

EMPLOYMENT AND APPOINTMENTS PANEL (CHIEF EXECUTIVE)

Monday, 24 November 2014

Present: Councillors P Davies JE Green
AR McLachlan L Rennie
G Davies P Gilchrist
AER Jones

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

On a motion by Councillor George Davies, seconded by Councillor McLachlan, it was –

Resolved – That Councillor Phil Davies take the Chair of this Panel.

2 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Panel were requested to declare whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in the item on this agenda and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

No such declarations were made.

3 APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HEAD OF PAID SERVICE (INCLUDING RETURNING OFFICER AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER)

Further to minute 4 of the Employment and Appointments Committee (27/1/14) the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development presented a report on recruitment process for the appointment of a new Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service.

The report gave details of issues for consideration and decision, including:

- Appropriate salary for the role
- Role of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer
- Requirements of the role as defined in the Job Description and Person Specification
- Proposed selection process and timetable
- Interim arrangements

With regard to the salary for the role, appendices to the report gave comparative data for Chief Executive salaries and population size; by

workforce size and across different types of local authorities. The workforce size data had become less relevant for comparative purposes. This was because Councils of similar scope and size in terms of population and community chose to organise differently in terms of the way they employed people to deliver the work e.g. commissioning, outsourcing models. There was therefore wide variance in the 'per fte' figure.

Comparative salary data for Chief Officers reporting to Chief Executives in North West Authorities was also attached as an appendix, as applicants for the Chief Executive role at Wirral were likely to come from the next tier of Chief Officers. The Council therefore needed to consider the tier two salaries compared to Wirral's Chief Executive salary to ensure that it attracted suitable candidates.

The Chair introduced the external advisors for the Panel, Martin Denny from the Local Government Association and David Slatter from Penna Recruitment Consultants.

Mr Slatter said that with regard to the salary range there were two points that needed to be addressed, first, the need for it to be at a level to attract quality candidates, and secondly that it was at a level to retain in post the appointee for, he suggested at least five years. He recommended a range of between £155,000 to £175,000, although an appointment did not necessarily have to be made at the top of the range. Mr Denny concurred with the need to set a suitably salary range to attract quality candidates.

Responding to a query from Councillor Gilchrist, the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development stated that the figures for salaries of senior officers (appendix 3) showed these as percentages of the current Chief Executive salary and would not be fixed that they would automatically increase based on a higher Chief Executive salary. There were no recommendations to alter these salaries.

In respect of comparative data and the ratio of average salaries to the Chief Executive's (appendix 8), Wirral's lowest salary was £14,736 p.a. as an employer which paid the living wage, this was higher than some other authorities which paid at the starting point of the Local Government pay scale from £13,500. This data was provided by every Local Authority in their published Pay Policies.

Councillor Green commented that with oncosts of approximately 22 per cent the Council would, with the proposed salary increase, be looking to spend near enough £1m for a five year appointment for one person. He suggested that the market could be tested first to see what sort of candidates applied on the current salary level.

Councillor McLachlan commented upon the need to attract the best possible candidates and the need to pitch the salary at the appropriate level as was the case in other parts of the public sector.

The Leader of the Council stated that it was hoped to attract not just Strategic Directors but also serving Chief Executives from elsewhere. He referred to the comparative data of neighbouring authorities all of which were paying higher salaries and the need to listen to the expert advisors to the Panel. Councillor Green's suggestion would only lead to a delay in the recruitment process.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development responding to comments and questions – the salary scale had not been reviewed for the last three Chief Executives including at one time a spot salary of £130,000.

It was moved by Councillor Green and seconded by Councillor Rennie, that –

“A new Chief Executive be sought on the current salary grade.”

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Phil Davies and seconded by Councillor McLachlan, that –

“Wirral Council is the ninth largest metropolitan authority in the country. The current salary of the Chief Executive is not sufficiently competitive given the size and scope of the authority.

Given the external advice from the Local Government Association and Penna Plc, acting recruitment consultants, this Panel recommends to Council, at its meeting on 8 December 2014, that:

- (i). the salary range for the Chief Executive be agreed between £155,000 - £175,000 per annum; and
- (ii). the final salary for the Chief Executive be agreed (within the salary range) by the Employment and Appointments Panel as part of the recruitment process.”

The amendment was put and carried (4:3).

The substantive motion was then put and carried (4:3).

Resolved (4:3) –

(1) Wirral Council is the ninth largest metropolitan authority in the country. The current salary of the Chief Executive is not sufficiently competitive given the size and scope of the authority.

Given the external advice from the Local Government Association and Penna Plc, acting recruitment consultants, this Panel recommends to Council, at its meeting on 8 December 2014, that:

- (i). the salary range for the Chief Executive be agreed between £155,000 - £175,000 per annum; and**
- (ii).the final salary for the Chief Executive be agreed (within the salary range) by the Employment and Appointments Panel as part of the recruitment process.**

Further recommendations were then put and carried unanimously and the Panel –

Resolved (unanimously) –

- (2) That the job description and person specification, be approved.**
- (3) That the proposed process and timescales for appointment of a new Chief Executive (who shall also be appointed as the Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer) as outlined in appendices two and eleven to the report, be approved.**
- (4) That this Panel recommends to Council at its meeting on 8 December 2014 that David Armstrong be appointed to the position of Acting Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, with effect from 1 January 2015 until the newly appointed Chief Executive takes up the position, and as Deputy Chief Executive from 8 December to 31 December, 2014.**
- (5) That this Panel recommends to Council at its meeting on 8 December 2014, the appointment of Surjit Tour, Head of Legal and Member Services, as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, and that Joe Blott, Strategic Director: Transformation and Resources is appointed as Deputy Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, both effective from 1 January 2015 until the newly appointed Chief Executive takes up the position.**