

East Herts Council Report

Council

Date of meeting: Wednesday 16 October 2024

Report by: Councillor Ben Crystall – Leader of the Council

Report title: Appointment of Interim Chief Executive and Returning Officer

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – Following the departure of the previous Chief Executive, the Chief Officer's Recruitment Committee met on 19th September 2024 to appoint Helen Standen to the role of Interim Chief Executive and Returning Officer for a period of up to 18 months.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Council:

- a) That Council ratify the appointment of Helen Standen to the role of Interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service for a period of up to 18 months.
- b) That Council appoint Helen Standen as the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer for up to 18 months.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 In accordance with Section 4(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and part 10.9.1 of the Council's constitution, the Interim Chief Executive is also designated Head of Paid Service.
- 1.2 Pursuant to part 3.3.1(p) of the Council's Constitution, Council must appoint the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer to act in connection with electoral matters such as Parliamentary, District, County, Police Commissioner elections, and referenda.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The previous Chief Executive left the Council on 15th September 2024.

- 2.2 Part 11.1(f) of the Council's Constitution sets out that the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive are to be appointed by the Chief Officer Recruitment Committee, with the Chief Executive appointment to be ratified by Council.
- 2.3 Senior officers usually have a notice period of between 3 and 6 months, meaning that a full recruitment process and eventual appointment can have a long lead in time before the new appointment is in place. An interim appointment allows the Council to run a full recruitment process whilst the interim appointment is in place.
- 2.4 The Chief Officer Recruitment Committee therefore met on 19th September 2024 to consider an interim appointment to the role of Chief Executive, and unanimously agreed on appointing the then Deputy Chief Executive, Helen Standen to the role with immediate effect.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 Helen Standen had been the Deputy Chief Executive at East Herts Council since July 2018 having previously been a Director at the council since 2016. She had deputised for the previous Chief Executive on numerous occasions and has built a reputation for being open and honest and developing good working relationships. She is highly regarded locally and regionally, often representing the Chief Executive, and is well regarded by councillors and staff alike.
- 3.2 The previous Chief Executive undertook the statutory functions of Head of Paid Service, the Returning Officer, and the Electoral Registration Officer. The posts are statutory positions with specific functions to which the Council must appoint Officers to fulfil as well as the post of Interim Chief Executive.
- 3.4 By law, an appointment of Chief Executive and chief officers or deputy chief officer can only be made where there is no "well-founded objection" from a member of the Executive. In accordance with the Schedule 1, Part 2 of the Local Authorities' (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 the name of the person to be offered the appointment was sent to all Executive Members asking for any well-founded objections to the appointment to be submitted by Tuesday 8th October 2024. No such objections were received.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 To ratify the appointment of Helen Standen as Interim Chief Executive for up to 18 months, and to also appoint Helen Standen as Returning Officer and

Electoral Registration Officer for the same period. This option is RECOMMENDED as all statutory steps have been followed meaning that there is no good reason for Council not to ratify the appointment.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 Leaving the role of Chief Executive vacant for a prolonged period would present significant risks to the Council in terms of delivery and successful implementation of the Transformation programme.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 As set out at paragraph 3.4 above, all members of the Executive have been consulted in line with the requirements of the Local Authorities' (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001.

Community Safety

None

Data Protection

None

Equalities

There were no equalities concerns identified in the appointment of then Deputy Chief Executive to the role of Interim Chief Executive.

The eventual full recruitment process will adhere to all relevant equalities and diversity requirements.

Environmental Sustainability

None

Financial

The post of Chief Executive is a fully funded position within the current establishment and as such the cost of this appointment can be met from within existing resources. There are no capital implications arising as a direct result of this proposal.

Health and Safety

There are no health and safety implications associated with this appointment.

Human Resources

The appointment has followed the process set out in the Council's Constitution.

The eventual full recruitment process for the appointment of Chief Executive will be undertaken by the Human Resources team and, latterly, the Chief Officer Recruitment Committee.

Human Rights

There were no Human Rights implications identified in this process.

Legal

In accordance with Section 7 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 when appointing a person to a paid office or employment within the Council the appointment shall be on merit. The requirements of the Council's Pay Policy, appointments procedures alongside statutory employment procedures were met.

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 None

Contact Member

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