



Full Council

Monday, 12 May 2025

**Subject: Recommendation from Chief Officer Employment Committee -
Appointment of Interim Head of Paid Service (incorporating
Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer)**

Report by:

Chief Executive

Contact Officer:

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Chief Executive
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Purpose / Summary:

To accept the **RECOMMENDATION OF THE CHIEF OFFICER EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE** to appoint Mr Bill Cullen as the interim appointment for the Statutory role of Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council

1. accept the RECOMMENDATION from the Chief Officer Employment Committee and formally appoint Bill Cullen as Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer from 1st July 2025 on an interim basis

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

Section 4 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires that it shall be the duty of every relevant authority to designate one of their officers as head of their paid service.

Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, Regulation 5 provides “the power to approve the appointment or dismissal of the head of the authority’s paid service shall be exercised by the authority itself...”

Section 113 Local Government Act 1972 allows local authorities to enter agreement for sharing staff services with other local authorities.

The authority is required under Representation of the Peoples Act 1983 to appoint an Electoral Registration Officer and a Returning Officer.

Financial : FIN/17/26/SL

There is full budget provision for this post within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Staffing : The arrangement will be pursuant to the provisions under Section 113 Local Government Act 1972, which provides a way for local authorities to share senior officer roles.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

The arrangement will comply with the relevant laws in relation to Equality and diversity

Data Protection Implications : None from this report

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: None from this report

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: None from this report

Health Implications: None from this report

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

[Agenda for Chief Officer Employment Committee on Thursday, 6th March, 2025, 4.30 pm | West Lindsey District Council](#)

[Agenda for Chief Officer Employment Committee on Monday, 31st March, 2025, 6.00 pm | West Lindsey District Council](#)

Risk Assessment :

It is a statutory requirement to appoint a Head of Paid Service to ensure the management and coordination of the employees of the organisation. It is a role which a Council must have in place at all times.

If, for any reason it is not possible to implement this shared service arrangement, the Council will have to act promptly to consider other options for the Head of Paid Service role.

The Council also is required to have a Returning Officer and an Electoral Registration Officer and this shared arrangement will also see Mr Cullen being appointed to these roles, should this not occur, alternative arrangements will need to be made.

The permanent role is full time and a shared arrangement may not be able to cover all the non-statutory functions, should the Chief Officer Employment Committee wish to review this arrangement at any time they are able to do so.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

x

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Following the announcement that the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service Mr Ian Knowles is to retire, his last working day with the Authority will be 30th June 2025. Arrangements are ongoing regarding recruiting to his role on a permanent basis, however due to the seniority and nature of this role the recruitment process is very involved and requires various different stages. It is expected that any permanent replacement will not be available to start with the organisation until the middle of October 2025 at the very earliest.
- 1.2 The organisation requires an interim solution pending the permanent recruitment process and the Chief Officer Employment Committee have considered this at their meetings on 6th March and 31st March 2025. The Committee decided a shared arrangement should be considered and directed the officers to make enquiries of other Chief Executives who may be able to take on the role on an interim basis. A shared service arrangement involves sharing a Head of Paid Service with an existing Authority for a period of time. The Chief Officer Employment Committee will be kept updated regarding the permanent recruitment process.
- 1.3 As a result of enquiries made, the Committee met with Mr Bill Cullen, Chief Executive of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council on 14th April 2025, and unanimously recommended he act as the organisation's Head of Paid Service on an interim, shared basis. It was recommended that Mr Cullen also act as the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.

2. Regulations and provisions

- 2.1 Under Section 4 Local Government and Housing Act 1989, it is a requirement that the Council designate one of its officers as Head of the Paid Service.
- 2.2 The West Lindsey District Council Constitution, Part IV, pages 31-21 detail the functions of the Head of Paid Service.
- 2.3 Section 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 requires the Council appoint a Returning Officer and this is an independent statutory role. The Council is also required to have an Electoral Registration Officer appointed under this legislation and it is recommended that Mr Cullen be appointed to these roles on an interim basis.

3. Duties of the role

- 3.1 The role will require the interim Head of Paid Service to provide stewardship and leadership to the Council pending the recruitment of the permanent position. The role will exercise overall responsibility for corporate management and operational issues within existing budgets and be the principal staffing advisor for staff who are not subject to the terms of reference of the Chief Officer Employment Committee.

- 3.2 The interim Head of Paid Service will attend full Council meetings, meet and work with the Leader and Deputy leader as required, meet and work with other Group Leaders and elected members as required and attend meetings of the Council's Policy Committees.
- 3.3 The role will provide management, guidance, supervision and direction to the senior Management Team and chair the Management Team meeting at which all draft committee reports are considered, in addition to considering other matters which are to be decided by Management Team.
- 3.4 The role will include attending the weekly meeting of the Lincolnshire District Chief Executives and representing West Lindsey District Council's interests in this forum and any other meetings consisting of senior lead officers across Lincolnshire. The role will also provide leadership and a steer in relation to the ongoing work regarding Local Government Reorganisation.

4. Appointment

- 4.1 Mr Cullen is an existing Chief Executive for Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and has been in this role for 8 years. He is highly experienced in local government matters, has previously been the Chair for the District Council's Network Chief Executive Group, and recently led on the local government proposals for Hinckley and Bosworth.
- 4.2 Mr Cullen has met with the Chief Officer Employment Committee, which included three of the Council's Group Leaders, and he was asked various questions about his experience, knowledge and his views on how the shared arrangement will operate in practice. The senior Management Team has also met with Mr Cullen and arrangements are being made for his attendance at the Management Team's away day in June.
- 4.3 The shared service arrangement with Mr Cullen's organisation will be through a Section 113 Agreement which is a legal agreement and allows either party to withdraw from the arrangement providing reasonable notice.
- 4.4 The shared arrangement will be on a 2/3 days per week basis during which Mr Cullen will spend time each week in the Guildhall office building in addition to working on a virtual basis as required.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 That the Council accept the RECOMMENDATION from the Chief Officer Employment Committee and formally appoint Bill Cullen as Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer from 1st July 2025 on an interim basis.