



Cabinet
Tuesday, 23rd September, 2025 at 4.00 pm
in the Card Room - Town Hall, Saturday Market Place,
King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

Reports marked to follow on the Agenda and/or Supplementary Documents

1. **URGENT BUSINESS** (Pages 2 - 10)

To consider any business, which by reason of special circumstances, the Chair proposes to accept, under Section 100(b)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Contact

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Agenda Item 3

**NOTICE AND AGREEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE CORPORATE
PERFORMANCE PANEL OF AN URGENT KEY DECISION WHICH WILL NOT BE
SUBJECT TO CALL IN**

Under Standing Order 12.15 if the Cabinet is proposing to take a Decision as an Urgent Decision – and therefore not subject to call-in, no such recommendation or decision shall be called in if the Leader of the Council, obtains agreement from the Chair of the Corporate Performance Panel that the matter must be acted on urgently without the availability of call in.

The following notice is hereby provided:

Matter about which the decision is to be made

On 23rd September 2025 the Cabinet intent to accept an item of Urgent Business to determine that the posts of Monitoring Officer and Chief Operating Officer are necessary posts and that steps are to be taken to recruit to those posts.

The post of Monitoring Officer is a Statutory Post and the recruitment process will require consideration by Cabinet, the Appointments Board and Full Council. The decision being considered by Cabinet as an urgent decision on 23rd September is necessary to ensure that there is no delay in commencing the recruitment process.

Standing Order 23.2 states that No step shall be taken to advertise or fill a vacancy for any post designated as that of a Chief Officer (as defined in the Local Authority (Standing Orders) Regulations 1993) until such time as the Cabinet has determined whether that post is necessary.

The Chair of the Corporate Performance Panel has agreed that in accordance with Standing Order 12.15 that this decision cannot be called in and notes the recruitment process to be followed which will involved Member input as appropriate.

Signed:



Name Councillor Brian Long, Chair of the Corporate Performance Panel

Date: 22nd September 2025

REPORT TO CABINET

Open/Exempt		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Mandatory/	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		YES/ NO	
	Discretionary /	Need to be recommendations to Council		YES /NO	
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		YES/ NO	
Lead Member: Alistair Beales, Leader E-mail: cllr.alistair.beales@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted:			
		Other Members consulted:			
Lead Officer: Kate Blakemore E-mail: kate.blakemore@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial: 01553 616200		Other Officers consulted: Alexa Baker, Monitoring Officer Michelle Drewery, Chief Finance Officer			
Financial Implications YES/ NO	Policy/ Personnel Implications YES/ NO	Statutory Implications YES/ NO	Equality Impact Assessment YES Pre-screening	Risk Management Implications YES/ NO	Environmental Considerations YES /NO
If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s)					

Date of meeting: 23 September 2025

Recruitment of Chief Officers

Summary

This report outlines the resignation of the current Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer, and the consequential proposals to develop the senior management structure, to provide resilience going forwards with local government reorganisation.

Specifically, there is an opportunity to elevate the seniority of the position by formalising its place within the Executive Team (ET) and transitioning it into a Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer (MO) role. This move will strengthen the governance framework and clarify the role's strategic importance within the organisation.

Additionally, the report highlights the interim nature of the current Chief Operating Officer (COO) role, which is due to conclude at the end of this year. It presents a proposal to conduct a parallel recruitment process for both the Chief of Staff/MO role and the COO position.

Recommendations

Cabinet Resolves to:

1. Approve the formalisation of the Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer role at the Executive Team level.
2. Approve the parallel recruitment for both the Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer and Chief Operating Officer positions confirming both these posts are necessary organisational appointments.

3. Note that oversight of the recruitment processes will be undertaken by the Appointments Board, with final appointment recommendations submitted to Full Council in due course.

Reason for Decisions

To strengthen Governance, elevating the Governance and Monitoring Officer to Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer at the Executive Team level enhances strategic oversight and accountability. The resignation of the current role provides an opportunity to formalise and elevate its seniority, aligning with best governance practices.

Ensure operational continuity through parallel recruitment for both the Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer and Chief Operating Officer roles ensuring smooth leadership transitions.

1 Background

- 1.1. A Monitoring Officer is the statutory officer responsible for the legal governance of a local authority in much the same way that a section 151 officer is responsible for a council's finances. The majority of the role is set out under section 5 of the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act. They have a legal duty to ensure councils fulfil statutory obligations and apply their codes of conduct. This includes investigating and reporting on anything the authority does that has the potential to be an illegal action or any action that might count as maladministration.
- 1.2 The role has a range of other responsibilities away from the formal legal perspective, some of which include:
 - Responsibility for the local authority's constitution.
 - Responding to complaints from the local government ombudsman.
 - Updating the other statutory officers on any changes in legal or ethical standards.
 - Informally advise on and investigate allegations of misconduct.
 - Prepare training programmes on ethical standards and code of conduct.
 - Advise on cases of political restriction exemptions.
 - Being the principal adviser on the standards committee and panel
- 1.3 Recently the Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer has submitted their resignation with their last full working week concluding with us at the end of October.
- 1.4 However, the Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer has agreed to continue to work for us from this date in a part time capacity until our recruitment processes into this post has been completed, and as such will continue with the Monitoring Officer element of their current role post October.
- 1.5 Separately to this resignation, Cabinet are asked to note the current Chief Operating Officer (COO) role is interim in nature and is due to conclude at the end of the year. Given the centrality of this position to organisational operations, it is essential to ensure a seamless transition and continued leadership at the senior operational level.

2. Considerations

Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer

- 2.1 With the Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer submitting their resignation an opportunity to re-evaluate the role and its alignment with the organisation's evolving needs is presented. This position, which has historically sat across the Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Team, requires strengthening to better support governance and strategic decision-making.
- 2.2 Therefore this resignation provides the impetus to formalise this position within the Executive Team, elevating its importance and ensuring that governance functions are integrated at the highest level of leadership. By transitioning the role into a Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer (MO), the organisation will benefit from:
- Improved governance oversight: Clearer accountability and leadership for governance matters.
 - Enhanced strategic alignment: Direct alignment with the Executive Team, ensuring governance and operational priorities are unified.
 - Increased seniority and influence: Formalising the position within ET will elevate the role's strategic input.
- 2.3 This role will be responsible for governance, monitoring officer duties, and acting as a strategic partner to the Chief Executive and Executive Team, ensuring the organisation remains compliant and forward-focused in its governance structures.
- 2.4 In changing this role to a Chief of Staff the substantive role of Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer will then be removed from the Council's senior management structure.

Interim Chief Operating Officer Role

- 2.5 The current Chief Operating Officer (COO) role is interim in nature and is due to conclude at the end of the year. Given the centrality of this position to organisational operations, it is essential to ensure a seamless transition and continued leadership at the senior operational level.
- 2.6 There is a significant opportunity to combine the recruitment processes for both the Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer role and the COO role into a twin-track recruitment process. By doing so, we can ensure that both roles are filled in a way that aligns with the organisation's strategic goals.
- 2.7 The COO role will focus on managing the operational delivery of the organisation's strategy, overseeing key operational functions, and supporting the Executive Team in driving organisational performance. This role, like the Chief of Staff/MO position, is crucial in ensuring smooth, effective governance and operational efficiency.

Recruitment Process

- 2.8 Both the Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer and Chief Operating Officer positions will be overseen by the Appointments Board, with the recruitment processes proceeding in parallel. The steps to be followed are:

- Subject to Cabinet approval, recruitment for both positions will begin promptly.
 - The recruitment process will aim to attract high-calibre candidates.
 - Recommendations for final appointments will be made by the Appointments Board and submitted to the Full Council for approval.
- 2.9 The goal is to ensure a thorough and timely recruitment process that identifies individuals with the necessary skills, experience, and vision to lead these critical roles in the organisation.

Impact and Benefits

- 2.9 This strategic restructuring, including the elevation of the Governance role and the parallel recruitment of the Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer and Chief Operating Officer, is expected to bring several key benefits to the organisation:
- **Enhanced strategic oversight:** By placing the governance role at the Executive Team level, governance oversight will be more directly aligned with organizational strategy and leadership.
 - **Strengthened leadership capacity:** The Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer will ensure that governance processes and operational effectiveness are managed cohesively, enhancing organizational capacity.
 - **Operational continuity:** The twin-track recruitment approach will ensure the organisation continues to operate efficiently without disruption following the conclusion of the interim COO role.

3. Options Considered

- 3.1 Not recruiting into the MO element is not an option for the Council as this is a statutory post. One alternative option is to maintain the current role structure, which would be cost-effective and familiar, but could limit the strategic influence of the Governance and Monitoring Officer role and result in potential overload due to the broad range of responsibilities.
- 3.2 Alternatively, the role could be split into two separate positions, one focused on governance and compliance and the other on operational leadership. While this would allow for specialisation, it may require more resources and could lead to duplication of responsibilities or fragmented leadership.
- 3.4 Another option would be to delegate governance responsibilities to a senior director within the Corporate Leadership Team, which could save costs but might not provide the seniority or focus required for effective oversight.
- 3.5 This report also considers a permanent recruitment into the Chief Operating Officer role. Since the earlier restructure from Executive Directors to a Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer the structure has worked well and evidences the need for this post also.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The resignation of the Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer presents both a challenge and an opportunity from a financial perspective. The transition to a Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer (MO) role at Executive Team level will result in an increase in salary and associated costs due to the elevated seniority and

strategic responsibilities of the post. The estimated annual cost for the new Chief of Staff/MO role is £135k, compared to the current cost of £106k for the outgoing Assistant Director. This uplift reflects the enhanced scope of duties and the need to attract candidates with significant governance and leadership experience.

- 4.2 In addition, the recruitment of a permanent Chief Operating Officer (COO) to replace the interim post will also have financial implications. The current interim arrangement is funded at £158k per annum, and it is anticipated that the permanent COO role will be budgeted at £135k, inclusive of employer pension contributions and on-costs. While this may represent a change in expenditure, it is expected to deliver greater continuity and strategic alignment, thereby improving organisational efficiency and reducing reliance on temporary leadership solutions.
- 4.3 The twin-track recruitment process for both roles will incur one-off costs, including advertising, executive search support, and assessment centre facilitation. Costs for this type of recruitment have previously cost in the region of £25-30k for each recruitment through the use of external consultants supporting the assessment and interview activities. However, we have suitable internal resource available to facilitate this part of the recruitment process which reduces the estimated cost to around £15-20k in total for both roles. These costs are considered necessary to ensure a robust and competitive process that attracts high-calibre candidates capable of delivering long-term value to the organisation.
- 4.4 Overall, the proposed restructuring will result in a small increase in salary costs of around £5k. However, it is anticipated that the long-term benefits—such as improved governance, strategic oversight, and operational continuity—will outweigh the initial financial outlay. These changes are expected to contribute to more effective decision-making and risk management, potentially leading to cost savings and efficiency gains across the wider organisation

5. Statutory Considerations

- 5.1 A Monitoring Officer is the statutory officer responsible for the legal governance of a local authority in much the same way that a section 151 officer is responsible for a council's finances. Much of the role is set out under section 5 of the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act. They have a legal duty to ensure councils fulfil statutory obligations and apply their codes of conduct.

6. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(Pre screening report template attached)

Attached.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The resignation of the Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer presents an opportunity to enhance the strategic oversight and operational efficiency of the organisation.
- 7.2 By formalising the role as Chief of Staff/Monitoring Officer within the Executive Team and recruiting for both this role and the interim Chief Operating Officer position in parallel, we can strengthen both governance and operational leadership. This restructuring will ensure continued alignment with the organisation's goals and contribute to improved organisational effectiveness.

- 7.3 Approval for recruitment into these key roles is sought from Cabinet, with final appointment recommendations to be brought to Full Council in due course,

8. Background Papers

None.

Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	Appointment of Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer and Interim Chief Operating Officer				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? <i>(tick as appropriate)</i>	New		Existing	x	
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	Following the resignation of the current Assistant Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer, the report highlighted the recruitment and opportunity to develop the Executive Team with recruitment of Chief of Staff and Chief Operating Officer.				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only <i>(identify stakeholders consulted with)</i>	Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Current Monitoring Officer and Cabinet Members will debate and decide at the Cabinet meeting.				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group. NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> <p><i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i></p> <p><i>*For more information on health inequalities please visit The King's Fund</i></p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			x	
	Disability			x	
	Sex			x	
	Gender Re-assignment			x	
	Marriage/civil partnership			x	
	Pregnancy & maternity			x	
	Race			x	
	Religion or belief			x	
	Sexual orientation			x	
	Armed forces community			x	
	Care leavers			x	
	Health inequalities*			x	
	Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)			x	
Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:					

Question	Answer	Comments	
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	Yes / No		
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	Yes / No		
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	Yes / No	Actions:	
		Actions agreed by EWG member:	
<p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p>Decision agreed by EWG member:</p>			
5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	Yes / No	Please provide brief summary:	
Assessment completed by:	Kate Blakemore		
Name			
Job title	Chief Executive		
Date completed	22nd September 2025		
Reviewed by EWG member	Charlotte Marriott	Date	22/09/25

✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy (corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk)