

Leadership arrangements for Children's Social Care

Report from the County Solicitor and the Chief Executive

Recommendation: that the Committee:

- (a) Endorse the permanent appointment of the current temporary Head of Children's Social Care with immediate effect to permanently fill the role of Head of Children's Social Care without a further recruitment campaign.
- (b) Agree the continuation of the 20k market supplement for the role.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Appointments and Remuneration Committee were unable to recruit directly to the Head of Children's Social Work, following a third recruitment process held in November 2016. Therefore, an Executive Search and Selection agency was contacted.
- 1.2 The current temporary post holder, introduced by the Executive Search & Selection agency, accepted the role on a fixed term contract. This commenced on the 4th December 2017 for a 2 year period and will expire on the 4th December 2019.
- 1.3 The improvements made within Children's Social Work must be sustained and the post holder will need to continue to ensure that the service attains a 'good' outcome in the next stage of the Improvement process. It is critical for both service delivery and the workforce that there is leadership stability.

2. The Current Position

- 2.1 Nationally, there is a shortage of experienced candidates for permanent senior leadership positions in Children's Services. The challenge for Devon has been identifying a candidate with the right level of skills, experience and a proven track record of delivery, in a post at this level, which enables Devon to continue to deliver the service improvement agenda against the future financial challenges for the Authority.
- 2.2 The previous 5 occasions where the Council has attempted to conduct a permanent recruitment and selection process, has resulted in no applicants applying for the role, despite significant costs being spent on the attraction campaigns. Approx. £6000 was spent in the April 2017 campaign.
- 2.3 An appointment to the role was made in May 2017 via a recruitment agency, however, the candidate didn't perform at the level required and left after 5 months period by mutual agreement.

- 2.4 Although the interim market appears buoyant, it is lacking candidates with a proven track record and experience of operating at the required level in a Council of Devon's size. Feedback from other Councils is consistent in that they are struggling to recruit and, in some cases, have recruited weak interims. Recent research of agency rates for interims operating at the required level has been undertaken and the majority of interims are seeking a minimum of £900 per day. This equates to £234,000 per annum.
- 2.5 The current salary for the permanent role is £100,825 per annum. Following a benchmark exercise via the e-paycheck system, which is a national database of all councils' salary information, it has been identified that there are several councils paying a higher basic salary than Devon. E-paycheck does not give information about market supplements being paid in addition to the published salary.
- 2.6 The current temporary Head of Children's Social Care commenced his employment with DCC on 4th December 2017, on a 2 year fixed term contract, which expires on 4th December 2019. The post holder was introduced to the Council by an Executive Search & Selection agency, as no applicants applied directly to the Council, through the recruitment campaign. The Executive Search & Selection agency charged £23,770 for the introduction. The current post holder is paid the £100,825 salary plus an annual market supplement of £20,000.
- 2.7 The current post holder, Darryl Freeman, was appointed following a recruitment process that involved a young person's interview panel, psychometric tests, an interview with a psychologist, written and numerical tests and a formal interview with the portfolio lead for Children's Services, and 2 Chief Officers.
- 2.8 A Market Supplement can be attached to a role where recruitment and retention difficulties have been experienced and can be evidenced. It is payable for a 12 month period subject to normal deductions and should be reviewed annually. If market conditions were to change the postholder is given 12 months notice of the supplement ceasing.
- The market supplement is necessary for Devon's post to be competitive in this challenging market, with the shortages of strong fields of candidates, that is being experienced and reported nationally.
- 2.9 It is proposed that to continue to provide robust and effective leadership and continuity and sustainability to enable Devon to continue its improvement journey, the current post holder covering the Head of Children's Social Care role, should be offered a permanent contract without a further recruitment campaign. The offer should be made on the same terms to include the annual market supplement. This will provide the stability Devon requires and in a period of austerity, avoid additional costs of attraction campaigns and/or executive search fees, that will unlikely produce the calibre of candidate that we are seeking.
- 2.10 This proposal has been discussed with the recognised Trade Unions and they understand the reasons behind the proposal. There are occasions when a fixed term contract is changed to a permanent contract. This proposal meets the criteria. i.e. the performance of the post holder is satisfactory, there is not a suitable candidate on the redeployment register, at the initial appointment there was a formal recruitment process and the TU's have been informed.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Appointments and Remuneration Committee endorse the proposal.

**Jan Shadbolt, County Solicitor &
Phil Norrey, Chief Executive**

Electoral Divisions: All

Contact for enquiries: Jacky Wilson

Telephone: 01392 383000

Email: jacky.wilson@devon.gov.uk