

To: Council
Date: 26 January 2026
Report of: Chief Executive
Title of Report: Designation of Section 151 Officer

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To designate the Council's Section 151 Officer following a success recruitment campaign and the recommendation from the Appointments Committee on 28 November 2025.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	N/A

Recommendation(s): That Council resolves to:
1. Designate the newly appointed Interim Group Finance Director as the Council's Section 151 Officer with effect from the 6 th April 2026

Information Exempt From Publication	
N/A	N/A

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
N/A	N/A	N/A

Introduction and background

1. The current Group Finance Director, Nigel Kennedy, will be retiring from the Council on 5th April 2026, after 12 years as the Council's Section 151 Officer.
2. The usual course of action would be to recruit to a permanent replacement for the role, but given the context of Local Government Reorganisation, the role of S151 for Oxford City Council will cease to exist on formation of the new Unitary authorities in April 2028. The recruitment market for S151 is very competitive at the moment and

finding candidates with sufficient expertise to support the LGR process who would be interested in a role without long term certainty and risk of redundancy is very challenging. For this reason and on the advice of recruitment professionals it was decided to recruit to an interim to fill the position in the lead up to LGR. Designation of the Section 151 Officer

3. The Council has a duty under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to designate one of its officers as the Section 151 Officer (also known as the Chief Finance Officer) to be responsible for specified statutory functions. The Section 151 Officer may not be the Head of Paid Service nor the Monitoring Officer.
4. Under Section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, it states the qualifications of the responsible officer appointed as the Section 151 Officer.
5. The Council's Constitution Part 9.2 states that the Group Finance Director is the Section 151 Officer. However, the designation of the Group Finance Director to the statutory role of Section 151 Officer is not automatic in law and the designation must be confirmed by Council.
6. The duties and responsibilities of the Section 151 Officer are summarised in Part 9.6 of the Council's Constitution.
7. The Appointments Committee is responsible for undertaking the recruitment and selection process for the designated Section 151 Officer (Group Finance Director) and for making a recommendation to the Council (Constitution Parts 7.8(a) and (c)).
8. The Appointments Committee met on 28 November 2025 to undertake a recruitment process and selected a preferred candidate for the interim role of Group Finance Director.
9. Part 20.6 of the Constitution requires that before an offer of appointment is made to the post of Group Finance Director, Cabinet Members must be notified of the proposed appointment and given a period of time in which to raise objections. The appointment is subject to the appointor being satisfied that any objection raised is not material nor well-founded. Cabinet Members were informed of the proposed appointment of the preferred candidate as Group Finance Director on 1 December 2025 and no objections were raised by the response deadline.
10. Subject to the above, the Appointments Committee resolved to appoint Alistair Rush as the interim Group Finance Director and recommend to Council to designate the successful candidate as Section 151 Officer with effect from 6th April, upon the retirement of Nigel Kennedy.

Alternative Options Considered

11. To appoint an internal candidate as the Council's Section 151 Officer, however there is not currently any internal candidate with sufficient experience with appetite to take on the role. The Appointments Committee appointed the successful candidate as the Council's interim Group Finance Director and as set out within the report, this officer within the Council's Corporate Leadership Team is traditionally designated as one of the Statutory Officers.

Financial implications

12. The Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) is an established post and the salary for the permanent role is within the agreed budget. Any difference between established budget and the cost of an interim will be funded from the budget that

has been allocated for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) transition, as LGR is the reason we have needed to recruit to an interim position.

Legal issues

13. The legal requirements for the Council to have an officer correctly appointed to and holding the role of Section 151 Officer is set out in this report. The appointment must be made by full Council.

Equalities impact

14. The recruitment process for the interim role of Group Finance Director was undertaken in compliance with the Council's policies and usual procedures around recruitment which are aimed at ensuring equality in recruitment.

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Background Papers:	
1	Local Government Act 1972
2	Local Government Finance Act 1988
3	Part9RolesofOfficers.pdf
4	Part7Rolesofdecisiontakingcommittees2025.pdf
5	Part14OtherCommitteecedures2025.pdf
6	Agenda for Appointments Committee on Friday 28 November 2025, 9.00 am Oxford City Council

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