

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council

16th March 2022

Report of the Chief Executive

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Appointment of Senior Management Posts

Purpose of the Report:

To authorise the recruitment to two heads of service posts:

- Head of Housing and Communities within the Social Services, Health and Housing Directorate; and
- Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture within the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate.

Summary of Proposals:

This report seeks approval to commence recruitment to two heads of service posts:

- Head of Housing and Communities:
The Welsh Government has introduced significant changes to housing policy which in turn, requires a response by local authorities. There is also a need to refresh the Council's existing housing strategy to better respond to the housing need across the county borough and the associated targets identified in the Local Development Plan. More specifically, there is considerable work to do as part of recovery from the pandemic to secure suitable housing and support for those who have been found temporary housing as a result of the 'all in' policy adopted at the beginning of the pandemic. The Council is currently housing a significant number of people in unsuitable premises, including accommodation at the Ambassador Hotel in Neath and the L and A

Centre at Goytre. We also anticipate further pressure on housing arrangements from recovery of the wider health and social care system with a continuing focus on the need for community-based solutions to support our elderly and vulnerable residents.

The Council's revised Corporate Plan places a clear priority on developing thriving and sustainable communities and finding ways to reduce structural poverty and inequalities across the area. There is also a need to ensure continuing high performance in the areas of community safety, community cohesion and to deliver this Council's participation in Government asylum and refugee programmes. This work requires a 'one council' approach and also extensive collaboration with residents, community and voluntary sector partners and wider stakeholders.

These are significant areas of work and having consulted with the chief officer team we are agreed that there is insufficient capacity to drive forward this agenda within the current senior management structure. Temporary additional capacity has been procured to commence the most urgent aspects of this work but a permanent appointment is needed to put arrangements on a sustainable footing.

In 2021, Council approved the appointment of a Chief Finance Officer and this new post replaced two posts in the senior management structure. Consequently, it is proposed that the funding released is now re-purposed to bring expertise and capacity into the Social Services and Housing Directorate.

- Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture:
The Cabinet, advised by the members of the joint meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny and Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny committees, has determined to return indoor leisure and theatre services currently provided by Celtic Leisure to the Council's direct management and control. This is a significant undertaking and there is an urgent need to construct a viable business plan that will identify how the funding gap associated with this decision can best be met.

The decision to return the above services to the direct management and control of the Council creates an opportunity to strengthen the strategic approach to leisure with wider tourism, heritage and culture services and functions with the aim of developing synergy between these areas of work to increase visitors to the area, contributing to economic growth, as well as improving the wellbeing offer to residents. It is therefore proposed that an additional head of service post be created to provide the strategic leadership now required in these areas of work. The long term cost of this post will be addressed as part of the business planning process referred to herein and in the short term will be met from the Corporate Contingency budget.

If approved, the appointments will be overseen by the Special Appointments Committee following the local government elections in May 2022. Proposed job descriptions and person specifications are attached for Members' information.

Appointment of Heads of Service

The Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Constitution sets out that the appointment of a Head of Service is vested in the Special Appointments Committee.

Advertisement

It is proposed to advertise these Heads of Service positions via national advertising and on-line media.

Financial Impacts:

In respect of the two proposed posts set out in this report, it is proposed to apply the NPT Head of Service Pay Grade that ranges from £77,269 per annum to £84,991 per annum. Council is asked to delegate responsibility to the Special Appointments Committee for the final determination of the starting salary to be offered to successful candidates, to be made within the parameters of the Head of Service Pay Grade.

Details of the financial impacts are outlined in Appendix 1 of this report. The Head of Housing and Communities will be met from existing budgets held within the Chief Executive's cost centres. The Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture will be funded during 2022/23 from the corporate contingency reserve with a base budget identified from 2023/24 as part of the forthcoming medium term financial strategy preparation which will necessarily include the strategy for funding the return of indoor leisure and theatre services from Celtic Leisure to the Council.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment, attached at Appendix 3, has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A full impact assessment is not required as there is no impact on any protected group. It also has no negative impact on bio-diversity or the Welsh Language”.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications

Workforce Impacts:

This appointment process will be conducted in line with the Council's Officer Employment Procedure Rules.

Legal Impacts:

No implications

Risk Management Impacts:

The scale of work to be undertaken in both portfolios is considerable and there is insufficient capacity to accommodate the work within existing portfolios.

Failure to increase capacity risks:

- putting the Council in breach of its statutory housing duties;
- delaying the transfer of Celtic Leisure services back to the Council;
- delivering the Council's strategic intent set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-27;
- missing the opportunity to draw in additional investment and income to maximise the benefits that could be secured from leisure, tourism, heritage and culture;
- the wellbeing of the existing workforce.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that having due regard to the Integrated Impact Screening Assessment that Council:

- a) establishes a new post of Head of Housing and Communities, reporting to the Director of Social Services, Health and Housing;
- b) establishes a new post of Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture reporting to the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning;
- c) authorises the Chief Executive and the Head of People and Organisational Development to advertise these posts with recruitment and selection to be overseen by the Special Appointments Committee following the local government elections, May 2022
- d) approves the salary to apply to both posts, in line with the NPT Head of Service Pay Grade that ranges from £77,269 per annum to £84,991 per annum and delegates authority to the Special Appointments Committee to determine the starting salary to be offered to successful candidates within the parameters of the pay grade.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure there is sufficient senior management capacity to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision is proposed for immediate implementation.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Financial Appraisal

Appendix 2 – Integrated Impact Screening Assessment

Appendix 3 – Job Description and Person Specification Head of Housing and Communities

Appendix 4 – Job Description and Person Specification Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture

List of Background Papers:

- The Constitution of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2014
- Future of Indoor Leisure Services – Cabinet, February 2022
- Corporate Plan 2022-27, Cabinet, February 28th 2022

Officer Contact: Karen Jones, Chief Executive Tel: -1639 763284 or e-mail: chief.executive@npt.gov.uk