South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee

Cyd-bwyllgor corfforaethol De-Dwyrain Cymru

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| **Report for:** | ACTION |
| **Contains Confidential or Exempt Information** | NO |

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| For Consideration By | South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee |
| Report Title | Appointment of Interim Section 151 Officer |
| Report of | Kellie Beirne, Chief Executive Officer |
| Contact Details | Kellie.Beirne@cardiffcapitalregion.gov.uk |
| Date to be Considered | 3 June 2024 |
| Implementation Date | With immediate effect |
| Affected Council Areas | All |
| Keywords / Index | Appointment; Section 151; Chief Finance Officer |

**Report Summary**

1. To seek approval for the appointment of the Sout East Wales Corporate Joint Committee's Interim Section 151 Officer, with effect from the 3 June 2024 to the date upon which the appointed Strategic Director Resources takes up his role, expected to be 15 July 2024.

**Recommendations**

2. The Corporate Joint Committee is asked to:

   2.1. Note that Christopher Bradshaw is to step down as Interim Section 151 Officer for the SEWCJC with effect from the 3 June 2024;

   2.2. Appoint Hrjinder Singh as the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee's Interim Chief Finance Officer pursuant to Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, with effect from the 3 June 2024 until such time as the appointed Strategic Director of Resources and permanent Section 151 Officer, Liam Hull takes up his post, expected to be 15 July 2024.

**Reasons for Recommendations and Options Considered**

3. At its meeting of the 29 January 2024, the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) approved the appointment of Christopher Bradshaw as the Interim Section 151 (s151) Officer and Hrjinder Singh as the Interim Deputy

s151 Officer. These interim arrangements were put in place whilst the formal recruitment process for the Strategic Director Resources was carried out.

4. The remit of Strategic Director Resources includes the statutory s151 Officer role as well as oversight of all accounting and medium-term financial planning, ICT, Governance and Audit Sub-Committee, HR, service level agreements, business management, assets and emergency planning.

5. At its meeting of the 7 May 2024 the CJC ratified the appointment of Liam Hull as the Strategic Director Resources, and it is expected that the postholder will commence his duties on the 15 July 2024.

6. Christopher Bradshaw was the former Chief Executive of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council having retired in November 2022. To support the CJC to fulfil the Cardiff Capital Region's adopted policy position of 'Lift and Shift', Christopher Bradshaw agreed to undertake the temporary role of Interim s151 Officer on a part-time basis during the CJC's critical transition phase. In order to provide Mr Bradshaw with appropriate support, and the CJC with continuity and resilience, the Head of Finance, Risk & Assurance (Hrjinder Singh) was appointed as the Interim Deputy s151 Officer.

7. As the critical phase of the transition is now complete, the Interim s151 Officer wishes to step down from his duties following the CJC's Annual Meeting on the 3 June 2024. It is therefore proposed that Hrjinder Singh be appointed as the Interim s151 Officer from this date, until the appointed Strategic Director Resources takes up his role, expected to be 15 July 2024.

8. Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the role of s151 Officer to be undertaken by an individual with a recognised relevant professional accountancy qualification and a current membership of a relevant professional body.

9. Hrjinder Singh has been an accountant member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) since 2001 and therefore possesses the relevant professional qualifications and membership of an accredited professional body. Prior to his appointment as CCR's Head of Finance, Risk & Assurance in 2019, Mr Singh held a number of senior roles within Cardiff Council's accountancy section and has over 31 years of experience in local government finance.

**Corporate Policies and Priorities**

10. Both the CJC's Annual Business Plan and Annual Budget for 2024/25, which were set and agreed by CJC in January 2024, established the clear objective to recruit a Senior Executive Team in 2024/25 to fill long-term leadership gaps and provide for the resources required for effective leadership. Whilst also a legal requirement of CJC Regulations to recruit statutory officers, the independent work commissioned on a Target Operating Model approved by the CJC in September 2023, provided the backdrop and business case for the structure, which was further considered and approved by the CJC in December 2023.

**Comments of the Section 151 Officer**

11. The costs associated with these short-term temporary arrangements are expected to be minimal and can be fully met from within the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee's approved 2024/25 Revenue Budget.

12. The budget report sets out in detail the proposed Senior Executive Team arrangements and costs, along with details (and costs) of the interim arrangements that would operate until the postholders commenced their duties. This report proposes a small change to the extant interim arrangements and are expected to cover a period of circa 6 weeks.

**Comments of the Monitoring Officer**

13. Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by Regulation 5 of the Corporate Joint Committees (General) (No. 2) (Wales) Regulations 2021) places a duty on the CJC to appoint a suitably qualified officer responsible for the proper administration of its financial affairs.

**Staffing Implications**

14. As set out in this report, it is necessary to ensure continuation of the Interim s151 Officer arrangements until such time as the appointed Section 151 Officer (Liam Hull) takes up his post, expected to be 15 July 2024.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

15. The Committee must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty arising under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, and the need to: (1) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act; (2) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not; and (3) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.

16. The characteristics protected under the Act are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

17. There are no specific equalities implications arising from this report.

**Sustainability and Climate Considerations**

18. There are no sustainability and/or climate change implications associated with this report.

**Risk Management**

19. The need to ensure continuity of the Interim s151 Officer role is critical to managing risks around:

- Supporting gaps in leadership capacity and resources and ensuring the officer team is suitably skilled to lead the on and off-payroll 'workforce' and establish critical fitness for the future.
- The requirement in the CJC Regulations for appointment of statutory officers.
- Supporting the CJC's Senior Executive Team to meet the contractual obligations of the City Deal and Investment Zone programmes.
- Supporting the statutory requirements of CJC Regulations in respect of economic wellbeing, strategic planning and regional transport and a range of legal corporate duties.

**Consultation**

20. The necessary consultation with HR and other relevant officers has taken place.

**Welsh Language Implications**

21. In accordance with the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, and the CJC's statutory obligations, consideration has been given to the impact the recommendations made in this report may have on opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language, whether the proposals treat the Welsh Language more or less favourably than the English Language, and opportunities for increasing the positive effects, or decreasing the negative effects, of the proposals on the Welsh Language.

22. No negative impacts were identified which would prevent approval being sought to implement the recommendations of this report.

**Well-being of Future Generations**

23. In developing the Recommendations of this report, regard has been had to the well-being duty arising under the to the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act').

**Background Papers**

Reports to CJC:

- 29 January 2024 – Appointment of Interim Section 151 Officer
- 7 May 2024 – Ratification of Appointment of Senior Executive Posts

**Report Author:** Kellie Beirne, Chief Executive

**Meeting Date:** 3 June 2024