

By: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

To: SENIOR OFFICER APPOINTMENT, CONDITIONS AND  
CONDUCT COMMITTEE – 18 February 2025

Subject: DIRECTOR OF FINANCE RECRUITMENT

Classification: Unrestricted

## **FOR DECISION**

### **SUMMARY**

Members will be aware that an internal selection process was undertaken last May to appoint an interim Director of Finance and Internal Services (s151), in light of the planned retirement in May 2025 of the current Director of Finance and Internal Services, Alison Hartley.

Since then, the interim appointment has performed well on Corporate Management Board, but we now need to ensure a permanent appointment to the role, given the impending financial challenges that lay head in the Fire Sector. Pensions are still very much a key focus, as is the potential impact of changes arising from the Fair Funding Review, Business rate reset and multi-year settlements to name but a few.

This report therefore asks Members to agree to progress with recruiting a permanent replacement to the role of Director of Finance and Internal Services.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are requested to:

1. Agree to progress recruitment to replace the retiring Director of Finance and Internal Services on a permanent basis.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Chief Executive – Ann Millington

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

## **COMMENTS**

### **Background**

1. The Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee has responsibility for the recruitment and employment conditions of the Chief Executive and the four Directors, namely the Director of Finance and Internal Services; Director of HR, Director of Response and Resilience; the Director Protection, Prevention, and Customer Engagement.
2. Members will be aware of the impending retirement, on the 5 May 2025, of the current Director of Finance and Internal Services, Alison Hartley. This post is one of the two statutory officer positions on the Corporate Management Board, so continuity in the role by a post holder who has the relevant experience and knowledge of the Fire Sector is a key requisite of this position.
3. Members of this committee agreed in May 2024 to an internal interim appointment, and that person has now been in place for a year and is performing well, but there is now a need to appoint to this position on a permanent basis. As such Members are asked to agree that recruitment is progressed to appoint permanently to this post.

### **Financial Governance and Stability**

4. Nationally there are many financial pressures facing the public sector, not least the ability to deliver services to the public, our customers, whilst ensuring financial sustainability over the medium to long term. Many challenges are ahead in relation to public sector funding and so it is key that the new Director has an understanding and working knowledge of the Fire Sector and the potential impact that these changes may have on this Authority.
5. Sadly, elsewhere over the last few years there have been several Authorities in the news experiencing difficulties in their fiscal management, so someone who can oversee the delivery of sound controls and strong governance remains a key attribute of this role as does ensuring the delivery of value for money and fiscal management.
6. Accounting requirements and regulations remain ever complex, but so too does the changing world of pensions. The recent pension cases are having a significant impact on the sector, so it is important that the new Director is well versed in the accounting and pension complexities, so they are able to lead a team to address all these issues.

### **Recruitment**

7. Members of this committee agreed last May that it was appropriate to develop internal talent, as it is far more advantageous for the Authority, as it maintains internal

knowledge and expertise. Consequently, Members agreed to appoint, on an interim basis, an internal candidate. The successful candidate has now been on the Board for nearly a year, and is performing well, as they have a strong skillset in understanding the strategic financial aspects required of this post.

8. But as mentioned at the time of the interim appointment to this Director role, the recruitment market for Finance Directors / S151 was very limited, making it extremely difficult to find appropriately qualified and experienced people to fill such roles. This still remains the case, especially given the punitive impact of pension taxation in relation to senior roles.
9. Given the challenges that lie ahead namely; the need for an experienced Director to support and help facilitate the delivery of the CRMP over the coming years; the need to guide the Authority through the complexities of the impending financial challenges in the Fire Sector, to understand and address the challenges of the recent pension cases, all whilst ensuring that this Authority continues to be financially sustainable into the future, there is a need to appoint to this role on a permanent basis.
10. As such Members are asked to agree that this post is advertised externally in the coming weeks, with a view to the formal interviews being undertaken in the week beginning 21<sup>st</sup> April with a Member panel following the Audit and Governance Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> April.
11. Attached at **Appendix 1** is the relevant Job Description and Person Specification. The post will be advertised on a salary of £141, 475, excluding the pay award which is to be applied from 1 January 2025, as this is still subject to agreement.

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

12. The Authority is required under the Local Government Act 1972 to appoint one of its officers to have responsibility for the administration of its financial affairs, commonly known as the S151 Officer. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires that the S151 Officer must be a member of one of the accounting bodies specified within the Act. As such, the appointment of a suitably qualified person, is a prerequisite for this Authority.
13. Sufficient budget exists within existing base budget resources to fund the cost impact of the appointment and any associated advertising costs.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

14. Members are asked to:
  - 14.1 Agree to progress recruitment to replace the retiring Director of Finance and Internal Services on a permanent basis