

Report for: Appointments Panel 31 March 2026 – Public report

Title: Proposed Fixed Term Appointment to the Post of Director of School and Learning

Report authorised by: Ann Graham – Corporate Director of Children’s Services

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Ward(s) affected: All

Report for: Non-Key Decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

This report seeks approval from the Appointments Panel to appoint directly to the post of Director of Schools and Learning on a Fixed-Term Contract (FTC).

The Council has undertaken two recruitment campaigns to fill this post on a permanent basis. Despite progressing candidates through the recruitment process, neither campaign resulted in a successful appointment. The most recent campaign has now closed.

Both recruitment exercises generated a limited pool of suitable candidates for this senior and strategically important role. Following the closure of the most recent campaign, a candidate with the appropriate experience, leadership capability and availability to undertake the role was identified. As the recruitment campaign had already concluded at the point this candidate became available, it was not possible to progress the appointment through the Council’s standard executive recruitment process.

To ensure a robust assessment process, a candidate was invited to attend a formal panel interview with Ann Graham – Corporate Director Children’s Services, Jane Edwards – Current Director of Schools and Learning, Cllr Brabazon – Councillor and Karen Ollermann – Strategic Lead to the Director, PS&I. This provided an opportunity to assess his experience, leadership capability and ability to deliver the strategic priorities associated with the role.

In addition to the panel interview, the candidate met separately with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to discuss the strategic leadership of the service and alignment with the Council’s wider priorities.

Through this process the candidate demonstrated the relevant leadership experience, sector knowledge and capability required to undertake the responsibilities of the Director of Schools and Learning role.

The matter is also time-sensitive and securing leadership stability within the service is therefore important to ensure continuity and minimise disruption within this critical area of work.

The Council does not intend to appoint to the role on a permanent basis at this stage. Instead, it is proposed that they are appointed on a Fixed-Term Contract for an initial period of 12 months, with the option to review and extend if required. This will enable the Council to provide leadership stability while reviewing the longer-term recruitment approach for the post.

This approach also provides a pragmatic and cost-effective solution, enabling the Council to secure experienced leadership for the service while avoiding the significantly higher costs typically associated with interim agency arrangements.

Director-level appointments fall within the remit of the Appointments Panel and must follow the governance requirements set out in Part 3, Section B of the Constitution.

If approved, the appointment will be made on the Council's Chief Officer Terms and Conditions.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

2.1 Not applicable.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Appointments Panel approve the direct appointment on a Fixed-Term Contract basis to the role of Director of Schools and Learning following a revised recruitment process due to exceptional circumstances detailed in the report.
- 3.2. The fixed-term arrangement provides service continuity while a refreshed strategy for permanent recruitment to the post is developed.
- 3.3. To approve the terms of the Fixed-Term Contract for an initial period of 12 months, with the option to extend for another period of 12 months if required.
- 3.4. To note that this approach is consistent with the Council's wider use of accelerated recruitment practice in exceptional circumstances, however in this case requires Member approval due to the seniority of the role.
- 3.5. The proposed salary for the FTC role will fall within the Council's HB1 pay band (£115,794 - £134,352), subject to agreement by the Appointments Committee.
- 3.6. The FTC arrangement remains in place while we review and reinstate the permanent recruitment campaign, thereby reducing the potential for considerably higher agency costs and ensuring a stable leadership presence.
- 3.7. Note in accordance with Part 4 Part K Paragraph 4 of the Constitution an offer of employment as a Director will only be made where
 - (a) no objection has been made by any member of the Cabinet, or
 - (b) if any objection is made, the Appointments Panel must declare itself satisfied that the objection is not material or well-founded.
- 3.8. Subject to 3.1, 3.3. and 3.5 above, delegated authority is sought to allow the Director of Childrens' Service to agree the salary point of appointment and the extension of any contract to a maximum of 2 years.

- 3.9. Subject to 3.1 above any appointment made will take effect when the appointed candidate accepts in writing the contract of employment offered to him/her by the Council.

4. Reason for decision

- 4.1. To fill a senior post in the Council's organisation structure which is responsible for leading the delivery of services within the accountabilities of the role.
- 4.2. The role is critical in Children and requires stable leadership, particularly as the current postholder has submitted their resignation and will be leaving the Council.
- 4.3. Securing an alternative interim agency arrangement would result in additional cost pressures and reduced organisational certainty.
- 4.4. The Council has already undertaken a permanent recruitment campaign without success [twice]. A full rerun of the process at this time would not be value for money.
- 4.5. This FTC offers a pragmatic and cost-effective solution while ensuring strategic leadership remains in place and is endorsed by the Chief People Officer.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1. To fill this role on a temporary interim basis. However, this would not be as cost effective nor offer the service the stability that of a fixed term appointment.

6. Background information

The Council initiated a permanent recruitment campaign for this role in September 2024 with the support of Faerfield as our recruitment partner. Despite progressing several candidates to technical assessment, the overall quality of applicants did not meet the Council's expectations for such a high-risk, strategic role. Rather than proceeding for the sake of process, the campaign was halted to avoid wasting time and resources.

Given the current financial climate and need for stability in this service area, we propose to appoint on a Fixed-Term Contract while we revisit the approach to permanent recruitment at a later stage.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1. The post of Director of Director of Schools and Learning is a key role and part of the strategic leadership of the Council, responsible for the delivery of Council priorities and the Borough Plan.

8. Statutory Officers' comments

Finance (including Procurement)

- 8.1. The cost of the post Director of Schools and Learning falls within the range set out above, can be met from the approved budget for this post.

Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)

- 8.2. A local authority shall appoint such officers as it thinks necessary for the proper discharge by the authority of such of their functions (section 112 Local Government Act 1972).

- 8.3. In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 (“the 2001 Regulations”) and Part 4 Section K of the Council’s Constitution, any proposed appointment to the post of a Director must be made by the Appointments Panel. In addition, the 2001 Regulations state that where a committee or a sub-committee of the council is discharging the function of appointment on behalf of the authority, at least one member of the Cabinet must be a member of that committee or sub-committee.
- 8.4. In accordance with the Part 4 Section K paragraph 4(c), that applies to the appointment of Directors, the offer of employment to the post of Director of Schools and Learning shall only be made where:
- (i) no objection has been made by any member of the Cabinet, or
 - (ii) if any objection is made, the Appointments Panel has declared itself satisfied that the objection is not material or well-founded.
- 8.5. In accordance with the Council’s Pay Policy Statement and Part 3 Section B of the Constitution, where it is proposed to appoint an officer and the proposed salary is £100,000 per annum or more, the Appointments Panel must consider and approve the proposed salary. The report refers to the salary band and seek delegated authority to the Director of Children to appointment the Director within band HB1.
- 8.6. Under section 7 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, every appointment to a paid office or employment to a Council post must be made on merit.

9. Use of Appendices

9.1. Not applicable.

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1. Not applicable.