

KENNET DISTRICT COUNCIL

Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 4th September 2007

APPOINTMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S SECTION 151 OFFICER

Report by the Director of Resources

1. Introduction

The purpose of the report is to explain the need for, and recommend the appointment of a new Section 151 Officer in place of the Director of Resources.

2. Financial Implications

If the recommendations made in this report are approved, then a new Section 151 Officer would have his duties subjected to job evaluation to determine the level of any pay increase, such increase to be met from within the existing revenue budget.

3. Staffing Implications

The staffing implications are discussed in detail in the body of the report.

4. Legal and Risk Management Implications

There are no legal or risk implications arising from the report.

5. Introduction

Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires local authorities to appoint an officer to be responsible for the proper financial administration of its affairs. Whatever their formal title, such officers are commonly also referred to as "the Section 151 officer". The requirement to appoint such an officer has been reinforced and extended in subsequent laws and regulations so that, for example, the Section 151 officer has to be a qualified accountant.

6. Background

The current Section 151 officer is the Director of Resources, who is retiring at the end of 2007. We could wait until his retirement to appoint a new Section 151 officer, but making the appointment now would achieve a number of things:

1. It would allow the person appointed to have a timely and orderly handover of responsibilities before the end of the year.

2. It would allow the Director of Resources to focus on managing the work of the Council generally.

The second point is significant in the light of the decision by the Government, (subject to approval of the relevant legislation) to proceed with unitary local government for Wiltshire.

Being free of Section 151 work the Director of Resources would be better able to:

1. Plug management gaps as senior staff leave or increase their work of preparing for the new authority.
2. Provide one senior manager whose role is unequivocally to look after the interests of the Kennet District Council, having no place in the new unitary council.

It should be stressed that an appointment of a new Section 151 officer does not prejudice any appointment of a new Director of Resources, the former is a statutory role, the latter is simply a post.

7. Appointment of Section 151 Officer

If the argument that the appointment of a new Section 151 officer should be made now rather than in a few months is accepted, then the obvious choice is the current Finance Services Manager, who is a qualified accountant with the necessary seniority and experience that the role requires.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

There are important advantages in appointing a Section 151 officer now rather than later in the year, and the Council is fortunate in having an eminently suitable individual for that position.

It is therefore **RECOMMENDED THAT:**

- (1) Mr. Andrew Hart be appointed as the Council's Section 151 officer with immediate effect; and**
- (2) the Chief Executive be granted delegated authority to agree any consequential change in salary following a job evaluation review by the Human Resources Services Manager.**

Director of Resources