

Appointment of the Managing Director of Make It York

Summary

1. This paper proposes the appointment of the new Managing Director of Make It York, Sarah Loftus, to the company's board.

Recommendations

2. The Staffing Matters and Urgency Committee is recommended to:
Appoint Sarah Loftus as a director of Make It York in order that she may fulfil her role as the new Managing Director.

Reason: To comply with the company's Articles of Association.

Background

3. Make It York is a company limited by shares wholly owned by the Council. It has the following objectives:
 - Increased profile for the city as a destination for living, visiting, studying, and doing business
 - To deliver the recently developed Cultural and Tourism Strategies for the city
 - Increased visitor spend – as measured by increase in average length of stay and average spend per visitor
 - A National / International profile of high quality cultural events, driving the development and implementation of the city's cultural strategy and promoting cultural wellbeing
4. The governance structure provides for a board of directors and a Shareholder Committee. The directors are appointed by the Council, the decision to appoint being within the remit of Council or Staffing Matters and Urgency Committee. The directors, who are unremunerated, are responsible for:
 - Setting the strategic direction of Make It York; keeping it under constant and constructive critical review and ensuring that it

fulfils its purpose: to develop and promote York as a great place to live, visit, work, study and do business

- Commissioning specialist expertise to advice and support the company including legal services, auditors and other expertise as required
 - Bringing fresh and independent thinking to the Board whilst being a team player and supporting a culture of collective responsibility once the Board has taken a decision
 - Practising the highest standards of governance (in line with the Companies Act 2006)
 - Working with the executive team to enhance the profile of Make It York and to promote its achievements
5. As a publicly-owned business, Make It York (MIY) is required to maintain the highest standards in relation to its governance. This applies to the appointment and conduct of its Board of Directors and staff, as well as to the make-up of the Board itself. As a primary means of achieving this, MIY follows the seven Nolan Principles in relation to public service: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

The Recruitment Process

6. At the outset of the recruitment process for the new Managing Director, a person specification was set out. This called for a candidate who has strong and demonstrable skills and experience in the following areas:

Leadership:

- Proven strong leadership skills
- Powerful ambassador for the city
- Mix of strategic and operational skills
- Visible person who can champion projects
- Motivator and people leader
- Track record of positive change and sustainable transformation

Commerce:

- Commercial acumen
- Identifying and navigating funding and grant opportunities
- Marketing and business development acumen
- Experience of managing budgets
- Sustainability

Collaboration:

- Public and private sector partnership working

- Political sensitivity
- Track record of working with and influencing stakeholders
- Strong advocate of the tourism and culture sectors
- Gain and maintain respect of various stakeholders

Experience:

- Ideally some private sector tourism or leisure experience
- Some experience of working closely with local government
- Experience of or interest in the culture sector
- Comfortable and credible with frequent media exposure

7. An open, objective and rigorous recruitment process was undertaken, supported by recruitment specialists Badenoch and Clark. The role was advertised through their website following consultation on the candidate brief with Portfolio Holders, the Make It York Board, including the CYC Directors, CYC officers and a number of stakeholders. In addition, Badenoch and Clark were able to use their existing databases and national reach to proactively approach suitable candidates and to directly contact candidates who were recommended.
8. Following a first and second interview process with a panel, Sarah Loftus emerged as the unanimously preferred candidate.
9. Sarah Loftus's summary of experience and skills:

Sarah is a graduate of Humberside Polytechnic and University College London.

She is currently the Chief Executive of the Lincoln Business Improvement Group (BIG) and previously held the positions of Corporate Director for Economic Growth at Trafford Council and Service Director for Economic Growth and Strategic Housing for Wakefield Council. She also had a series of different roles in the six years she worked for Yorkshire Forward culminating in the role of Assistant Director for the Humber Region in 2008/9.

Sarah will take the lead on the delivery of the tourism strategy, as well as driving forward the city's cultural strategy and will work with stakeholders and partners across the city to promote York's profile regionally, nationally and internationally.

10. She has a 12 week notice period which may be shortened, and will start in post at Make It York by 3rd December 2021 latest.

Options and Analysis

11. It is open to the committee to accept or reject this proposed appointment to the Make it York Board. Should the committee reject the appointment it will not be possible for the individual to carry out this key senior leadership role to the extent and in the way envisaged in the job role or in accordance with the memorandum and articles of association of the company. It is recommended that the candidate is appointed in view of her outstanding credentials and selection through a rigorous process.

Next Steps

12. Make It York or its professional advisors will be responsible for registering the appointment of Sarah Loftus as a Director of Make It York with Companies House having undertaken relevant statutory checks.
13. Sarah Loftus will fill in a register of interests, advising Make It York of any conflict that they can foresee.
14. The Chair of Make It York will arrange a board induction process to take place in the first three months after appointment.

Council Plan

15. Make It York contributes to a number of Council Plan themes including Well-paid jobs and an inclusive economy, and Safe communities and culture for all.

Implications

16. There are no additional implications beyond those set out in the report.

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Wards Affected:

All