

## COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the County Council held at Oake Manor Golf Club, Oake, TA4 1BA, Wednesday 15 June 2022 at 12.00pm

**Present:** Cllr S Ashton, Cllr J Bailey, Cllr J Baker, Cllr L Baker, Cllr M Barr, Cllr M Best, Cllr B Bolt, Cllr A Bradford, Cllr T Butt-Philip, Cllr S Carswell, Cllr N Cavill, , Cllr N Clark, Cllr S Coles, Cllr J Cook-Woodman, Cllr N Cottle, Cllr A Dance, Cllr H Davies, Cllr D Denton, Cllr A Dingwall, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr S Dyke, Cllr C Ellis, Cllr H Farbahi, Cllr B Ferguson, Cllr B Filmer, Cllr A Govier, Cllr T Grimes, Cllr Pauline Ham, Cllr Philip Ham, Cllr S Hart, Cllr M Healey, Cllr B Height, Cllr A Hendry, Cllr H Hobhouse, Cllr J Hunt, Cllr D Johnson, Cllr V Keitch, Cllr C Lawrence, Cllr M Lewis, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr T Lock, Cllr M Lovell, Cllr D Mansell, Cllr M Martin, Cllr H Munt, Cllr T Munt, Cllr M Murphy, Cllr F Nicholson, Cllr G Oakes, Cllr S Osborne, Cllr O Patrick, Cllr C Payne, Cllr E Pearlstone, Cllr D Perry, Cllr E Potts-Jones, Cllr T Power, Cllr H Prior-Sankey, Cllr F Purbrick, Cllr W Read, Cllr L Redman, Cllr B Revans, Cllr M Rigby, Cllr T Robbins, Cllr D Rodrigues, Cllr D Ruddle, Cllr P Seib, Cllr H Shearer, Cllr F Smith, Cllr F Smith-Roberts, Cllr M Stanton, Cllr A Sully, Cllr S Wakefield, Cllr M Wale, Cllr R Wilkins, Cllr D Woan, Cllr R Woods and Cllr R Wyke

**Virtual attendance:** Cllr A Boyden, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr L Duddridge, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr M Hewitson, Cllr A Kendall, Cllr T Kerley, Cllr G Slocombe

### 1 **Apologies for Absence** – Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from: Cllr S Aujla, Cllr H Bruce, Cllr M Caswell, Cllr P Clayton, Cllr B Clarke, Cllr S Collins, Cllr D Darch, Cllr T Deakin, Cllr M Dunk, Cllr D Fothergill, Cllr R Henley, Cllr E Hobbs, Cllr H Kay, Cllr J Kenton, Cllr M Kravis, Cllr K Pearce, Cllr S Pugsley Cllr J Roundell Greene, Cllr B Smedley, Cllr A Soughton, Cllr J Snell, Cllr C Sully, Cllr A Wiltshire, Cllr G Wren, Cllr Lucy Trimnell.

### 2 **Declarations of Interest** – Agenda Item 2

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting, full list of District / City / Town and Parish Councils can be found on the Somerset County Council website.

Following a tribute by the Chair, Cllr Mike Best, Members of Council stood and observed a minute silence for the Nigel Taylor, former Chair of Council who had passed away on 14 June 2022.

3 **Public Question Time** – Agenda Item 3

No public questions were received by the published submission deadline.

4 **Report of the Appointments Panel - Chief Executive recruitment process and Terms & Conditions** - Agenda Item 4

The Director of Customers, Digital and Workforce, Chris Squire, presented the report highlighting the process for the recruitment and appointment of a Chief Executive to Somerset County Council and Designate Chief Executive to Somerset Council and that as such the role will continue as Chief Executive of Somerset Council, from 1st April 2023.

The Director further highlighted: the importance of learning from other Council's unitary restructures; the role of the Appointments Panel; the composition of the Panel, including the Leader, the Deputy Leader and the Leader of the largest opposition group; the involvement of the four District Leaders as consultees to the decision; and the inclusion of a probationary period.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans presented the recommendations highlighting the following: offering congratulations to the existing Council Chief Executive, Patrick Flaherty on his new role of Chief Executive at the London Borough of Harrow Council; the challenges faced with the amalgamation of five Councils into one Council at time of great change in society, with challenging financial and environmental climates and changes of legislation that will impact on services; the need to recruit an individual with a particular skill set and experience to lead the Council, lobby on the national stage for a fairer deal for Somerset and deliver our vision for the future; the importance of setting the right terms and conditions including a market rate salary; and that the future for Somerset residents depends on the ability to successfully deliver quality services and use resources efficiently and effectively; that the report is the conclusion of discussions by the Council's appointments Panel.

In summary the Leader emphasised and proposed two amendments to the recommendations relating to: the reduction of the salary range to £190,000 to £200,000; and the inclusion of a probationary period. The Leader further

thanked all members of the recruitment panel, staff, partners and recruitment consultants for their work.

Members discussed the Chief Executive recruitment and terms & conditions, the following points were raised:

Cllr Faye Purbrick welcomed the proposed amendment to the salary range due to further consideration by the appointments panel and to provide clarity and suggested a further amendment to the first recommendation to include 'after further consideration to set a salary range of...'.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans thanked Cllr Faye Purbrick for her comments and confirmed his support for the proposed amendment.

Councillors commented on the recruitment process and change in the proposed salary, asking for clarity of the evidence available to support the addition of a probationary period.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans responded, noting the dynamic recruitment market and consideration of all available evidence.

Cllr Leigh Redman commented on: the exclusion of the delivery of the Somerset Climate Strategy; the terms of employment; the very high salary range; the disparity in salary levels; the cost of living crisis; the invaluable work of council staff during the pandemic; and that many staff had in effect seen a year on year pay cut.

The Director of Customers, Digital and workforce responded noting: that no service specific objectives are included within the job description, but that these would be considered under a separate process; difficulties in recruitment; the work undertaken alongside recruitment consultants; the use of a broad salary range to attract candidates; and that national comparisons and benchmarking within local government and other sectors showed the salary range to be fair.

Cllr Bill Revans noted the national issue regarding low pay for public sector workers and that the Council is part of national pay bargaining system.

Cllr John Hunt questioned if the salary as advertised included pension contributions; and whether additional costs were anticipated and budgeted for against the expected savings of £18 million a year with the Unitary Council.

Councillors commented on the importance of setting an appropriate salary and package to attract the right calibre of candidate.

The Director of Customers, Digital and Workforce responded that the Chief Executive's pension is budgeted for and within the anticipated savings of the Unitary Council. The Director further noted that moving forward, salary benchmarking will be undertaken when other Senior Roles are advertised.

The Director of Finance and Governance further added that there is an anticipated £2.6m saving from a net reduction of 29 posts across the top three tiers of management as a part of unitary transformation.

Councillors further commented on: comparisons with the salaries of Chief Executives at other Councils; the dynamic recruitment market and associated amendments to salary range; and the landmass and geography of Somerset and associated costs to provide services to residents.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bill Revans formally proposed the two amendments to the recommendations to include: further consideration of the salary range to amend to £190,000 to £200,000; and the addition of a probationary period.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Cllr Liz Leyshon seconded recommendations as amended. The Deputy Leader further: acknowledged the informative debate; and commended on salary levels; references the building of social housing; and the cost of housing in the County.

The Council proceed to vote on the two amendments regarding further consideration of the salary range and the addition of a probationary period separately. Both votes were carried by a majority.

The Council then proceeded to vote on the recommendations as amended (as detailed below), these were agreed by a majority vote

The Council **RESOLVED** by majority to:

Approve the Appointments Panel's recommendations relating to the role description (set out in Appendix 1 of the officer report), the terms and conditions (set out in Appendix 4 of the officer report) and following further consideration to set a salary range of £190,000 - £200,000, to support the process to recruit a Chief Executive to Somerset County Council and the designate Chief Executive to Somerset Council.

The Council further **RESOLVED** that:

Paragraph 7.5 of the recruitment process be amended as follows: The Appointments Panel believes that the use of a probationary period is necessary for this post, given the nature of the working relationship between the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council, the Executive and Council. Qualification for statutory employment rights is based on length of service. Performance processes for the post of Head of Paid Service are set out in the Constitution and relevant policies

And that the following is added to Appendix 4 of the officer report (key terms and conditions of employment):

Probationary Period The appointment will be subject to a probationary period of 6 months. Internal applicants who have already completed their probationary period would not normally be expected to complete this again

**(The meeting ended at 1.09pm)**

**CHAIR**