

TO: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

FROM: Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Officer - Matthew Warren

PRESENTING OFFICER(S): Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Officer
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APPOINTMENT OF SECTION 151 OFFICER AND DEPUTY STATUTORY OFFICERS

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend to the Authority the appointment of a new statutory Section 151 Officer and two deputy statutory officers, namely a Deputy Section 151 Officer and a Deputy Monitoring Officer.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Authority is asked to approve the appointments of:

- Ursula Bird (ACMA) to the role of Section 151 Officer for the Fire Authority;
- Josh Muir to the role of Deputy Section 151 Officer for the Fire Authority;
- Tamsin Mirfin as Deputy Monitoring Officer for the Fire Authority.

3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 **Legal** – the Service must ensure its statutory officer roles are independent of one another. This means that the Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer, and Monitoring Officer need to be fulfilled by separate people within the organisation. Further, the Section 151 Officer must be a fully qualified accountant to enable it to be meet the requirements of the statutory role.

4. Background and Interim Arrangements

- 4.1 On 1 July 2024, Matthew Warren was appointed to the role of Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive Officer. This appointment meant that he could no longer fulfil the role of the Section 151 Officer as the law requires financial independence between it and the Head of Paid Service.
- 4.2 As stated in Paragraph 3.1 above, the Section 151 Officer must be a qualified accountant and Ursula Bird, the current Assistant Director Finance, was temporarily appointed to the role on 10 July 2024 under the Fire Authority Chair's urgency powers. All Members were notified by email of the Chair's decision in compliance with the Constitution.

5. The Role of the Section 151 Officer/Chief Financial Officer

5.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) define the role of the Chief Financial Officer and highlight the elements required to fulfil the role. The full document can be accessed via the link within the bibliography at the end of this report but in summary the individual must:

- be a skilled professional;
- lead an effective and efficient finance function;
- ensure the financial health of the organisation;
- create an enabling culture to drive positive change;
- look outside of the organisation to explore wider context.

5.2 The current Assistant Director of Finance, Ursula Bird, is a highly experienced qualified Chartered Management Accountant who exhibits all the positive skills and values required to be a highly effective Chief Financial Officer.

5.3 Ursula has been Head of Finance for three years and during that time has introduced significant change to the finance function, creating a more efficient and highly effective function which resulted in the Service being recognised as 'outstanding' in the use of its resources in our last His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

5.4 In reality, whilst Ursula was not in the statutory officer role for the Authority before June, her entire role was focused on ensuring all legislation and statutory requirements were met. I have absolute confidence in recommending to the Authority that Ursula is appointed as the Authority's Section 151 Officer.

6. Deputy Statutory Officers

6.1 Whilst not a legal requirement, it is best practice to appoint deputy statutory officers to provide resilience in the event of absence or unavailability of the statutory officers. For this reason, in full agreement with the Monitoring Officer and temporary Section 151 Officer, it is recommended that:

- Joshua Muir, Finance Manager is appointed Deputy Section 151 Officer. Joshua is a skilled professional holding an ACCA accountant qualification. He has been with the Service for in excess of 10 years and has an in-depth knowledge of fire and rescue finance policies and procedures.
- Tamsin Mirfin, Assistant Director Service Transformation is appointed Deputy Monitoring Officer. Tamsin has a good grounding in governance framework and risk management. She has been working with the Monitoring Officer in the last few months and is considered a highly suitable deputy.

6.2 A commensurate allowance will be paid to the Section 151 Officer and the two deputy officers.

6.3 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer is recognised as the Deputy Head of Paid Service and would assume the statutory role in the absence of the Chief Fire Officer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact Officer
Fire Authority and Committee Meeting Minutes – various CIPFA – The Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Public Service Organisations	Hinchingsbrooke Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon https://www.cipfa.org/members/the-role-of-the-chief-financial-officer	Matthew Warren Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Officer 07786 023436 matthew.warren@cambsfire.gov.uk