
Staffing Matters and Urgency Committee

14 July 2025

Report of the Chief Officer – HR and Support Services on behalf of Executive Leader

Recruitment of Head of Paid Services

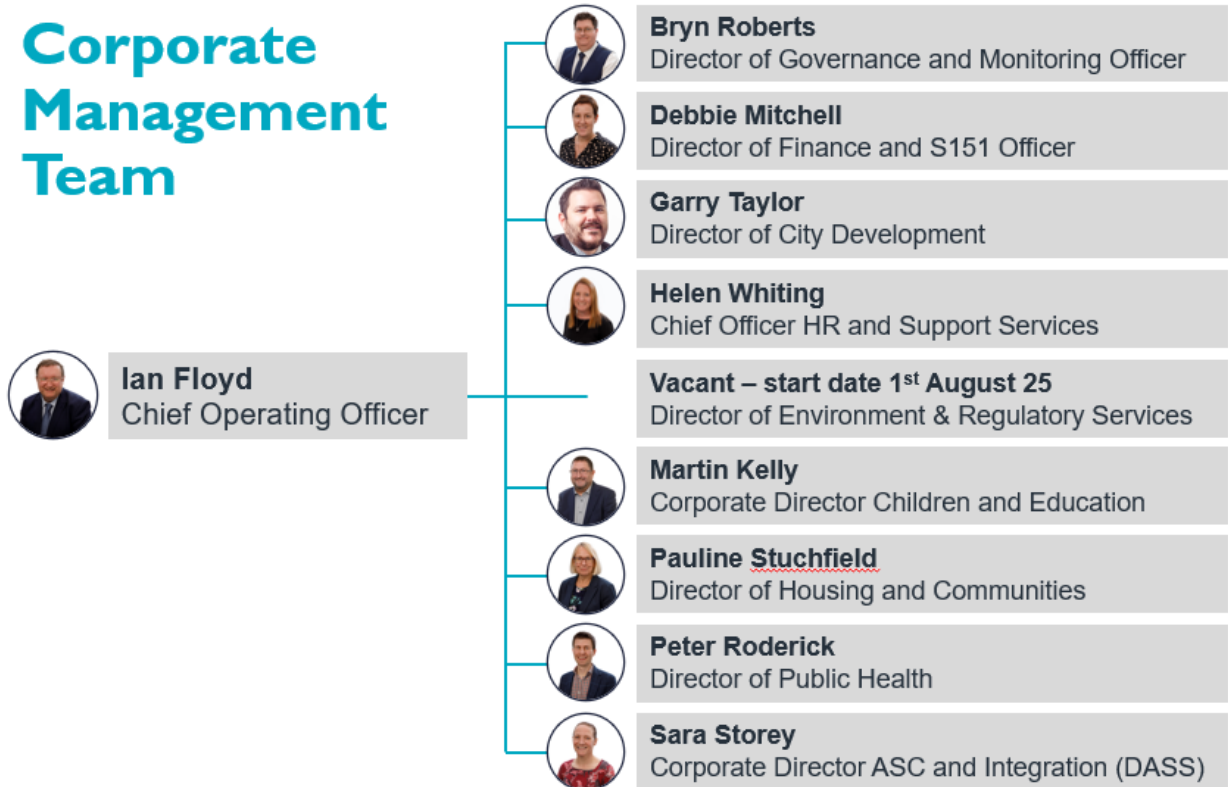
Summary

1. The Chief Operating Officer (COO) who holds the designation of Head of Paid Services (HoPS) has given an early indication of notice that he will be retiring from his post Easter 2026, (beginning of April 2026).
2. This early notification is useful to assist with the preparation of a replacement HoPS and inform the workforce, partners and other stakeholders accordingly. It will also aid a smooth leadership transition especially as an external recruitment campaign and likely notice period of a successful candidate could be between 6-8 months with appropriate approvals. Preparation is, therefore, required to progress a campaign.
3. This report seeks approval to proceed with the recommended option of replacing the COO post with a Chief Executive position and establish an Appointment Sub-Committee for a Head of Paid Service / Chief Executive Appointment, in accordance with paragraph 3.5 of Article 11 of the Constitution. This includes to delegate sufficient powers to that Sub-Committee to conduct the recruitment process, select and make a recommendation of a successful candidate to Full Council for approval of the appointment.

Background

4. The COO has been in post since November 2020. He was formerly the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Corporate Services from 2016 and prior to that was Director of Customer and Business Support Services 2008.

5. The following is the current structure of Corporate Management Team headed and managed by the COO. There is no proposed change to the structure prior to recruitment of a new Chief Executive / Head of Paid Services, however, it is likely that there would be expected to be a review of the layers beneath a Chief Executive to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for internal focus. There is, therefore, likely to be a review of Corporate Management Team on the appointment of a ChEx.



Options for Replacing the Chief Operating Officer

6. There is a range of options available to consider the replacement of the current COO / Head of Paid Services. It should be noted that there is not the option to 'do nothing' as there must be a Head of Paid Services. Options include:
- Replace like for like and recruit to a new Chief Operating Officer which will fulfil the role of Head of Paid Services
 - Replace with a Chief Executive (ChEx) which will fulfil the role of Head of Paid Services (Recommended)**
 - Do not replace the Chief Operating Officer role and designate an existing Chief Officer with the role of Head of Paid Services
 - Consider a shared Head of Paid Service with another Council on an interim or permanent basis.

7. The recommended option is **Option B**, replace the COO with a Chief Executive.
8. Whilst **Option A** is the current model, in practice the COO has operated as a Chief Executive as time and demands have evolved. The role implements the Executive's decisions including focus on long term goals, leads strategic and risk management of the Council, provides a clear vision of how the workforce can meet its objectives, provides leadership to the community and residents, is the principal advisor to elected members and works closely with the Executive to set the strategic direction of the Council and represent the council on external bodies.
9. It is suggested that in terms of attraction, more applicants will be drawn to a Chief Executive role and title than a COO role, and there is greater chance of an experienced Chief Executive or deputy Chief Executive showing interest in a chief executive role.
10. In the current climate of local government reorganisation and devolution, there may be current Chief Executives of smaller Councils interested in a new position and York has a good and attractive employer brand to its advantage.
11. **Option C** to designate an existing Chief Officer with the role of Head of Paid Services, would immediately require a restructure of the corporate management team to ensure capacity across the directorates is maintained. A Head of Paid Services designation must be a stand-alone statutory role and cannot be added to another statutory officer role. This option would mean recruiting to an existing Chief Officer role.
12. **Option D** is discounted as this option as this has not been explored to date and is not feasible given the timescales available. This option would have wider implications for both on the workforce and political structure.

Chief Executive Role Versus a Chief Operating Officer

13. CYC formerly appointed a ChEx up to March 2020. In response to national and local events, the former Administration created and adopted a Leader model, when the ChEx post became vacant. This model meant the (former) Leader would be more outwardly focused in place of a Chief Executive, and a COO would be appointed to strengthen the internal focus as it was forecasted that strong leadership would be needed ahead of the emerging COVID challenge alongside other key impacts of Brexit, climate change commitment, York Central and other large infrastructure projects which were all on the horizon. As such, a COO model was created and other chief officers and senior members would take more responsibility for external activities and specifically the responsibility for representing the Council's interests at a local, regional and national level.
14. The COO has successfully navigated the workforce and the City through these projects and is now presented with new challenges such as the Combined Authority, changing partner dynamics, changing demand in our social care services and an ambitious economic and regeneration agenda. As time has moved on, we were faced with a need for a different focus and leadership of the workforce to meet the new challenges. This includes working differently and collegiately with our key city partners to deliver success.
15. The pending retirement of the current COO has given the opportunity to reflect on the current model, how the current COO is operating as a Chief Executive, the future as well as reflecting on the tones and feedback of the 2024 peer challenge reports which observed the need to be more outwardly focussed and build on the existing good partner relationships and joint opportunities. Great steps and progress have been taken to do this, and the COO has undertaken this role. This is led through strong visible leadership working side by side with the Executive to show a united and responsive Council team to deliver the ambitions for the City and our residents.

Remuneration Package

16. The Committee is asked to confirm the pay package for this post which will be offered as part of the recruitment process.
17. There remains a Chief Executive pay structure and salary range, albeit, dormant and not used. The pay structure is, therefore, not new. The salary ranges from £154,693 to £172,308 (the Chief Executive band includes an additional 3 increments to the COO range). The 2025/26 pay award is also pending and remains subject to national pay bargaining negotiations. The role has a standby payment attached to it which equates to £19.95 per month for emergency standby rota.
18. The role will have access to the standard set of Chief Executive Terms and Conditions. It is also proposed that relocation costs may be reimbursed up to a maximum of £8,000 as per the council's policy which is line with HMRC rates. There are no enhancements, bonuses or additional discretions attached to the role.
19. There are very few Councils with a COO model, most have a Chief Executive model. Comparing CYC's Chief Executive salary band with similar sized Councils it is clear that the salary is competitive at the higher end of the salary band. It would, therefore, not be suggested that there is a need to review the salary range in the first instance, but the salary is promoted at the upper end of the range.

Council	Chief Executive Salary (pending 2025 pay award)
City of York (population 202,800)	Up to £172,308
Stockton Borough Council (population 196,595)	£173,252
North Tyneside Council (population 208,967)	£168,104
Calderdale Council (population 206,631)	£163,196

(To note for comparison COO max salary is £163,499)

Appointments Committee

20. As noted above, the Council's Constitution allows for the Staffing Matters and Urgency Committee to establish an Appointments Committee, including at least one member of the Executive, to interview applicants for a Chief Executive post. There will also be various panels as part of the selection process, prior to the Appointments Committee making a recommendation to Executive and then Full Council. Full Council will consider agreeing the appointment, in line with the Council's Constitution and statutory guidance for the appointment of a Head of Paid Service.
21. To attract the strongest field of candidates with the right knowledge and skills there will be a need for a dedicated experienced head hunt exercise and arrangements will be made to appoint a specialist executive recruitment agency. Officers will, however, be preparing a microsite and the recruitment campaign packs. It is anticipated that an exercise of this nature will cost in the region of £25k to £30k, quotes will be obtained, and procurement processes will be followed.

Proposed Timetable

22. Subject to approval of the Committee it is proposed that the following timetable will be followed as closely as possible but may be subject to change depending on availability to key officers and stakeholders involved in the recruitment and appointment process.

Activity	Planned date
Recruitment Campaign live w/c 28 th July or 4 th August running to 1 st September	w/c 28 th or 4 th August to 1 st September
Longlisting w/c 8 th September –	w/c 8 th September
Shortlisting w/c 15 th September	w/c 15 th September
Various Panel interviews w/c 22 nd September	w/c 22 nd September
Final Interview w/c 29 th September	w/c 29 th September
Executive to be given option for any objections to recommended candidate (5 working days)	w/c 29 th September
Appointment made subject to Full Council approval – to remain confidential, pre-employment checks to commence	w/c 29 th September
Full Council approval required for appointment of New ChEx	Date to be confirmed following SMUC in July
Following approval from Full Council successful candidate will be formally appointed and will give notice period	October / November
Onboarding and handover with start date expected to be Easter 2026	March / April 2026

Council Plan

23. Making an appointment to the Head of Paid Service post will contribute to delivering the Council Plan and its priorities as well as ensuring that the Council remains statutory compliant.

Implications

24. The following implications have been considered:

- **Financial and procurement** - The cost of associated recruitment will be managed within existing departmental budgets as is common practice. The cost for the proposed salary is forecast to be a maximum of £220.5k which includes oncosts. The COO staffing costs (including oncosts) are currently £208.3k. The difference between the COO and Chief Executive roles (£12.2k) will be made from existing budgets.
- **Human Resources (HR)** – The job description for the post will be submitted and subjected to the council's established job evaluation mechanism and reflects the national job evaluation framework for Chief Executives. The Appointments Committee is in line with the constitutional requirements for the recruitment and appointment of Chief Officers and the appointment will be carried out in accordance with the Chief Officer recruitment protocol.
- **Equalities** - There are no specific equalities implications relating to the impact of this report.
- **Legal** – The approach in this report seeks to ensure that the Council continues to meet its statutory requirements as set out in the Constitution. Under section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council is required to designate an Officer as the Head of Paid Service

All Chief Officer posts are politically restricted pursuant to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

In addition, the recruitment must be carried out in accordance with the provisions of [Part II](#) of Schedule 1 to The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 (as amended).

Risk Management

25. The risk of no or a delayed appointment could risk delivery against the Council Plan and its priorities. Should there not be a suitable candidate to appoint, further options will be presented to the Committee for recommendation to Full Council.

Recommendations

26. It is recommended that the Committee:
- a. approves the recruitment of a Chief Executive as a replacement of the Chief Operating Officer following the early notification that the post holder intends to retire at Easter 2026 **(paragraphs 6 to 15)**.
 - b. confirms the pay package for the role of Chief Executive to allow the post to be advertised **(paragraphs 16 to 19)**.
 - c. establishes an Appointments Sub-Committee for the role. To delegate sufficient powers to the Sub-Committee enabling them to conduct the recruitment process, select and appoint a candidate, subject to the requirements of the standing orders on appointment **(paragraphs 3 and 20)**.
 - d. approves the engagement of an executive recruitment consultant to undertake an executive search to aid the recruitment process, this process will follow procurement processes **(paragraph 21)**.
 - e. Notes the proposed timetable for the recruitment campaign **(paragraph 22)**.

Reason: To allow timely appointment to the Head of Paid Services / Chief Executive in line with the council's Constitution and relevant legislation, as well as to ensure that there is a handover and seamless transition of leadership when the Chief Operating Officer retires.

Contact Details

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Chief Officer Responsible for the Report

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Report
Approved

✓

Date 3 July 2025

Specialist Implications Officer(s):

Bryn Roberts – Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer
Debbie Mitchell – Director of Finance

Wards Affected : List all wards or tick box to indicate all

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None.

Annexes:

None.