

**RECRUITMENT TO THE POST OF SERVICE DIRECTOR,
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

To: **Staffing and Appeals Committee**

Date: **20th April 2016**

From: **Adrian Loades, Executive Director Children, Families and Adults**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Purpose: **The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the recruitment of a Director of Children's Social Care, within the Children, Families and Adults Directorate.**

Recommendations: **The Committee is asked to note the content of this report and endorse the recommended approach.**

<i>Officer contact:</i>	
Name:	Adrian Loades
Post:	Executive Director
e-mail:	Adrian.loades@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 727993

1.0 Recruitment to Service Director Children's Social Care

- 1.1 In July of last year the previous Service Director for Children's Social Care left the organisation and as a consequence, with the approval of Staffing and Appeals Committee, a search and selection exercise was started.
- 1.2 The post is a Director C grade, with a pay banding of £92,474 – £103,699. It has previously been brought to the Committee's attention that the market in social care generally is extremely competitive, and Service Directors in Children's Services are a particular challenge to recruit. It is therefore anticipated that the full range of the pay scale may be needed to secure an appointment to this post.
- 1.3 On 31st March 2015, approval was granted by Staffing and Appeals Committee to engage a search and selection agency to support the recruitment process. This was duly carried out by SOLACE, and the vacancy closed on 1st June 2015.
- 1.4 In June 2015 Members were advised that the response to the advert had been particularly disappointing, and only a small number of applications were received. As a consequence the decision was taken to suspend the process and source an interim Director.
- 1.5 Feedback provided by SOLACE gave the following reasons for the unusually low number of applicants at the time:
 - There had been several appointments at this level and some potential candidates were engaged in other recruitment processes.
 - The salary was considered to be not high enough to attract people to move sideways so this would need to be a step up move for most people.
 - Due to the number of roles in the market people did not see the need to relocate to progress their careers – the cost of housing and living in Cambridgeshire can also be an issue.
 - Joining an organisation that has made such significant progress could be a risk if success is not ongoing, whereas joining an organisation that needs improvement was seen as a potentially safer bet.
 - Some assumption in the market that there would have been strong internal candidates for this role.
- 1.6 At the Staffing and Appointments Committee on 29th June it was agreed that:
 - The Executive Director should look to negotiate an extension of the interim arrangements to allow more time for the development of internal candidates. This has been done.
 - Additional support should be given for those internal candidates who could, with more training, be in a position to carry out the role. This has been put in place.
 - To undertake a dual approach for the proposed further recruitment drive, linked to facilitating further in house development of potentially suitable internal candidates.

- 1.6 It was agreed that a further search exercise would be carried out in September 2015 with a view to resuming the process at that point in time. However, advice from SOLACE taken in early September was that the market had not changed, and therefore a further exercise was unlikely to yield any more favourable results.
- 1.7 With that advice, the interim arrangement was left in place and the individual concerned, John Gregg, has been willing to continue to provide interim cover.
- 1.8 Members were advised previously that the post must be filled. Section 18 of the Children Act 2004 requires every top tier local authority to appoint a Director of Children's Services (DCS). The statutory DCS role is held by Adrian Loades as Executive Director. A fundamental part of the Council's statutory responsibilities for Children's Services relates to duties to safeguard vulnerable children and young people. Whilst there is a collective responsibility for safeguarding, much of the operational responsibility rests with the Service Director: Children's Social Care. The post reports to the Executive Director and manages the breadth of the Council's children's social care functions from arrangements for looked after children to the management of safeguarding referrals.
- 1.9 In November 2015 the Department for Education published a Knowledge and Skills Statement for the role of "Practice Leader". The Practice Leader role is expected to be filled by a qualified social worker and will have day to day operational responsibility across the system of child and family social work practice. The Knowledge and Skills statement sets the expectation for the Practice Leader role as "usually this is referred to as the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care or Director of Family Services". The Assistant Director role equates to the Service Director grade in the Council's structure. The job description for the post has been updated to reflect the expectations of the Practice Leader function.

2.0 Interim Arrangements

- 2.1 The interim Director is scheduled to leave in the summer and arrangements now need to be progressed to recruit permanently to this key role.
- 2.2 Over the last six months a structured approach to leadership development has been put into place for the existing six Heads of Service, with a view to providing opportunities for them to also gain more breadth to their experience across the strategic remit that the Director post covers. This exposure and development should enable them to consider applying for the post when it is advertised, as none had previously done so.
- 2.3 The development opportunities have been welcomed by the Heads of Service. Four have indicated that they would consider putting themselves forward for the Service Director role. Each has strengths and areas for development that would be tested through the selection process. It is though proposed to seek invite external applications to ensure that the Council maximises the opportunity to recruit the best possible candidate for the role.

3.0 Recruitment Process

- 3.1 Due to the seniority and specialism of this role, it was previously recommended to the Committee, and agreed, that the services of a Search

and Selection agency be sourced to assist with the search for potential candidates. An estimated cost for this is expected to be approximately £20,000 plus advertising costs.

- 3.2 It is unlikely that there will have been a significant change in the market since the process was undertaken last year, however, it is hoped that some recent developments may increase the profile of the role as set out below.
- 3.3 It was announced in January 2016 that Cambridgeshire has been chosen by the Department for Education (DfE) as a pilot authority for the Partners in Practice Innovation Programme, which aims to redefine what children's services departments should look like.
- 3.4 Education Secretary Nicky Morgan announced that Cambridgeshire – as one of the country's best-performing local authorities - would work with the DfE on new freedoms that would support social work practice and ultimately secure better outcomes for families.
- 3.5 The programme seeks to inspire whole system change so that in five years, it will achieve better life chances for children receiving help from social care, better value for money across children's social care and stronger incentives for innovation and experimentation.
- 3.6 The focus in Cambridgeshire will be the Council's work to prevent children becoming looked after by the local authority through exploring how risks can be better managed, and the removal of regulations and processes that inhibit a flexible response to a family's needs.
- 3.7 As stated above the Practice Leader role will form part of the accountabilities for the Service Director, Children's Social Care. A copy of the job description is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.8 When advertising this role, emphasis can be given to our involvement in the programme, and the innovation opportunities that will be open. It is hoped that this will prove to be an attractive prospect for people in the sector who may be incentivised to apply and have the opportunity to be involved in a ground breaking project.
- 3.9 The selection will be through a Committee Panel. The selection process and assessments can be managed internally by LGSS HR to minimise costs to the Council.
- 3.10 The timeframe to get to the final selection stage of the Staffing and Appeals Committee will be approximately 12 – 14 weeks. It is likely that any preferred candidate would then have a notice period to serve of at least three months. The current interim Director has indicated that he would be able to continue in the role to cover the period to a successful candidate taking up the position.

3.0 DECISION

The Staffing and Appeals Committee is asked to note the current position and endorse the recommendation that the search and selection process be recommenced with immediate effect.

Source Documents	Location
Staffing and Appeals Committee – Agenda and Minutes 31 March 2015 and 29 June 2015	Martin Cox LGSS Head of People Cambridgeshire County Council Shire Hall Cambridge