



Report subject	<b>Recruitment of BCP Council Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service and Returning Officer</b>
Meeting date	3 June 2025
Status	Public Report (Appendix 1, Exempt)
Executive summary	<p>This report invites the Council to approve the appointment of Aidan Dunn to the position of BCP Council Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service in accordance with the Council's Constitution and statutory requirements.</p> <p>A summary of Aidan's skills, experience and employment history appears at Exempt Appendix 1 of this report.</p> <p>A copy of the job description for the post of BCP Council Chief Executive appears at Appendix 2 of this report.</p>
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p>Council approves the appointment of Aidan Dunn to the position of BCP Council Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service;</p> <p>To approve the appointment of Aidan Dunn as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer for the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole electoral area.</p>
Reason for recommendations	In accordance with the Council's Constitution and with primary legislation, the Council is required to appoint an officer to act in the position of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service. The Council is also required to appoint an officer to the role of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer for the purposes of all elections related activities across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Clr Millie Earl, Leader of the Council
Corporate Director	Graham Farrant, Chief Executive
Report Authors	<p>Sarah Deane, Director of People and Culture</p> <p>Janie Berry, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer</p>

	Jon Matthews, Head of Resourcing, Employee Relations & Change
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Decision

## Background

1. Following the announcement that Graham Farrant, current Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service at BCP Council is to retire on 31 August 2025, arrangements have been in place to recruit a successor to this role. Following a rigorous selection and interview process by a cross-party Appointment Panel, the preferred candidate, Aidan Dunn is recommended to take on the role as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service. It is also recommended that Aidan assumes the role of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.
2. Aidan is an accomplished and forward-thinking public sector leader with over three decades of experience spanning local government, the civil service and the NHS. Currently the Executive Director of Corporate Development at Dorset Council, he has played a pivotal role in establishing the new unitary authority, leading transformation programs, and overseeing the council's finances. His leadership has improved service delivery and fostered strong partnerships across sectors.

Aidan brings a wealth of expertise in finance, transformation, infrastructure, and customer services, underpinned by a deep commitment to community engagement, climate action, and inclusive leadership. He is a Chartered Public Finance Accountant.

A summary of his skills and career history is shown at Appendix 1.

3. A copy of the job description for this role is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.
4. Supported by Penna, a specialist Executive Recruitment Company, who was appointed to support the recruitment process, longlisted candidates attended a technical interview externally facilitated and those shortlisted attended a two-day assessment process held on 27 and 28 May 2025.
5. On 27 May 2025, candidates were invited to participate in a number of engagement sessions with a wide range of stakeholders including:

- Informal Member Engagement, this group comprised of Party Group Leaders and Chairs of Overview & Scrutiny committees
- Representatives from local business and public sector partners and other local stakeholders
- Members of Corporate Management Board
- Trade Union Representatives and Chairs of Staff Network Groups
- Community Engagement Panel, including representatives from our older community, residents from our council houses, and individuals with lived experiences of homelessness or food deprivation
- Young People's Panel

Each of the engagement sessions provided informal feedback in respect of each candidate to the Cross Party Appointment Panel.

6. On 28 May 2025, formal interviews took place with the Cross Party Appointment Panel. The Cross Party Appointment Panel comprised of:
- Cllr Millie Earl, Leader of the Council
  - Cllr Mike Cox, Deputy Leader
  - Cllr David Brown, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing
  - Cllr Kieron Wilson, Cabinet Member for Housing & Regulatory Services
  - Cllr Patrick Canavan, Leader of Labour Party
  - Cllr Phillip Broadhead, Leader of Conservative Party
  - Cllr Felicity Rice, Leader of Poole People Party

The Panel were supported by Sarah Deane, Director of People & Culture and Bernadette MacDonald-Raggett, Independent Observer who attended in a non-voting capacity.

## Options

7. Option 1: Council accepts the recommendation to appoint Aidan Dunn as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service as well as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer. A formal offer of appointment will then be made.
8. Option 2: Council, if it chooses, could reject the recommendation to appoint Aidan Dunn, in which case, a formal offer of appointment cannot be made. In the event this happens, Council will need to embark on a further recruitment activity to seek a replacement Chief Executive.

## Summary of financial implications

9. There are no financial implications arising from this report, as the role is within the current establishment budget.

## **Summary of legal implications**

10. In accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council is required to designate an officer as the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service. The appointment of the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service has taken place in accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules published in the Council's Constitution.
11. In accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Council is required to appoint an Officer as its Returning Officer and BCP Council has determined that the Returning Officer appointment shall sit with the Chief Executive. The appointment of Electoral Registration Officer usually sits alongside the role of the Returning Officer.
12. Council is required to approve the recommendation of the appointment to the role of Chief Executive and Returning Officer prior to a formal offer of appointment being made to the preferred candidate.

## **Summary of Human Resources Implications**

13. The Constitution requires Chief Officer roles to be advertised in such a way as is likely to bring it to the attention of persons who are qualified to apply for them. This Chief Executive role was advertised in the Municipal Journal (the MJ) and the Guardian to ensure the council attracted the widest pool of applicants. In addition, Penna, an established executive search company was appointed to support the recruitment drive and ensure that a wide pool of potential candidates was approached and attracted to the role.
14. Should Council decide not to accept the recommendation to approve the appointment of this preferred candidate, the Director of People and Culture will need to provide advice on alternative recruitment activity to appoint a Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service.

## **Summary of sustainability impact**

15. There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **Summary of public health implications**

16. There are no public health implications arising from this report.

## **Summary of equality implications**

17. Candidates were assessed using objective assessment criteria. The selection process was observed by an independent observer who participated in the whole process from shortlisting through to selection. The process included engagement with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure it was inclusive, as detailed within this report.

## **Summary of risk assessment**

18. There are no increased risks arising from this report.

## **Background Papers**

19. BCP Council Constitution

## **Appendices**

Exempt Appendix 1 – Candidate Summary – Aidan Dunn

Appendix 2 – Job Description for the Chief Executive