

**REPORT TO:** East Lothian Council

**MEETING DATE:** 14 December 2021

**BY:** Executive Director for Council Resources

**SUBJECT:** Appointment to the Post of Head of Finance

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To advise Council of the decision of the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee to appoint Ellie Dunnet to the post of Head of Finance.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To note the decision of the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee to appoint Ellie Dunnet as Head of Finance.
- 2.2 To advise Council that following receipt of satisfactory pre-employment checks Ellie Dunnet was offered the post and has subsequently confirmed her acceptance. Ms Dunnet's commencement date has still to be agreed with her current employer.
- 2.3 To note the minute of the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee held on 8 October 2021 for the appointment of the Head of Finance (Appendix 1).

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 An external recruitment campaign to recruit to the vacant post of Head of Finance post ran from Friday 23 August until Monday 20 September 2021. Eight applications were received.
- 3.2 A cross-party Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee was established in accordance with Council's Standing Orders and charged with making an appointment to the permanent post of Head of Finance. The Sub-Committee comprised:

Cllr Norman Hampshire (Convenor)  
Cllr Shamin Akhtar  
Cllr Lachlan Bruce  
Cllr Stuart Currie

- 3.3 The Sub-Committee was advised throughout by Council officials Monica Patterson, Chief Executive; Sarah Fortune, Executive Director – Council Resources; Kirstie MacNeill, Service Manager – People and Governance; and Zoe McFadzean – HR Business Partner. Evelyn Docherty from Solace in Business provided independent advice. Solace in Business provided additional independent advice throughout the recruitment campaign, candidate selection and the candidate interview process.
- 3.4 The Sub-Committee met on 28 September 2021 to consider applications received and the shortlisting recommendations that had been made by Solace in Business. Six candidates were selected for shortlisting and an Assessment Day was arranged for Wednesday 6 October 2021. One candidate withdrew their application prior to the Assessment Day and another withdrew in the course of the Assessment Day itself.
- 3.5 The candidates completed a series of online psychometric tests and during the Assessment Day they undertook a technical interview with the Executive Director for Council Resources accompanied by an officer from Solace in Business and they separately completed a written exercise. An outcome-based report on the candidates' overall performance was prepared by Solace in Business. The report was shared with and discussed by the Sub-Committee prior to the formal interviews on 8 October 2021 to help inform its decision making.
- 3.6 The final competency based interviews took place on 8 October 2021. The candidates were required to present a pre-prepared presentation to the Sub-Committee at the beginning of their formal interviews. Thereafter, the candidates were asked a number of pre-set competency-based interview questions.
- 3.7 Following the interviews, taking full account of the candidates' individual performances in relation to the competency based interview and presentation along with the feedback from the Assessment Day, the Sub-Committee unanimously determined that Ellie Dunnet was the preferred candidate for the post of Head of Finance.
- 3.8 The relevant pre-employment checks were carried out and found to be satisfactory, following which a formal offer was made to Ellie Dunnet which she has formally accepted. Ms Dunnet will take up the post at a date to be agreed with her current employer. A minute of the meeting of the Sub-Committee which conducted the interviews for the post on 8 October 2021 (Appendix 1) is presented for noting.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

#### **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Financial - None

6.2 Personnel – None

6.3 Other - None

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 None

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<b>DESIGNATION</b>	Service Manager – People and Governance
<b>CONTACT INFO</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	11 October 2021

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CHIEF OFFICER AND HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENTS SUB-COMMITTEE  
For the Post of  
HEAD OF FINANCE**

**Held on 8 October 2021**

**Via Microsoft Teams**

**Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee:**

Councillor Norman Hampshire (Convenor)  
Councillor Shamin Akhtar  
Councillor Lachlan Bruce  
Councillor Stuart Currie

**In Attendance:**

Evelyn Docherty, Solace in Business, External Independent HR Adviser

**Council Officials:**

Monica Patterson, Chief Executive  
Sarah Fortune, Executive Director – Council Resources  
Kirstie MacNeill, Service Manager – People and Governance  
Zoe McFadzean, HR Business Partner

Candidates began their interview by giving a ten minute presentation to the Sub-Committee. The topic was 'As Head of Finance for East Lothian Council, what are your key priorities over the next 12 months in supporting the Council's COVID-19 recovery programme taking cognisance of any lessons learned during this unique period?' This was followed by a series of set competency based questions from Sub-Committee members.

At the end of the formal interviews the Sub-Committee discussed the relative merits of the candidates with assistance from Evelyn Docherty and the officers present. The Sub-Committee scored the candidates. Ellie Dunnet scored highest in both the presentation topic and in all of the competency questions posed and was accordingly declared to be the preferred candidate.

The Service Manager – People and Governance explained that the usual pre-employment checks on the preferred candidate would be carried out prior to formal appointment.