

Appointment of Interim Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service

Date: 11 September 2024

Report of: Chief HR Officer

Report to: Council

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

The purpose of the report is to invite Council to approve the recommendation of the Employment Committee to appoint Mariana Pexton to the role of Interim Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.

Mariana Pexton will commence in role upon the departure of the current Chief Executive, and will remain in post until the commencement of a substantive Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.

Recommendations

- a) To note the contents of this report.
- b) To seek Council approval to the recommendation of the Employment Committee of 2 September 2024 to appoint Mariana Pexton to the post of Interim Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.

What is this report about?

- 1 The purpose of the report is to seek Council approval to the recommendation of the Employment Committee of 2 September 2024 to appoint Mariana Pexton to the post of Interim Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.

Background

- 2 Following Tom Riordan's announcement in May of his intention to leave later in the year, the Council commenced a process to recruit to the post of Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.
- 3 Officer Employment Procedure Rules, Part 4(l) of the Constitution sets out the requirement for the recruitment and appointment of the Council's Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service. Pursuant to these requirements, it is expected that Council will be in a position to approve the recommended substantive candidate at its November 2024 meeting, with an incoming Chief Executive expected to commence between then and April 2025, subject to notice periods and other employment arrangements.
- 4 Whilst we progress with the recruitment process, one potential scenario is that Tom Riordan may leave slightly earlier than originally planned and/or before the conclusion of the recruitment process. In this case interim arrangements will be necessary.
- 5 It is a requirement of the Constitution to have a Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service in place at all times. As such it is prudent to ensure that Council has selected and appointed an Interim who is ready to commence in post immediately upon the departure of the current Chief Executive. It is expected that the interim will remain in post until such point that the substantive appointee commences in role.
- 6 The appointment of an interim or substantive Chief Executive is a Council (non-executive) Function. Part 3 Section 2A of the Constitution delegates the responsibility for making recommendations regarding the appointment of the Chief Executive to the Employment Committee for which Terms of Reference are set out in Part 3, Section 2B(g). As such, arrangements were made for the interim post to be advertised in such a way as is likely to bring it to the attention of persons who are qualified for it. For the Interim Chief Executive post this was determined to be all current Directors. The Interim Chief Executive job description is included in Appendix 1.
- 7 An Employment Committee was convened on 2 September 2024 to interview the qualified applicant for the interim post.
- 8 The Employment Committee comprised of Cllr James Lewis (Chair), Cllr Debra Coupar, Cllr Jonathon Pryor and Cllr Alan Lamb.

- 9 The Employment Committee unanimously recommended the appointment of Mariana Pexton to the post of Interim Chief Executive.
- 10 All members of the Executive were subsequently invited to present any material and/or well founded objections to their recommendation within the specified period. No objections were received, and the Officer Employment Procedure Rules have been duly followed.
- 11 A brief summary of Mariana Pexton’s biography and employment history is included in Appendix 2.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 12 Recruiting to this interim post will ensure strategic leadership capacity and capability is maintained to deliver the priorities in line with the Best City Ambition and Organisational Plan and will ensure that the Council complies with its Constitutional obligations.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

- 13 Making this appointment will ensure continuity of leadership to consider and deliver the above three pillars of the Best City Ambition.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:
Have ward members been consulted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

- 14 The proposals contained in this report have been agreed by the Leader and Executive Board Member for Resources. Trade union colleagues have also been updated on the proposal to recruit to this interim role.

What are the resource implications?

- 15 The Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service is an established post and is within budget provision for 2024/25 therefore no additional costs will be incurred in making this interim appointment.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 16 There are no identified risks with the proposals set out in this report. There may be a short period of transition from the substantive Chief Executive to the interim postholder to ensure effective handover and leadership continuity.

What are the legal implications?

- 17 The approach within this report seeks to ensure that the Council continues to meet its statutory requirements as set out in the Constitution.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 18 It is a requirement to ensure that the Council employs a Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service at all times and that the mechanism to do so should be pursuant to the Constitution and Officer Employment Procedure Rules.
- 19 Seeking wider external interest for the interim role was carefully considered and rejected on the grounds that it risked compliance with the above obligation, and that candidates, save for existing Directors, would be unlikely to hold the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to satisfactorily fulfil the interim role. The adopted approach was considered the best option at this stage to provide stability and continuity in the short to medium term. It is recognised that backfill arrangements may be necessary to cover the role temporarily vacated by the Director of Strategy & Resources.

How will success be measured?

- 20 Success will be measured through the smooth and successful transition of officer leadership and a continuity of service and strategy delivery.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- 21 The recruitment and selection process is co-ordinated by the Chief HR Officer and the timeline is as follows:

- Expressions of Interest (w/c Monday 19 August)
- Employment Committee (2 September)
- Full Council (11 September)

Appendices

- 1. Interim Chief Executive Job Description and Person Specification.
- 2. Precise of the employment history of Mariana Pexton.

Appendix 1

JOB DESCRIPTION – INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Grade:	Chief Executive
Responsible to:	The Executive Board and Full Council
Responsible for:	The 'Paid Service'

PURPOSE OF THE ROLE

The Interim Chief Executive is the Head of Paid Service and the most senior employee of the City Council. They must therefore conduct the role in accordance with the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.

Their primary function is to provide overall leadership and vision in developing the strategic direction of the senior leadership team and the whole organisation, and deliver the Council's key corporate and partnership priorities in line with the Best City Ambition for Leeds.

They will set an overarching management framework to ensure effectiveness in service development and delivery.

As the Council's principal policy adviser, they support the delivery of excellent services, in keeping with Council policy, budgetary and statutory requirements.

They are primarily responsible for the successful delivery of the political priorities and leading the Corporate Leadership Team to deliver the strategic direction as outlined by the elected leadership.

The Interim Chief Executive will be a strong advocate for the Council and City, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, working closely with the combined authority, local government, central government, commercial partners, statutory agencies, residents, local businesses, and other relevant stakeholders and partners.

A key responsibility is ensuring that everyone involved in Team Leeds has a shared purpose and common goals by designing, delivering, and leading the organisation in accordance with our values and behaviours.

SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To act as the Council's principal adviser to the elected leadership of the Council on policy options and the forward planning of objectives, services and resources to deliver their ambitions for the city. Provide a clear sense of direction and purpose assisting the elected leadership in the process of policy formulation to ensure that the Council's vision, priorities, and core values are made a reality.

2. Champion a 'One Council' approach and provide leadership, direction, and management of the Council's Officer Corporate Leadership Team to ensure the delivery of the Council's priorities and the provision of high quality, cost-effective services based on community needs.
3. Further develop the Council's commitment to take a positive lead in major local and regional partnerships to achieve, within the overall strategy, maximum benefit for the Authority and its communities.
4. Represent and negotiate on behalf of the Council at local, regional, national, and international levels, promoting inter-authority working across the city region and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness to change.
5. To work closely with the combined authority and the family of partnerships to ensure the city achieves maximum benefit for our community from partnership working.
6. Determine and implement appropriate performance management processes to monitor and review the overall effectiveness of the Authority through a 'One Council' approach, including the delivery of the Council Organisational Plan and supporting strategies.
7. Manage the interface between Elected Members and Senior Officers, maintaining productive and essential Member / Officer partnerships and processes, including promoting a positive and respectful relationship whilst providing critical leadership, advice and challenge to help shape and support the delivery of outcomes.
8. Scrutinise and advise on the plans and actions of Central Government and other external agencies to determine their impact on the development of local policies and priorities, and position the Council and city as a decisive and influential organisation and place.
9. To develop and sustain a positive and enabling organisational culture that puts at its heart the provision of high quality, value for money services and ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the organisation to deliver successfully against the Council's ambitions and priorities.
10. Provide strong visible leadership and direction to the Council's diverse workforce to deliver Council and community priorities, maximising potential and developing a culture of accountability, inclusion, and empowerment.
11. To lead the efficient and effective implementation of key programmes and initiatives that are central to the achievement of the Council's objectives across all services and the effective deployment of the Authority's resources to those ends.
12. Ensure the effective co-ordination of bids and resources to promote the sustainable regeneration of the local economy, respond to the needs of the community and make a difference to people, society, and the environment.
13. Ensure equality, diversity, inclusion and cohesion principles are exemplified and embedded across the Authority and across all service provision. Provide strategic leadership around diversity issues, ensuring that the policies and services of the Council reflect the changing needs of all our communities and workforce and that equality of opportunity is ensured and diversity celebrated.
14. To provide innovative solutions to challenges, bringing in expertise and good practice from elsewhere and developing a culture of innovation and improvement.
15. Promote, develop, and maintain good relationships with the media and public and ensure an effective communication strategy both internal and external to the organisation.
16. To ensure that the Council has appropriate governance and regulatory systems and controls in place and adhered to, which are modern, flexible, fit for purpose and proportionate.

17. Represent the Authority on formal occasions, undertaking the necessary Civic duties including support to the Lord Mayoral Office.
18. All duties and responsibilities should be carried out in accordance with Council's Constitution, governance arrangements, policies and procedures.
19. To undertake any other related duties and responsibilities as they arise.

The Council expects all its employees to have a full commitment to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and acceptance of personal responsibility for its practical application. All employees are required to comply with and promote the policy and to ensure that discrimination is eliminated in the service of the Authority.

Special Conditions:

This position has been identified as a politically restricted post under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Therefore, you will be restricted from political activity.

This position is exempt under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means you will have access to vulnerable groups such as young people, the elderly, and children. Any offer of appointment will be subject to a satisfactory Enhanced / Standard Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau. Having an 'unspent' conviction will not necessarily bar you from employment. This will depend on the circumstances and background to your offence(s).

It is a requirement of the Constitution to have a Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service in place at all times and such the Interim postholder will commence immediately upon the departure of the current substantive Chief Executive. The Interim Chief Executive will remain in post until the commencement of a permanent replacement.

DATE: August 2024

Appendix 2

Brief biography and employment history of Mariana Pexton

Mariana is currently the Director of Strategy and Resources at Leeds City Council, leading a large directorate of about 5,000 staff including Finance, Human Resources, Digital, Legal and Governance, Shared Services, Strategy and Performance, Communications and Marketing, and crucially a service called Civic Enterprise Leeds that delivers many vital front-line services such as catering, cleaning, school crossing patrols, passenger transport and building repairs.

She leads the strategic developments for Leeds City Council, including the Best City Ambition, and plays a key corporate role supporting councillors.

Mariana has previously been employed in senior roles in Leeds in Strategy, Customer Services and Children's Services.

Prior to joining the council in 2000, Mariana enjoyed a career in leadership and management in the Civil Service and an Inspectorate.

She studied Sports Studies in Newcastle as her first degree, has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Leeds, and is in the final stages of a Doctorate at Leeds Beckett University, researching leadership and strategy in local government.

She is married, with two children aged 23 and 15. Mariana is also chair of the Leeds Rhinos Foundation and a Director at Leeds Rhinos Netball as a volunteer. She loves family holidays in Menorca, and is a rookie runner who was proud to complete the inaugural Rob Burrow Leeds Marathon in 2023 albeit slowly!