

Report to **National Park Authority**
Date **10 December 2024**
By **Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer**
Title of Report **Appointment of an Interim Chief Finance Officer**
Decision

Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to:

- 1. Note the retirement of Nigel Manvell, Chief Finance Officer, on 28 February 2025.**
 - 2. Appoint Craig Garoghan, Head of Finance at Brighton & Hove City Council, as Interim Chief Finance Officer, pursuant to section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, of the South Downs National Park Authority with effect from 1 March 2025 until the appointment of a permanent Chief Finance Officer.**
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The National Park Authority must, under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, appoint a Chief Finance Officer to have responsibility for the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs.
- 1.2 The Chief Finance Officer is a statutory post and, as with the two other statutory posts of Chief Executive Officer and Monitoring Officer, this appointment must be made by the full Authority.
- 1.3 Nigel Manvell, the current Chief Finance Officer, is retiring on 28 February 2025, the Authority therefore needs to appoint a new Chief Finance Officer.

2. Policy context

- 2.1 The role of the Chief Finance Officer is set out in the Authority's Financial Regulations which states that the Chief Finance Officer has statutory duties in relation to the financial administration and stewardship of the Authority. This statutory responsibility cannot be overridden. The statutory duties are principally contained in:
 - Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972;
 - The Local Government Finance Act 1988 (LGFA 1988);
 - The Local Government and Housing Act 1989;
 - The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011; and
 - The Local Government Act 2003.
- 2.2 The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:
 - The proper administration of the authority's financial affairs, setting and monitoring compliance with financial procedures, advising on the corporate financial position and on the key financial controls necessary to secure sound financial management
 - Providing financial information

- Preparing the revenue budget and capital programme and assessing the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves
 - Treasury management
 - Advising on the corporate financial position and on the key financial controls necessary to secure sound financial management
- 2.3 Section 114 of the LGFA 1988 requires the Chief Finance Officer to report to the Authority and external auditor if the authority or one of its officers:
- Has made, or is about to make, a decision which involves incurring unlawful expenditure;
 - Has taken, or is about to take, an unlawful action which has resulted, or would result in, a loss or deficiency to the authority;
 - Is about to make an unlawful entry in the Authority's accounts.
- 2.4 Section 114 of the LGFA 1988 also requires:
- The Chief Finance Officer to nominate a properly qualified member of staff to deputise should he/she be unable to perform the duties under section 114 personally.
 - The Authority to provide the Chief Finance Officer with sufficient staff, accommodation and other resources, including legal advice where this is necessary, to carry out the duties under section 114.
- 2.5 The Chief Finance Officer must also be a qualified accountant.
- 2.6 The Authority's Standing Orders set out that where the Authority proposes to appoint a Chief Officer, of which the Chief Finance Officer is one, it may make the appointment from amongst the existing officers of the Authority or undertake the actions specified in Standing Orders to recruit an officer.
- 3. Issues for consideration**
- 3.1 The role of Chief Finance Officer for the Authority is delivered as part of the Financial Services contract. These services are delivered by Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) under contract until April 2027.
- 3.2 The role of Chief Finance Officer has been filled by Nigel Manvell from BHCC since 12 December 2014. Nigel Manvell is retiring from BHCC on 28 February 2025. BHCC is undertaking a recruitment process for a new Chief Finance Officer who, once in post, would normally be expected to undertake the role of Chief Finance Officer for the Authority as part of the Financial Services contract. Until a permanent Chief Finance Officer is in post, the Authority will need to appoint an Interim Chief Finance Officer.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the Authority appoint Craig Garoghan as the Interim Chief Finance Officer with effect from 1 March 2025 until the appointment of a permanent Chief Finance Officer.
- 3.4 Craig Garoghan is a Head of Finance at BHCC and is the current Deputy Chief Finance Officer for the SDNPA, nominated pursuant to section 114 of the LGFA 1988, as part of the Financial Services contract with BHCC. Craig is a very experienced, qualified accountant with 20 years' finance experience across a wide range of services with extensive experience of supporting council committees, working closely with Members and Chief Officers, and handling complex strategic budget planning areas. The Authority's current Chief Finance Officer is confident that Craig Garoghan has the necessary experience and skills to perform the role effectively.
- 4. Options and cost implications**
- 4.1 It is recommended that the Authority appoint Craig Garoghan, Head of Finance at BHCC, as Interim Chief Finance Officer in line with the Financial Services contract in place with BHCC.

4.2 There are no cost implications associated with the recommendation as the provision of the Chief Finance Officer is provided for in the Authority’s budget. Any alternative proposal may have greater cost implications.

5. Next steps

5.1 Should the Authority appoint Craig Garoghan as the Interim Chief Finance Officer he will take up the role on 1 March 2025, following the retirement of the current Chief Finance Officer.

5.2 A report will be brought to a future meeting of the Authority for a decision on the appointment of a permanent Chief Finance Officer.

6. Other implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	Yes. To appoint a permanent Chief Finance Officer following a recruitment process undertaken by BHCC.
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	No. The provision of the Chief Finance Officer is provided for in the Authority’s budget.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The Chief Finance Officer is a statutory role that the Authority is required to have a person appointed to at all times. It is a key role in ensuring proper financial management of the Authority.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	The role of Chief Finance Officer supports the Authority’s ability to deliver against all PMP Outcomes and Corporate Plan Objectives.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	Brighton and Hove City Council
How does this decision contribute to the Authority’s climate change objectives	The role of Chief Finance Officer supports the good financial management of the Authority in the delivery of its climate change objectives.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None directly arising from this report
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority’s equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes. There are no equality issues raised by this report. The recommendation involves the appointment of the most suitable officer as Interim Chief Finance Officer based on experience and capability.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None directly arising from this report
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None directly arising from this report
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the	None directly arising from this report

Implication	Yes*/No
proposal?	
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None directly arising from this report.

7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

7.1 Not having a Chief Finance Officer appointed would represent a failure of the Authority to comply with a statutory obligation as set out in section 2 of this report.

RICHARD SANDIFORD

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South Downs National Park Authority

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 Appendix: None
 SDNPA Consultees: Chief Executive Officer, Director of Landscape and Strategy, Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer, Head of Finance and Corporate Services, Legal Services.
 External Consultees: None
 Background Documents: [Authority Standing Orders](#)
[Authority Financial Regulations](#)