

# ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO AND DECISION OF CABINET ON 22 MARCH 2021

**SUBJECT:** Commercial Manager Post - Update

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Nigel Lynn – Chief Executive

**DATE:** 5 March 2021

**EXTN:** 37600

**PORTFOLIO AREA:** Chief Executive Directorate

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Members agreed the principle of creating a new post of Commercial Manager for 2020/21. The report proposes, that due to the Coronavirus, the process of appointing to the position is delayed.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that Cabinet

- (i) Support the principle of delaying the appointment process of the Commercial Manager post, until after the Covid pandemic has reduced demands on the resources of the Council.

### **1. BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1 The Council agreed 10 Strategic Targets at Full Council on 13 November 2019. One target related to the Council having a more commercial, and therefore, less risk adverse, approach to its assets and asset purchases. In order to take this forward, the Council agreed to create a new position of Commercial Manager to provide strategic guidance and expertise in this area.
- 1.2 As such, £80k was identified in both the 2020/21 and 2021/22 budgets. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 progress on this matter was delayed.
- 1.3 In late Summer 2020, the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Coster, and the CEO agreed to progress the appointment process as the pandemic appeared to be easing slightly, and a Job Descriptions/Person specification were prepared. However, the pandemic worsened, and it was agreed, in September 2020, that a temporary consultant be considered as an alternative to a full-time position, as the appointment process might not be successful in this difficult time.
- 1.4 Consultant CV's were obtained and examined, and a series of interviews took place on 30 November 2020. With only one possible candidate agreed upon, additional CV's were duly requested and obtained on 12 December 2020. One additional candidate was deemed suitable for interview, however as the Coronavirus National Lockdown took hold on 4 December 2020, the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Coster and the

CEO examined the current position that the Council was in. It was agreed that;

- i. Staff are under a tremendous amount of pressure due to the virus, and there is no capacity to progress this matter, at this time.
- ii. Should a successful consultant, or full-time person, be appointed, staff would be unable to assist the appointee at this time, due to their lack of capacity.
- iii. There are vacancies in several key areas of the Council that cannot be filled, including in Property Services, due to the Coronavirus. This has put additional pressure on other staff.
- iv. In relation to the work this individual might do, property values are low and developer costs high (recent procurement of Littlehampton public realm project resulted in 20% uplift in costs), due to COVID risks.
- v. Council owned property/land projects, such as The Bognor Regis Arcade and the Hothampton Lorry Park will struggle to move forward, even with the expertise of a Commercial Consultant or Manager at this time.
- vi. However, there are other projects that the Council could try to move forward, utilising the budget available, to progress smaller projects, such as fitting Solar panels on Council owned car parks, however, there are other commercial projects that the Council could try to move forward, utilising the budget available.

## 2. PROPOSAL(S):

Cabinet are asked to support the principle of delaying the appointment process of the Commercial Manager post, until after the Covid pandemic has reduced demands on the resources of the Council.

## 2. OPTIONS:

- (a) to support the recommendation
- (b) to proceed with an appointment
- (c) consider an alternative approach

## 4. CONSULTATION:

The Portfolio Holder and CEO agree with the recommendation within the report.

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		x
Relevant District Ward Councillors		x
Other groups/persons (please specify)		
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial – less money spent from the budget in 2021/22	x	
Legal		x
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		x

Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		x
Sustainability		x
Asset Management/Property/Land – slow down progress on key sites	x	
Technology		x
Other (please explain)		

**6. IMPLICATIONS:**

6.1 The Council has important and valuable sites that it wants to progress in a commercial way. Not having a Commercial Manager or Consultant in place will slow down progress on these projects.

6.2 However, as land/property values are currently low, and development costs high, both due to the Coronavirus pandemic, delaying progress by not making such an appointment, should prove more valuable for the Council, in the long term.

**7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:**

The Coronavirus has impeded progress on this appointment.

**8. EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE DECISION: 31 March 2021**

**9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Strategic Targets report to Full Council on 13 November 2019 and minutes - [Agenda - Full Council 13.11.19](#) and minutes [Minutes Full Council 13.11.19](#)