

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 10 December 2024

BY: Executive Director for Corporate Resources

SUBJECT: Retiral of Chief Executive – February 2025

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Council of the resignation and retirement of Monica Patterson, from the post of Chief Executive of East Lothian Council, to take effect from Sunday 16 February 2025.
- 1.2 The report sets out arrangements for the forthcoming recruitment campaign to secure a new Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service for East Lothian Council and asks Council to appoint members of the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee.
- 1.3 The report also details proposed interim arrangements to be put in place following the Chief Executive's departure and prior to a new Chief Executive taking up post.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the content of this report.
- 2.2 To appoint the Council Leader, Councillor Hampshire; Provost, Councillor McMillan; Depute Leader of the Council, Councillor Ahktar; Councillor Jardine; and Councillor McGuire as the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee.
- 2.3 To note that, following departure of Monica Patterson as Chief Executive, there will be a period whereby there is an absence of the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) and therefore to delegate authority to the Head of Corporate Support, following consultation with the Council Leader and political group leaders, to put in place interim arrangements to cover the role of Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) for this absence prior to a new Chief Executive taking up position.

- 2.4 To approve the appointment of Head of Corporate Support as interim Returning Officer for East Lothian.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 25 November 2024, Monica Patterson, Chief Executive, submitted her resignation, intimating that she would seek to retire at the end of her 12-week contractual notice period on Sunday 16 February 2024. The Leader of the Council has accepted Mrs Patterson's resignation.
- 3.2 The Local Government and Housing Act 1969, Section 4, requires the Council to designate a person as 'Head of Paid Service'. This is a statutory function conducted by the Chief Executive.
- 3.3 The Council Leader has instructed the Head of Corporate Support, supported by the Service Manager for People & Council Support, to progress arrangement to appoint a new Chief Executive. The Council has commissioned SOLACE in Business to assist with the recruitment campaign.
- 3.4 The recruitment of the new Chief Executive will follow the Chief Officials appointments process and the appointment will therefore be made by the Chief Officer and Head Teacher Appointments Sub-Committee in accordance with the Council Scheme of Administration. It is proposed that the cross-party Sub-Committee will comprise the Council Leader, Councillor Hampshire; the Provost, Councillor McMillan; Depute Leader of the Council, Councillor Ahktar; Councillor Jardine; and Councillor McGuire.
- 3.5 The recruitment campaign is due to commence in the week commencing 9 December 2024 with a view to securing an appointment of a permanent Chief Executive in advance of Mrs Patterson's retirement.
- 3.6 Depending on the successful candidate's personal circumstances and notice period, there will be a period whereby there is an absence of the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) and, therefore during such period, interim arrangements to cover this role will be required. To ensure fairness for any potential internal candidates planning to apply for the post, Council is recommended to delegate authority to the Head of Corporate Support following consultation with the Council Leader and political group leaders to agree interim arrangements to be put in place following the Chief Executive's departure. A further report on this matter will be brought to the meeting of Council in February 2025 to advise of the outcome of the recruitment campaign and to propose further interim arrangements, if required. Indicative recruitment timelines have been set out below.

Recruitment campaign opens	w/c 9 December 2024
Recruitment campaign closes	20 January 2025
Short leet meeting	w/c 27 January 2025

Assessment centre/final interviews w/c 3 February 2025

Latest offer to preferred candidate w/c 3 February 2025

Pre-employment checks will then have to be conducted. Most external candidates at this level would be required to give a minimum of three months' notice from the date a formal offer is made. It is therefore possible a new Chief Executive may not be able to assume post before May 2025. The report to Council in February 2025 would seek agreement from Council for interim arrangements for this period should this be required.

- 3.7 The Head of Corporate Support is currently the Depute Returning Officer, and the staff who work on elections sit within her service; therefore, it is recommended that Council agree to appoint her as the interim Returning Officer for East Lothian. The February 2025 report to Council will seek agreement on further interim arrangements, if required, or permanent arrangements.

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 – The costs of SOLACE in Business support plus any outlays, e.g. psychometric testing analysis, is estimated to be in the region of £12,000 and will be met from the existing staffing budget for the Chief Executive.
- 6.2 Personnel – The terms and conditions of employment applicable to the post of Chief Executive are enshrined within the SJC Conditions of Service for Chief Officials and the salary is nationally determined with other local terms and conditions applying in accordance with East Lothian Council employment policies. The Service Manager for People & Council Support will coordinate and administer the entire recruitment and selection process, reporting to the Leader through the Head of Corporate Support.
- 6.3 Other – None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None

AUTHOR'S NAME	Paul Ritchie
DESIGNATION	Service Manager People & Council Support
CONTACT INFO	01620 827767 pritchie@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	26/11/2024