



## COUNCIL

Wednesday, 25 November 2020

## APPOINTMENT OF S151 OFFICER

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Local Authorities are required to have in place certain statutory officers. One of these is the Chief Finance Officer, [Section 151 Officer], who undertakes a range of key financial responsibilities.
2. The Council's s151 Officer was Mr Simon Taylor-Buglione. Unfortunately, due to serious ill-health, Mr Taylor-Buglione had been absent from work. Sadly, due to his continuing ill-health, Mr Taylor-Buglione decided to leave the Council's employment on 31 October 2020. As the Council is required to have a s151 Officer, this report recommends that with immediate effect, Mr Brian Mew is appointed as the Interim Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer on a fixed term, temporary basis, until such time as the role can be filled on a permanent basis.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards in the District
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	CLlr Maurice Cook Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources
<b>Supporting Officer:</b>	Stephen Baker Chief Executive Telephone Number – 01394 444378 <a href="mailto:stephen.baker@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">stephen.baker@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their Officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs.
- 1.2 The s151 Officer fills one of three statutory roles which the Council must have, the others being the Head of Paid Service, and the Monitoring Officer. These roles have specific statutory duties assigned to them. The s151 Officer is responsible for the proper administration of the financial affairs of the Council. This includes ensuring the lawfulness and financial prudence of the Council's decision-making, the administration of financial affairs, contributing to the corporate management of the Council, and the provision of financial information and advice. This Council must secure that one of their Officers is designated as the 151 Officer.
- 1.3 Unfortunately, the previous s151 Officer, Mr Simon Taylor-Buglione, experienced ill-health and, after attending work intermittently, had to be absent for the latter few months of his service to the Council, as his condition deteriorated. During his absence Mr Brian Mew, and Mrs Lorraine Rogers, provided support as Deputy Section 151 Officers, and provided cover and deputised for Mr Taylor-Buglione.
- 1.4 Sadly, Mr Taylor-Buglione had to leave the Council's employment due to his continuing ill-health, on 31 October 2020. Mr Taylor-Buglione had worked for the Council in Financial services and had been the deputy s151 Officer, himself, and was appointed as the s151 Officer on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018. He provided excellent, clear financial advice to the Council, and worked diligently and conscientiously, for many months, whilst experiencing health issues, and undergoing treatment. The Council is very appreciative of his skills, hard-work and dedication, and thanks him most sincerely for this. The Council extends its best wishes to him, and his family, on his departure from the Council.
- 1.5 In the light of Mr Taylor-Buglione's resignation on ill-health grounds, it is necessary for the Council to appoint an Interim Chief Finance Officer and Sec 151 officer, pending the appointment of a person to fill the role.

## **2 APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 2.1 This report recommends the appointment of Mr Brian Mew as the Chief Finance Officer and 151 Officer. This will be for a fixed term, until 28 April 2021, during which time, the Council will advertise and recruit to the role on a permanent basis. Recruitment will proceed as soon as is practically possible, and will take account of any Covid constraints that apply at the time.
- 2.2 Mr Mew is extremely well qualified and has been an Accountant Member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) since 1989. Mr Mew has an impressive track record of work experience and achievements including support to East Suffolk Council and the predecessor councils on a consultancy basis. Mr Mew has consistently provided high-level support to the Council's Financial Services Team on a range of strategic areas.
- 2.3 Lorraine Rogers, the Deputy Chief Finance Officer, will remain in this role, to support Mr Mew, and deputise for the s151 Officer, as required.

## **3 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?**

- 3.1 The East Suffolk Strategic Plan expects the Council to maintain the highest financial standards and governance arrangements and to deliver against the financial sustainability theme. Appointing an interim officer to this role is essential to meet both

these and legislative requirements, and to maintain the support the Council needs from Financial Services.

#### **4 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 It is a legal requirement that the Council has a Section 151 officer in place.

#### **5 OTHER KEY ISSUES**

5.1 There are no other issues.

#### **6 CONSULTATION**

6.1 Consultation is not necessary.

#### **7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

7.1 Retaining an external consultant was considered but rejected as the Section 151 Officer needs to be an East Suffolk employee. Also, Mr Mew has the necessary experience and expertise, and has deputised for the previous s151 officer, during recent months.

#### **8 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 To ensure that the necessary financial governance arrangements are in place for East Suffolk Council.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Council thanks Mr Simon-Buglione for his service to the Council and extends its very best wishes to him and his family.
2. That Mr Brian Mew be designated as the Interim Chief Finance Officer and s151 Officer, with immediate effect, on a fixed term, temporary basis until 28 April 2021.
3. That Mrs Lorraine Rogers continues as the Deputy s151 Officer to Mr Mew.

#### **APPENDICES - NONE**

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS – NONE**