



**Title of report: Recruitment of the Chief Executive**

**Meeting: Employment Panel**

**Meeting date: Wednesday 22 October 2025**

**Report by: Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development**

**Classification**

Open

**Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

**Wards affected**

(All Wards);

**Purpose**

To initiate the recruitment process for the post of Chief Executive.

**Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) Recruitment for the post of Chief Executive is initiated in line with the estimated timescales set out in the report.
- b) Employment Panel approves the role profile in appendix A, subject to any agreed amendments.
- c) Employment Panel agrees the remuneration for the post of Chief Executive.

**Alternative options**

1. Employment panel might decide not to recruit to the post of Chief Executive at this time. This option is not recommended because it is important the council has effective strategic leadership in place.
2. Employment panel might wish to consider alternative models of leadership for the council in England. Whilst most local authorities appoint a Chief Executive it is not a statutory requirement to do so. For the reasons set out in this report, this option is not recommended.

### Key considerations

3. The council's Chief Executive has announced he is leaving the council at the end of the financial year and in accordance with part 4, section 9 of the council's constitution, Employment Panel is responsible for the selection and recommendation of any new appointment to Council.
4. The Chief Executive is a critical role for the council and to ensure that the right candidate is found it is recommended that a specialist employment agency with the necessary skills, networks and resources to 'head hunt' a field of qualified candidates is engaged to undertake the search.
5. Part 4, section 9 of the council's constitution sets out that employment panel will shortlist and interview candidates for the post of Chief Executive and will recommend their preferred candidate to Council for approval.
6. A selection process and draft timeline in which an appointment can be made is proposed below. The timetable is designed to avoid any meaningful recruitment activities taking place over Christmas, and to give Employment Panel multiple opportunities to assess the candidates.

<b>When (estimate)</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Lead</b>
October 2025	Select and brief agency	Director of HR&OD
13 November - 17 December	Candidate search	Agency
15 January	<b>Longlisting</b>  Employment panel to longlist up to 8 candidates for selection day 1.	Employment Panel
w/c 19 January	Psychometrics and 121 calls with candidates and the Leader	Agency and the Leader
28 January	<b>Selection Day 1 and shortlisting</b>  Includes technical interview and presentation to Employment Panel  After which Employment Panel will decide which candidates (approx. 4) to bring back for day 2.	Employment Panel
4 February	<b>Selection day 2 and final interviews</b>  Includes staff panel, stakeholder panel, lunch with candidates and final interviews with Employment Panel.	Employment Panel
5 February, 2 PM	<b>Formal Employment Panel meeting for decision</b>	Employment Panel
w/c 16 February	Council meeting to vote on recommended candidate.	All members

## **Salary**

7. The remuneration for this post is currently set at £174,377 and this salary has been approved by Council in the pay policy statement in February 2025. In accordance with guidance under the Localism Act 2011 and the Council's constitution, any new salary packages over £100,000 must be agreed by Council. If Employment Panel decides to change the salary for this post, it can do so by recommending an alternative salary package to Council.
8. To support Employment Panel in their considerations, a salary benchmarking exercise has been undertaken. For benchmarking purposes there is not a direct comparator, but nearby councils and smaller county councils have been considered.
9. The current salary for Herefordshire Council's Chief Executive is in the lower quartile and it is noted that the relative size of Herefordshire council in terms of headcount and population is also in the lower quartile.

## **Role Profile**

10. The council's constitution states that the Chief Executive will be the head of paid service and returning officer for all local and national elections.
11. An updated, draft role profile is attached in appendix A and it includes these responsibilities.

## **Alternative Leadership Models**

12. There are examples in other councils where alternative models of leadership have been put in place. These include rotating the role of Chief Executive between some or all of the directors or having no Chief Executive at all.
13. Most local authorities that have implemented alternative models have done so without success and have reverted to a chief executive model at the first opportunity. Notwithstanding the experiences of other local authorities, a fundamental change to the leadership model in Herefordshire could be destabilising at a time when effective and consistent leadership is critical.
14. The post of Chief Executive is established in the council's constitution, and the constitution also specifies that the Chief Executive is the head of paid service. Should Employment Panel decide to recommend substantive changes to Chief Executive and head of paid service function, those changes would need to be considered at Council.

## **Community impact**

15. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, the council needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, qualifications, and mind-set, to operate efficiently and effectively. The council is accountable for how it uses the resources under its stewardship, including accountability for outputs and outcomes achieved. In addition, the council has an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies.
16. The post holder for this role provides strategic leadership to council services and has key leadership roles in Herefordshire, regionally and nationally. Without effective leadership, outcomes for communities and individuals in Herefordshire could be adversely affected.

## Environmental Impact

17. The council's senior leaders have shared responsibility for the delivery of the county plan and corporate delivery plan and the inherent environmental objectives and outcomes within these plans.

## Equality duty

18. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
19. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision and it has been found to have no impact for equality.
20. The council's policies in relation to job evaluation and recruitment and selection pay full regard to the council's responsibilities as set out in the public sector equality duty. The council is a disability confident employer, and the council encourages applications from candidates from diverse backgrounds.

## Resource implications

21. The salary for the Chief Executive is currently £174,377 and will be met from within the existing directorate revenue budget.
22. The establishment budget is available for this post and the table below show the salary cost of appointing to these posts for a full year, together with any estimated recruitment costs.

Revenue budget implications	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
Salary for post of Chief Executive (full year, excluding any pay award which has not yet been announced)	-	174
Estimated Recruitment Costs	20	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>174</b>

## Legal implications

23. The council is required to appoint one of its officers as head of paid service as prescribed in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The council's constitution sets out that the head of paid service will be the Chief Executive (Part 2 Article 10 para 2.10.7).
24. Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, SI 2001/3384 as amended by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, SI 2015/881 say that where executive arrangements (Cabinet/Leader model) are in place, the appointment of chief officers and statutory chief officers and deputy chief officers, including their dismissal and the terms and conditions upon which they are appointed, is a function reserved to the Council. In the constitution this function is delegated to the Employment Panel (Part 4 Section 9 para 4.9.4 to 4.9.10). An offer of appointment for the post of chief executive and head of paid service, cannot be

made until the appointment has first been approved by full council (Part 3 Section 1 point 27- Council Functions).

25. Where cabinet executive arrangements are in place, before an offer of appointment is issued, the members of the Cabinet must be informed of the prospective decision, and the Leader may make any representations of 'material and well founded' objections to the decision maker (the council).
26. Any employee employed by the council must be employed on the council's normal terms and conditions and will be subject to all relevant policies and procedures as any other employee would be.
27. Any changes to the pay packages must be approved by full Council (Part 3 Section 1 point 29) and changes to terms and conditions must be approved by Employment Panel (Part 3 Section 1 point 28).

### **Risk management**

28.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The council will not be able to recruit a Chief Executive and will not have adequate leadership in place to deliver key council priorities.	This risk has been mitigated by proposing a specialist recruitment agency is engaged to undertake a national search for the right candidate.

### **Consultees**

29. None.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft role profile

Appendix B – Salary benchmarking information

### **Background papers**

None identified.