

Appointment of Chief Executive Officer

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Val Keitch, Leader of Council
Chief Executive:	Alex Parmley
Lead Specialist:	Jenny Clayton, Lead Specialist - People
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Purpose of the Report

1. To confirm the recommendation of the Appointments Committee and appoint a new Chief Executive Officer for South Somerset District Council.

Public Interest

2. Every Council by law is required to employ a person in the position of Head of Paid Service. This is commonly a Chief Executive Officer who is the most senior member of employed staff and accountable through the Leader and the District Executive to the Full Council. The role of the Chief Executive is to lead the staff team to deliver the policies, strategies and priorities of the Council.
3. Following resignation of the current Chief Executive, it is proposed to appoint a new Chief Executive to lead the staff team. There are potential changes ahead for local government in Somerset following the consultation by the Secretary of State for Communities on two options for different arrangements. If either of these options were agreed, it would lead to South Somerset District Council ceasing to exist in the future. Therefore, it is proposed to appoint to the post of Chief Executive on an interim basis. Such an appointment will be necessary to lead the staff team and the organisation through the potential changes ahead. If the Secretary of State decided not to change arrangements for local government in Somerset and South Somerset District Council is to continue, then the Council would review the position of Chief Executive and the interim appointment to determine the best arrangements for senior leadership of the authority moving forward.

Recommendation

4. That the Council accepts the recommendation of the Appointments Committee and that with effect from 7 June 2021 agrees to appoint Clare Pestell as the Chief Executive Officer and Head of Paid Service for South Somerset District Council on an interim basis for an 18 month period

Background

5. Since appointment in August 2016, South Somerset District Council has operated with a full time Chief Executive Officer fulfilling the statutory role of Head of Paid



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Service. In this role the Chief Executive has worked with Members of the Council to lead the organisation through a considerable period of change that has put the Council in a strong position both financially and in terms of the capacity to deliver high quality services and Members ambitions for the places and communities of South Somerset. As well as Transformation of the Council's operating model and services, considerable progress has been made in taking forward Council's objectives for regenerating the district's largest towns, developing the economy, accelerating housing delivery, improving the environment & tackling climate change, and supporting our struggling families.

6. The Council will continue to change the way it delivers including through implementation of its Digital Strategy. In addition, the Council has an ambitious programme for South Somerset that it is delivering through its priority projects including the new priority of recovery of the district's communities and economy as well as the council following the impacts of the pandemic. The Chief Executive has had a leading role over the past three years working with the other Somerset councils, in work around the reform of local government in Somerset. This includes more recently, with the other district councils, the development of the Stronger Somerset proposals. The Secretary of State for Communities is due to decide on whether to make changes to local government in Somerset and if so, which option to select before the summer Parliamentary Recess. If one of the options for change is selected, considerable work will need to be undertaken at a senior level with the other councils in Somerset to move from the current to the new arrangements. Even if the Secretary of State decided not to implement structural change, all councils in Somerset agree that change is needed if local government is to be financially sustainable, services are to be protected and where needed, improved, and better outcomes delivered for communities. Therefore, a decision not to change structures should not be seen as no change to the way local government, including this council, operates and delivers.
7. Whilst there is some uncertainty ahead for the Council, it is clear there is considerable work to be undertaken to ensure: the Council and its services continue to evolve; that the Council's ambitions for South Somerset and the needs of communities are delivered through priority projects and programmes; and that change in local government in Somerset is taken forward successfully, whatever its shape. This will therefore continue to need senior leadership capacity to ensure the council and South Somerset continue to move forward and also play a full and active part in shaping and delivering change to local government in Somerset. In particular, staff will need clear managerial leadership and access to senior support over the coming eighteen months.
8. The current Chief Executive has resigned to take up a role as Chief Executive of Waitaki District Council, New Zealand. It is proposed to appoint a Chief Executive on an interim basis, envisaged to be 18 months, to lead the Council's staff to deliver the Council's ambitions and priorities for South Somerset and take the Council through the changes ahead, whatever form they take.

Report Detail

9. The Appointments Committee, which is comprised of Councillors Val Keitch, Linda Vijeh, Dave Bulmer, Peter Seib, Mike Best, Crispin Raikes, Mike Stanton and Tony



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Capozzoli have undertaken an internal recruitment exercise to seek to appoint an interim Chief Executive. Councillor Nick Colbert who is also on the appointments committee, tendered his apologies.

10. The Role Description and Person Specification underwent a minor review to update them but no material changes have been made. The Council may choose to utilise the services of the Local Government Association in the near future if it wishes to substantially review the role description.
11. In line with the council procedures as agreed with the unions, the post was advertised internally on 20 April 2021. The selection process took place during the period 28 April to 4 May 2021. The selection process involved an Attitudes and Approaches assessment administered by South Hams District Council; a technical interview with the current and an external Chief Executive; a psychometric test administered by Thomas International, and a panel interview with Members of the appointments committee.

Financial Implications

12. The salary of the post of Chief Executive is fixed at £118,767,000 pa. Annual pay reviews will be linked to the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives of Local Authorities Chief Executive's Pay Agreement.

Legal implications (if any) and details of Statutory Powers

13. Every Council is required to appoint a person to the role of Head of Paid Service. This is usually undertaken by a Chief Executive who is the most senior member of the employed staff.

Council Plan Implications

14. The position of Chief Executive will be expected to progress all the aims and values of the SSDC Council Plan 2020 - 2024.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

15. No relevant considerations.

Equality and Diversity Implications

16. Due regard was given to equality and diversity considerations throughout all stages of the selection and interview process.

Privacy Impact Assessment

17. No relevant considerations.

Background Papers

18. Appointments Committee Agenda - 4th May 2021