

**OPEN – Report and Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 5**

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION - Appendix 4**

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1 and 2 of Part 1 Schedule 1 of the Local Government Act

**Appointments Committee**

**24 February 2025**

**Recruitment and Selection for the Executive Director Children's Services (DCS)**

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**Report of: Rob Polkinghorne, Chief Executive**

**Report Reference No: AP/09/24-25**

**Ward(s) Affected: All**

**Purpose of Report**

- 1 To update on the recruitment and selection arrangements for tranche 2 of the senior leadership recruitment and selection campaign.
- 2 To provide a longlist of candidates for further assessment as part of the recruitment and selection to the post of Executive Director Children's Services (DCS)
- 3 The report contributes to the delivery of Council services through the recruitment to a key vacant senior leadership post.

**Executive Summary**

- 4 The report provides an update on the current recruitment and selection process for the posts of Executive Director Children's Services (DCS)
- 5 This post has been advertised inviting applications from suitably qualified and experienced candidates, supported by Starfish, the recruitment partner for the process.
- 6 The report notes the recruitment and selection process to date and next steps as well as requesting delegation to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Appointments Committee, to finalise the assessment and formal interview arrangements.
- 7 The Appointments Committee is requested to consider the applications received, and

- 7.1 provide a longlist of candidates to progress to the assessment of technical ability and potential suitability for the posts of Executive Director Children's Services (DCS).
- 7.2 are updated on the progress of other recruitment activity relating to the structure that is not subject to the Appointments Committee process.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Appointments Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the recruitment and selection process to date, including the indicative framework for the further assessment and formal interview arrangements.
2. Delegate responsibility to finalise the assessment and formal interview arrangements to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Appointments Committee.
3. Approve a longlist of applicants from the information provided in the Part 2 Appendix 4 for the post of Executive Director Children's Services (DCS) for the technical assessment stages of the recruitment and selection process.

## Background

- 8 On 16 October 2024, Full Council approved the Phase 1 senior leadership structure following consultation with the trade unions and affected employees.
- 9 On 11 December 2024, Full Council agreed a proposed change to the senior leadership structure for Children's Services, subject to prior consultation with all parties affected by the decision, including any Trade Unions. The outcome of this consultation in January 2025 was to have a three-director structure following a review of capacity of the Children's Services senior leadership structure as part of the work being undertaken to implement the improvement and impact action plan which has identified the need for an additional permanent director post to ensure an effective leadership structure.
- 10 The overall Phase 1 final senior leadership structure can be seen in Appendix 1.
- 11 The new structure provides the capacity and stability to enable the strategic and operational leadership to address fiscal pressures and to lead the organisation through necessary change.
- 12 There are currently 15 senior leadership posts being recruited in Phase 1 which are being undertaken in two tranches to manage this campaign effectively and efficiently. These are shown in Appendix 2.

- 13 In line with the constitution, the Appointments Committee undertakes the recruitment and selection process to appoint the Executive Director Children's Services (DCS) as this post is a Statutory Director.
- 14 Starfish continues to be the executive search agency supporting the recruitment and selection process for these senior leadership vacancies.

#### Recruitment and Selection Process

- 15 The job advertisement was published on 14 January 2025 and closes on Sunday, 16 February 2025. The job description is shown in Appendix 3.
- 16 Applications from suitably qualified and experienced candidates were invited, supported by Starfish, the recruitment partner for the process.
- 17 The candidates' CVs and supporting statements can be found in Appendix 4.
- 18 Appendix 4 is Part 2 and is exempt from publication in accordance with Chapter 3, Part 2, Paragraph 24 under the categories 'Information relating to any individual' and 'Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual'. The public in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information as this
- maintains the council's confidential recruitment process to ensure that it can recruit the best candidate for the role, and
  - ensures the candidates' personal data is protected and there is no breach of data protection, and
  - does not undermine the recruitment process.
- 19 The Appointments Committee is requested to carefully consider all applications, in the form of CVs and supporting statements, and to agree on a longlist of candidates for the post.
- 20 The longlisted candidates will undertake an assessment of their technical ability and potential suitability for the relevant posts with Starfish.

#### Next steps following longlisting and the completion of the technical assessment

- 21 At the subsequent shortlisting meeting on 19 March 2025, the Appointments Committee will receive feedback on each of the longlisted candidates for the post of Executive Director Children's Services (DCS) from Starfish. This information will enable the Appointments Committee to shortlist candidates for further assessment and formal interviews.
- 22 The formal interviews will take place on 25 March 2025.

- 23 The indicative framework for the further assessment and formal interview arrangements can be found in Appendix 5.
- 24 The Appointments Committee is asked to agree to delegate the finalising of the assessment and formal interview arrangements to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Appointments Committee.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

- 25 Not applicable.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 26 In accordance with the Constitution, the Appointments Committee is required to undertake the recruitment and selection process for these four senior leadership posts in accordance with the Employment Procedure Rules

### **Other Options Considered**

- 27 Not applicable.

### **Implications and Comments**

#### *Monitoring Officer/Legal*

- 28 On 16 October and 11 December 2024, Full Council approved the Phase 1 senior leadership structure with the additional new posts and salaries over £100,000 in line with Cheshire East Council's constitution. The Executive Director Children's Services (DCS) was an established post in the previous structure.
- 29 In line with the Cheshire East Council's constitution, the Appointments Committee is responsible for the recruitment and selection process to appoint the Executive Director Children's Services (DCS) as a Statutory Director.
- 30 A fair, transparent and objectively justified selection process with due regard to equality laws should be followed throughout the recruitment process to reduce the risk of potential legal challenge.

#### *Section 151 Officer/Finance*

- 31 On 16 October and 11 December 2024, Full Council approved the Phase 1 senior leadership structure with the additional new posts and salaries over £100,000 in line with Cheshire East Council's constitution.
- 32 The post of Executive Director Children's Services (DCS) referred to in this latest report will be budgeted from 1 April 2025 and included in the MTFS and budget for the 2025/26 onwards.
- 33 The Council report noted that "there is a small difference between costs of the current structure versus the final structure, reflecting small variances in grading

between temporary and permanent arrangement. These costs would need to be managed by the relevant services areas as would normally be case when appointing at a spot salary". This remains the case.

- 34 The budget for further stages of the senior leadership restructure will need to be confirmed on a case by case basis.

#### *Policy*

- 35 The recruitment to this post is key to the Council's need to provide capacity and leadership within the Senior Leadership Team to meet the current fiscal challenges and to deliver its transformation programme.

#### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

- 36 There are no direct equality implications.
- 37 All equality considerations will be taken into account as part of the recruitment process for these senior leadership posts.

#### *Human Resources*

- 38 Actions will be undertaken in accordance with the Constitution and appropriate HR policies and procedures.

#### *Rural Communities*

- 39 There are no direct implications for rural communities.

#### *Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)*

- 40 This is a significant appointment for positive impact of the lives and outcomes for Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

#### *Public Health*

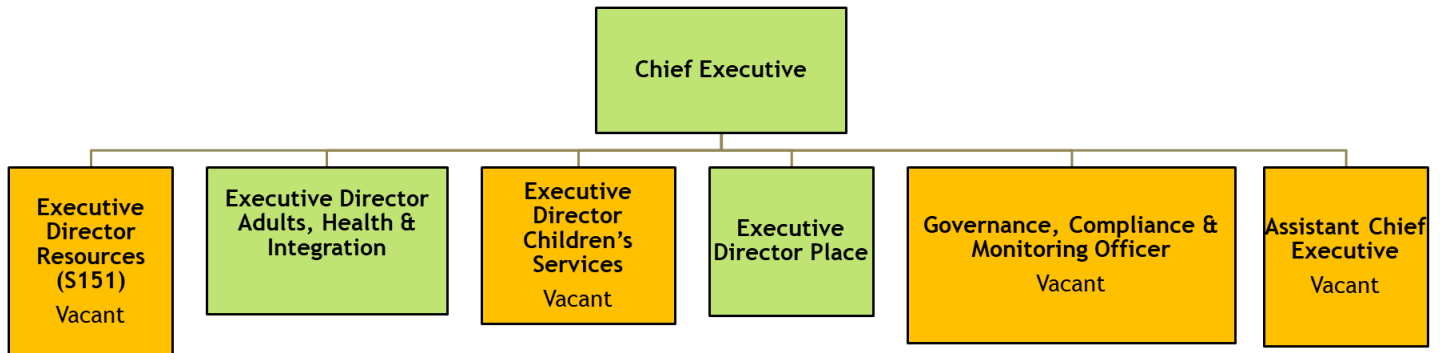
- 41 There are no direct implications for public health.

#### *Climate Change*

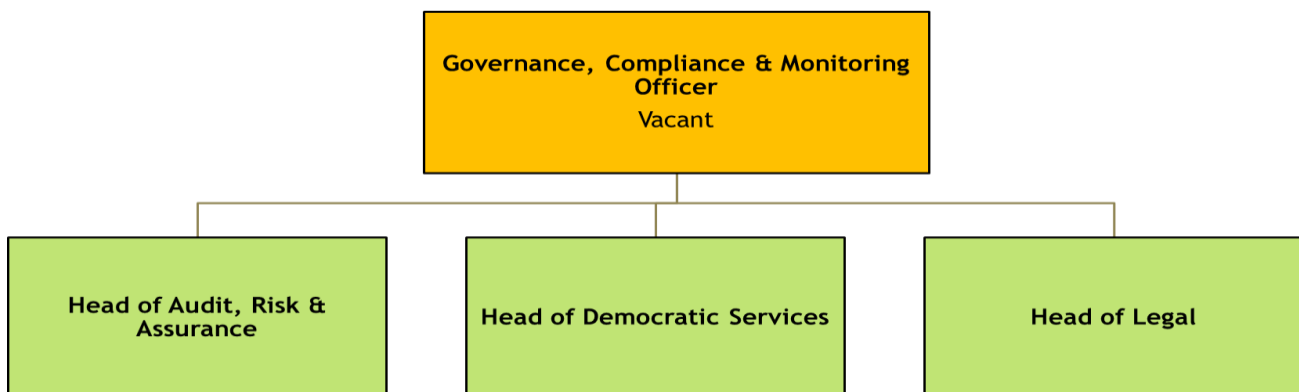
- 42 There are no direct implications for climate change.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Sara Duncalf, Head of Human Resources <a href="mailto:sara.duncalf@cheshireeast.gov.uk">sara.duncalf@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a>
Appendices:	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> Senior Leadership Structure Chart (Phase 1)</p> <p><b>Appendix 2</b> – Summary of recruitment and selection process to senior leadership posts (Phase1)</p> <p><b>Appendix 3</b> - Job Description and Person Specification for Executive Director Children’s Services (DCS)</p> <p><b>Appendix 4</b> – Part 2 Applicant CVs and supporting letters (to follow)</p> <p><b>Appendix 5</b> – Timetable for recruitment and selection activities and framework for assessment and final interviews</p>
Background Papers:	None

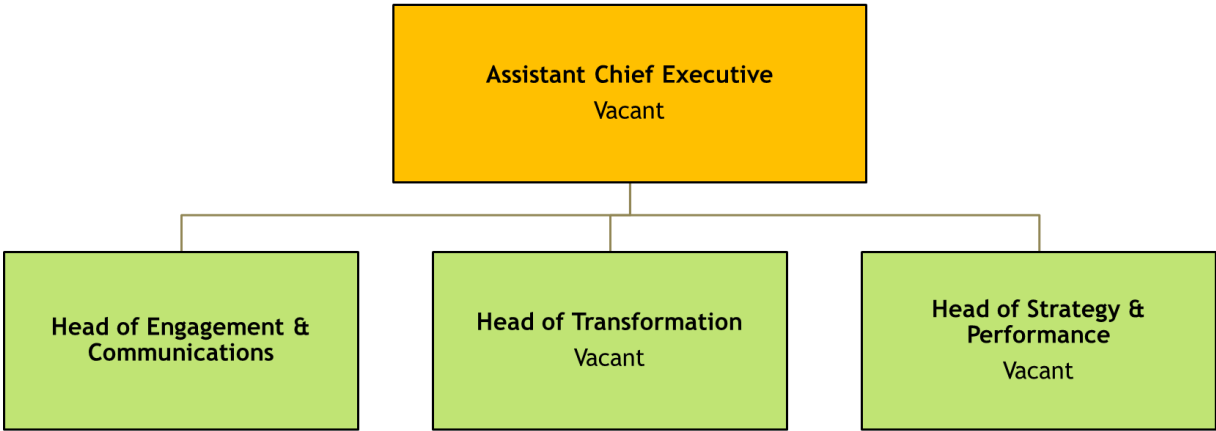
## Appendix 1 – Senior Leadership Structure Chart (Phase 1)



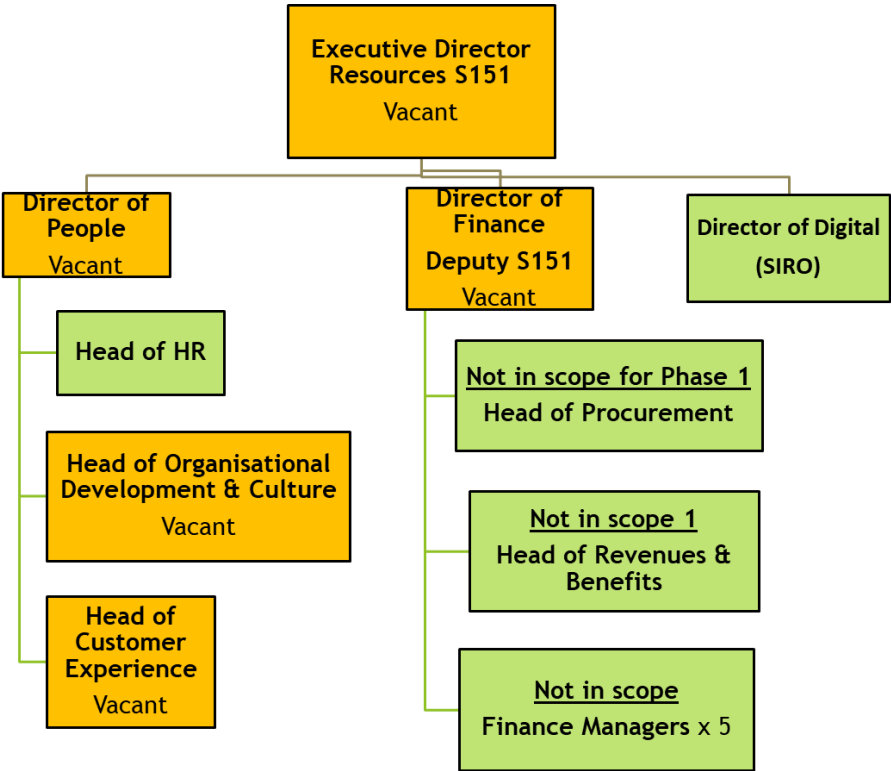
### Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer



# Assistant Chief Executive

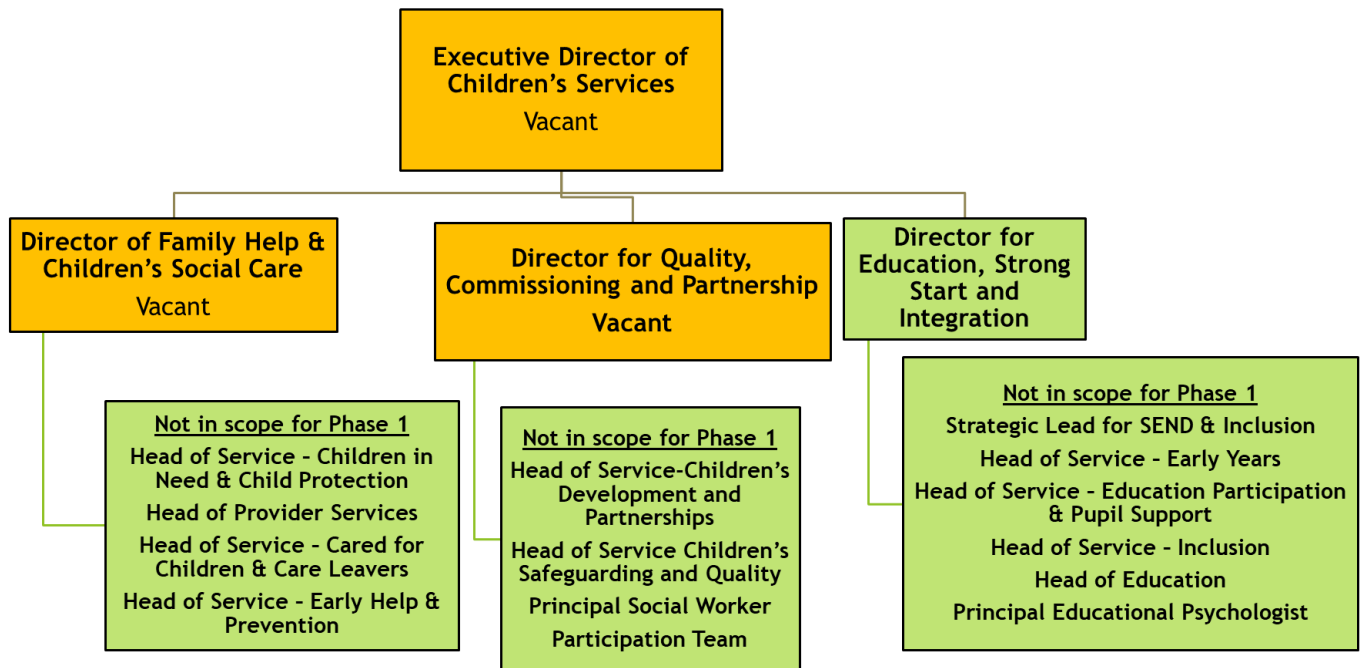


# Resources

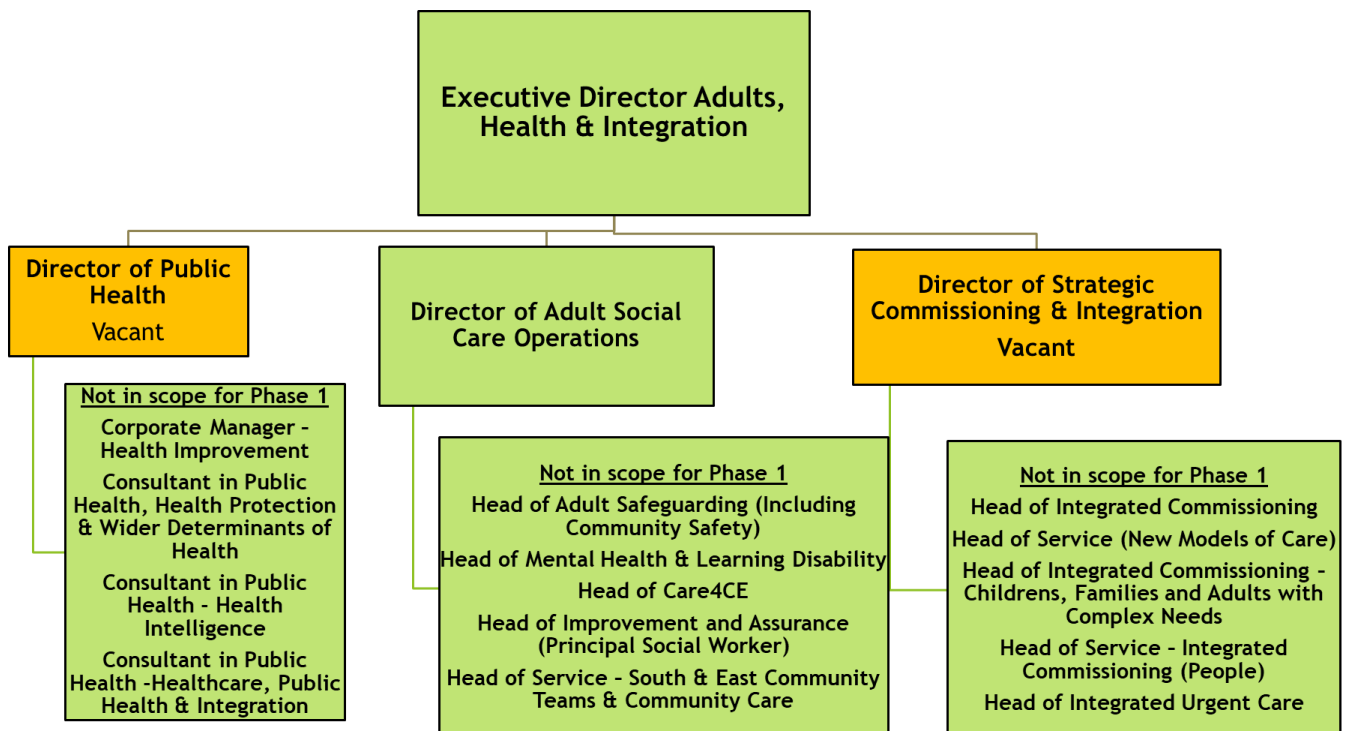




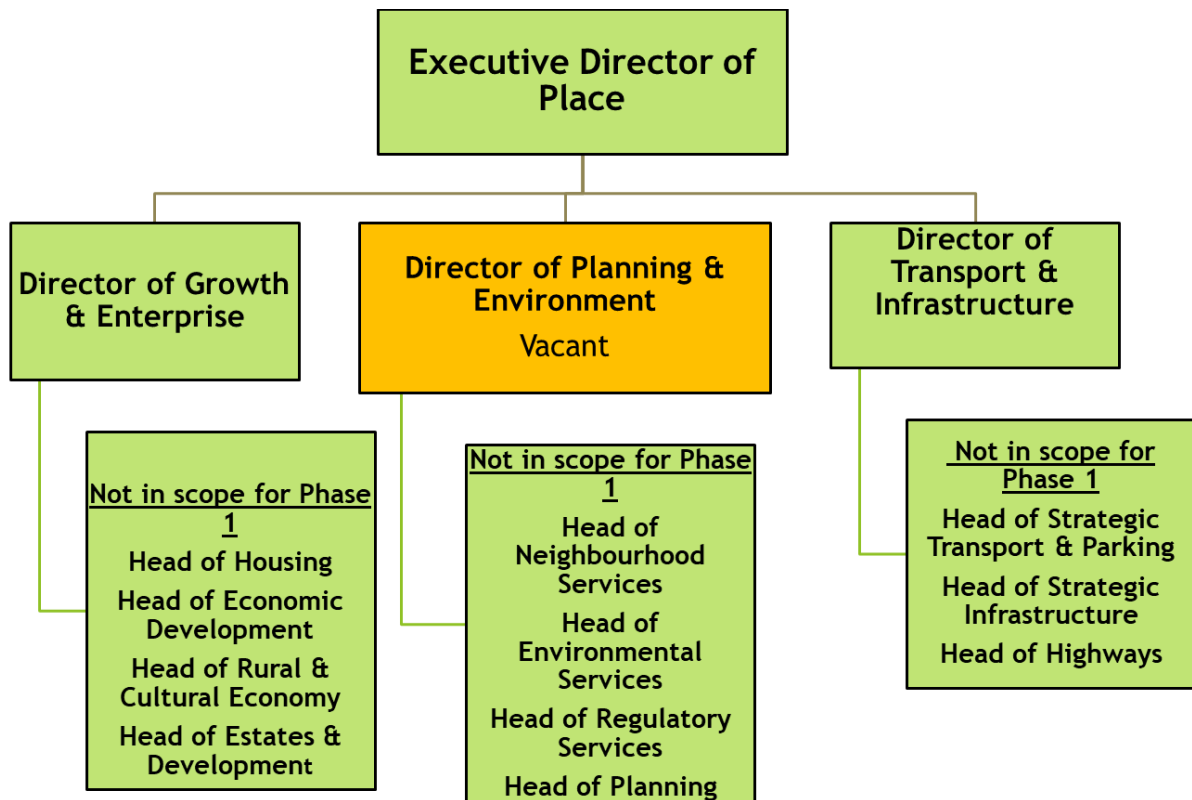
## Children's Services



## Adults and Health



## Place



## Appendix 2 – Summary of the recruitment and selection to 15 senior leadership posts (Phase 1)

Post	Tranche	Current Status (as at date of publication)
Executive Director Resources (and s151)	1	Interviews completed. The Appointments Committee is recommending the proposed candidate for approval at Full Council on 26 February 2025.
Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer	1	The Appointments Committee determined not to progress with the recruitment process.
Assistant Chief Executive	1	Interviews on 19 February 2025
Director of Public Health	1	Due to be readvertised
Director of People	1	Interviews on 18 February 2025
Director of Planning and Environment	1	Interviews on 17 February 2025
Executive Director Children's Services	2	Closing date: 16 February 2025
Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care	2	Closing date: 2 March 2025
Director of Commissioning, Quality Assurance and Partnerships (Children's)	2	Closing date: 2 March 202
Director of Commissioning and Strategy (Adults)	2	Closing date: 16 February 2025
Director of Finance (Deputy s151)	2	Closing date: 16 February 2025
Head of Customer Experience	2	Closing date: 23 February 2025
Head of Organisational Development and Culture	2	Closing date: 23 February 2025
Head of Strategy, Policy and Performance	2	Closing date: 23 February 2025
Head of Transformation	2	Closing date: 23 February 2025

## Appendix 3 - Job Description

# Job Description and Specification



Working for a *brighter future* together

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<b>Job Title:</b>	Executive Director Children's Services
<b>Reference:</b>	CE115
<b>Service:</b>	Directorate – Children's Services
<b>Grade:</b>	CX
<b>Reports to:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>Location:</b>	Delamere House, Crewe with travel to Macclesfield Town Hall and other locations within Cheshire East.
<b>DBS Check:</b>	Enhanced with Child Barred List

## Your job

Support the Chief Executive in the overall leadership and leadership of the Council to ensure the effective delivery of Council priorities and strategy.

As a member of the Corporate Leadership Team, to play a critical role in driving up performance and efficiency across the Council and its partnerships for the benefit of residents, and to work effectively with lead Members and Council officers to help continuously improve both service and individual performance.

Be accountable for the effectiveness, availability, and value for money of social care and education services to children and young people, effectively leading, co-ordinating, and supporting the activities of Council services in order to fulfil the Council's overarching strategic objectives and goals.

Provide effective leadership to secure the necessary changes to culture and practice to establish the Children & Families Directorate so that services are organised around children and young people's needs.

Build and lead effective joint working arrangements and partnerships with and between other providers and agencies in order to focus resources jointly on improving outcomes for children and young people.

Contribute to the formulation and delivery of the Council's policy objectives and plans to help to deliver the Council's vision and values.

Fulfil the statutory role of Director of Children's Services.

### **In this job you will**

1. Act as the Council's statutory Director of Children's Services and principal adviser on all aspects of safeguarding and services to children, young people and schools to ensure that the Council meets its statutory responsibilities and provides a coherent and responsive approach to identifying and meeting local needs.
2. Actively contribute, support and articulate the creation of the longer term vision, strategy and priorities of the Council through identifying, developing and implementing new ways to reduce the cost of services to taxpayers and improve their overall productivity and value for money to service users through a range of approaches. This will include the strategic re-design of services and their costs, the use of business and operational process improvements, the smarter use of supply, the better use of demand leadership, improved asset leadership and through the effective use of technology.
3. Develop and articulate a clear vision for co-ordinated services to children and young people in Cheshire East and provide a framework and common sense of purpose in order to commission an effective shared programme of joined-up and accessible service delivery which keeps children and young people at the centre.
4. To work closely with all elected Members and support them in undertaking their Strategic Leadership and Community Leadership roles effectively, by providing expert strategic advice and helping them hold local public service providers to account for delivery performance and outcomes.
5. Provide leadership in the development of cross-organisational and multi-disciplinary team working, across boundaries with other agencies and partners, (voluntary and other public sector organisations) to deliver more cost effective,

quality and valued services for children and young people and solve problems in a coherent and integrated manner.

6. Develop and embed a performance culture that delivers results in terms of better outcomes for local people through rigorous open challenge, personal accountability, disciplined execution, and continual improvement
7. Ensure that effective risk leadership arrangements are in place to maximise the ability to identify and take up opportunity, and to minimise the Council's exposure to risk and uncertainty, whilst encouraging creative thinking and innovative practice.
8. Ensure the establishment and review of resilient business continuity arrangements, and robust response and recovery arrangements in the event of emergencies and critical incidents locally – in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Emergency and Business Continuity Plans.
9. Ensure that all services/functions are delivered within budget and savings required are identified and delivered.
10. Support, encourage and enable collaborative, shared accountability and multi-agency working, in partnership with a wide range of other local service providers, to deliver better quality of life outcomes for children and young people efficiently and effectively.
11. Assure the quality of services delivered (whether by the Council or in an integrated manner with partner or contracted agencies) through robust leadership arrangements including clarity of accountability, effective commissioning and monitoring and re-allocation of resources as necessary.
12. Lead the work of partner agencies to establish strategic priorities for children and young people, aligning resources of all partner agencies with agreed priorities through the Children and Young People's Plan, establishing and developing information sharing and referral protocols, monitoring performance against agreed activities to ensure that the strategy is implemented.
13. Champion the rights of children and young people and implement effective frameworks and strategies to improve overall standards and improve the health, safety, wellbeing, and quality of life for all children and young people in Cheshire East.
14. Support and provide leadership to schools and Head Teachers and ensure effective arrangements for school improvement in order to drive up standards,

encourage collaborative working and improve outcomes for children and young people.

15. Recruit, manage, motivate and develop employees in the Directorate, ensuring their health, safety and well-being at work, in order to ensure all aspects of service delivery are provided to the highest possible standard.
16. Develop and implement effective communication and engagement strategies with children and young people, stakeholders, employees, partner agencies and other Directorates so that all can understand and fulfil their roles in the delivery of effective services.
17. Contribute pro-actively to the national debate to shape and influence the direction of children and young people's services nationally and keep abreast of developments within local government and elsewhere to evaluate creative and radical solutions to problems and promote best practice.

**From time to time you may be asked to undertake work as may be determined by the Chief Executive and/or an Executive Director. This will be up to or at a level that is consistent with your job role. This supports our joint commitment in our employee deal to work together as one team and one council to deliver the best service for our customers and communities.**

### **Statutory Function**

Section 18 of the Children Act 2004 requires every top tier local authority local authority to appoint a Director of Children's Services.

The DCS role:

- Has professional responsibility for the leadership, strategy, and effectiveness of local authority children's services.
- Is responsible for securing the provision of services which address the needs of all children and young people, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers.
- In discharging these responsibilities, the DCS will work closely with other local partners to improve the outcomes and well-being of children and young people.
- Is responsible for the performance of local authority functions relating to the education and social care of children and young people.
- Is responsible for ensuring that effective systems are in place for discharging these functions, including where a local authority has commissioned any services from another provider rather than delivering them itself.
- Should have regard to the General Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and ensure that children and young people are involved in the development and delivery of local services.

## In this job you will need

You must be able to demonstrate the following essential requirements:

- Degree qualification or equivalent
- Completion of a structured leadership development programme.
- Personal commitment to continuous professional development and improvement.
- Proven track record of reforming services to align them with the needs of customers and communities
- Experience of delivering successful new service delivery models
- Evidence of establishing a performance leadership culture, including service planning, target setting, performance and appraisal and the leadership of diverse staff groups.
- Experience and demonstrable success in the generation and leadership of major organisational and cultural change.
- A track record of working in and forging successful partnerships at all levels, including sub-regionally, to successfully deliver cross sector projects.
- A proven track record of working effectively within a political environment, across political groups, providing clear, balanced advice and guidance on strategic issues.
- Senior experience in the leadership of Children and Young People services to inspire others with a compelling vision of the future underpinned by operational detail.
- Able to demonstrate and apply innovative thinking and judgement to initiate and support change, to take action, to meet targets and achieve desired outcomes
- Ability to cope with ambiguity, uncertainty and pressure and be able to work under public scrutiny.
- Skills in dealing effectively with issues of major public, political and media interest.
- High levels of leadership, communication, interpersonal skills, and experience of managing in a political environment.
- Ability to role-model the leadership values of the Council with residents and staff.
- Ability to propose, develop and implement effective strategies in pursuit of agreed goals and to make clear, informed, appropriate and timely decisions.
- Highly developed networking, advocacy, written, oral and presentation skills to relate effectively to employees, specialist managers, Council Members, the public and other stakeholders, to command their respect, trust, and confidence.
- Ability to actively engage with people at all levels of the organisation on issues that really matter to them.
- Must be able to facilitate constructive, frank dialogue and manage conflict.
- Knowledge of legislation and national and local developments affecting the services managed, and the Council as a whole.
- Substantial expertise in financial and budgetary leadership with the ability to formulate financial strategy that really constitutes value for money and puts the customer at the heart of all financial decisions.
- Strong sense of accountability; taking ownership of mistakes and ensuring lessons are learnt.
- The ambition and drive to motivate and work with others in an enthusiastic and determined way to create a flagship authority.



- Willingness to assess and take appropriate risks, proportionate to the relevant service.
- Strong commitment to probity, honesty, and openness in dealing with others.
- High level of personal resilience and ability to manage competing priorities in a high-pressure environment.
- Professional personal presentation and a level of self-awareness and emotional intelligence that helps build rapport and credibility, and trust and confidence
- Ability to challenge others constructively and improve others' performance through coaching / mentoring skills
- Ability to design and deliver services that meet the needs of a diverse population.
- Understanding and record of achievement in promoting diversity and equality of opportunity in employment and service delivery.

## Our culture

For us, it is not just about our achievements as an organisation, but about how we do it. At Cheshire East Council we are working for a brighter future together –

- **We have a shared purpose**
- **We are supported and well led**
- **We are treated fairly and highly valued**
- **We succeed together**

This is all underpinned in our employee deal and everyone is expected to uphold their commitments by living by our values and demonstrating our behaviours.

## Our values

**Flexibility:** adaptable, open to learning and resilient

**Innovation:** creative, challenges convention and always looks to improve

**Responsibility:** delivers on promises, efficient and has integrity

**Service:** listens, delivers quality, is reliable and enables others

**Teamwork:** respectful, inclusive and contributes at all levels

## Employee deal

### Our COMMITMENT

#### Shared purpose

- Provide a safe and positive working environment
- Setting clear performance objectives with realistic timescales for delivery
- Having fair and efficient policies and procedures in place and applying them consistently
- Listen, respond and act appropriately when you tell us about something that is inappropriate or wrong

#### Well led

- Provide honest, respectful, and responsible leadership
- Be fair, consistent, and timely in our decision making
- Work with you, enabling you to do your best work every day with the right resources, tools, and technology

#### Valued people

- Have regular, useful team meetings, keep you informed and provide an opportunity for everyone to share their views
- Treat you as individuals, be respectful, flexible and supportive
- Care for your health and well-being
- Provide you with regular, meaningful and constructive feedback on your performance through one-to-ones and performance review meetings

#### Succeeding together

- Offer you opportunities for learning and developing

### Your COMMITMENT

#### Shared purpose

- Bring a positive and can-do attitude into work
- Be proactive and always responsive to our customers and communities
- Work responsibly and ask for help if you need it
- Tell us if you see or experience anything that is inappropriate or wrong

#### Well led

- Be honest and reliable
- Get involved, keep informed, make suggestions and share your ideas
- Embrace technology and new ways of working

#### Valued people

- Participate fully and make helpful contributions to team meetings
- Be respectful of others and work flexibly and collaboratively with colleagues and partners
- Care for your health and well-being enabling you to maximise your attendance at work
- Value helpful constructive feedback and act upon it

#### Succeeding together

- Take the opportunity to learn and develop

- Recognise and value your hard work and contribution
- Work together as one team and one council to deliver the best service for our customers and communities
- Be supportive and appreciate others
- Work together as one team and one council to deliver the best service for our customers and communities



## Appendix 5 – a) Timetable for Recruitment and Selection Process for Executive Director Children’s Services

Date / Timescales	Activity	Who
16/02/2025	Closing Date for applications	Starfish Recruitment
24/02/2025	<b>Appointments Committee</b> Longlisting	Appointments Committee (AC) / Chief Exec / Head of HR / Starfish
Dates tbc	Technical Interview	Starfish / Technical Assessor
19/03/2025 (9.30am – 10.30am)	<b>Appointments Committee</b> Shortlisting	AC / Chief Exec / Director of People / Head of HR / Penna
24 or 25/03/2025 (tbc)	Assessment Centre Activity	
25/03/2025	<b>Appointments Committee</b> Interviews, confirm candidates	AC / Chief Exec / Director of People / Head of HR / Starfish / Panels

## Appendix 5 – b) Indicative outline of Assessment Centre for shortlisted candidates to take place prior to formal interviews with Appointments Committee

Activity	
Meet the Chief Executive	Informal conversation
CLT and Direct Reports Panel	Structured conversation on a topic to be provided prior to attendance
Children and Young People’s Panel	Candidate to lead on a conversation to capture the voice of children and young people
External Stakeholders Panel	Interview questions
Members, Staff and Trade Union	Presentation on a topic to be provided prior to attendance