

Report subject	Appointment of Corporate Director of Children's Services
Meeting date	11 August 2026
Status	Public Report (Appendix Exempt)
Executive summary	This report invites the Council to approve the appointment of the preferred candidate to the position of Corporate Director of Children's Services in accordance with the Council's Constitution and statutory requirements. A summary of the preferred candidate's skills, experience and employment history is shown within appendix 1 of this report.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: (a) Council approve the appointment of the preferred candidate to the position of Corporate Director of Children's Services; (b) Council approve the appointment of Juliette Blake as interim Corporate Director of Children's Services for approximately a four-month period commencing 4 August 2026, including the discharge of relevant statutory responsibilities, until the appointed candidate commences in post.
Reason for recommendations	Constitution - Appointment of Head of the Paid Service, Chief Officers (Tier 2 Appointments), Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer

Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Richard Burton (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Skills)
Corporate Director	Aidan Dunn
Report Authors	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive Sarah Deane, Director of People and Culture Jon Matthews, Head of Resourcing, Employee Relations and Change Isabel Hall, Senior Talent Advisor
Wards	All
Classification	Decision

1 Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Council with detail of the recruitment process undertaken to source and select the preferred candidate to be appointed to the position of **Corporate Director of Children's Services**.

2 Recruitment process

- 2.1 The Council's Constitution sets out the requirements for senior appointments as follows:

Article 11 - Officers 1. Management Structure

- 2.1.1 General - The Council may engage such staff (referred to as Officers) as it considers necessary to carry out its functions.
- 2.1.2 Chief Officers - The Council will engage persons for the following posts, who will be designated Chief Officers:
- (a) Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service
 - (b) Directors who report directly to the Chief Executive within the line management structure
- 2.1.3 The process of selection and recruitment of the above Chief Officers shall be undertaken in accordance with provisions set out in the Employment and Procedure Rules - Part 4E of the Constitution.

- 2.2 The Constitution states that Chief Officer roles should be advertised in such a way as is likely to bring it to the attention of persons who are qualified to apply for them. The Corporate Director of Children's Services was advertised in the

Municipal Journal (the MJ) and LinkedIn to ensure the council attracted the widest pool of applicants.

2.3 The employment rules within the Constitution state that appointments will be made by Council following a process arranged by the Director of People and Culture and in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

2.4 The selection process for the Corporate Director of Children's Services comprised of the following: -

2.4.1 Penna, an established executive search company for local government was selected to support the council in resourcing for the role.

2.4.2 Candidates were selected by the formal panel from a long list of applications and attended a technical interview facilitated by an external assessor

2.4.3 Following the technical interviews, feedback was presented to panel members who agreed the shortlist.

2.4.4 Shortlisted candidates attended an Assessment Centre on Wednesday, 29th July, where they delivered a presentation to the formal panel. Following the presentation, they were asked a series of competency-based interview questions.

2.4.5 The formal panel comprised of the following: -

- Cllr Millie Earl (Leader of the Council),
- Cllr Richard Burton (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Skills),
- Cllr Toby Slade (Conservative Group)
- Cllr Sharon Carr-Brown (Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Chair)
- Aidan Dunn (Chief Executive),
- Sarah Deane (Director of People and Culture),
- Dennis Nelson (Independent Observer).

2.4.6 Candidates also presented to four stakeholder engagement panels consisting of the following: -

Panel 1 – External stakeholder engagement panel

- Helen Duncan-Jordan (Head of Children's Services, Dorset Healthcare University)
- Brian Reeves (Head of Volunteering & VCS Development Community Action Network (CAN)
- Shelagh Meldrum (Cluster Chief Nursing Officer NHS Dorset, BSW & Somerset Cluster ICB)
- Becky Whale (Place Director, NHS Dorset)
- Lindsay Dudfield (Chief Superintendent Head of Crime and Criminal Justice, Dorset Police)

Panel 2 – Corporate Management Board

- Glynn Barton (Chief Operations Officer),
- Laura Ambler (Corporate Director of Wellbeing),
- Matt Filmer (Interim Chief Finance Officer),
- Isla Reynolds (Director of Marketing, Communication and Policy),
- Sarah Chamberlain (Director of IT and Programmes).

Panel 3 - Young Person's Panel

- 6 young people
- Rebecca McDade (Youth Development Worker)

Panel 4 – Member Engagement Finance Scenario

- Cllr Partrick Canavan (Leader of Labour Group)
- Cllr John Beesley (Leader of Conservative Group)
- Cllr David Martin (Christchurch Independents)
- Cllr Dawn Logan (Liberal Democrat Group)
- Ronke Olarewaju (Finance Manager)
- Veronique Moorcroft (Strategic People & Culture Business Partner – Children's Services)

3. Recommended Candidate

- 3.1 Taking into account all of the feedback from the various stakeholders involved in the assessment process, the preferred candidate was proposed unanimously by the formal selection panel to be offered the role of Corporate Director of Children's Services.

It is recommended that Council approve this appointment. A conditional offer of employment has been issued to the preferred candidate.

We do not anticipate that the preferred candidate will be able to take up their employment for at least three months and therefore Juliette Blake has been issued with a conditional offer on an interim basis, subject to Full Council approval of their appointment and the completion of all necessary pre-employment checks.

- 3.2 The preferred candidate brings with them a wealth of experience. A summary of their skills and career history is shown at Appendix 1.

4 Summary of financial implications

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

5 Summary of legal implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6 Summary of sustainability impact

6.1 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

7 Summary of public health implications

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

8 Summary of equality implications

8.1 Candidates were assessed using objective assessment criteria. The selection process was observed by an independent observer.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – CV of the preferred candidate (Exempt Information – Category 1 (Information relating to an individual) and Category 2 (Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual))

Appendix 2 – CV of Juliette Blake – Interim Appointment (Exempt Information – Category 1 (Information relating to an individual))