

Council – 26 February 2026

Appointment of the Strategic Director, Housing and Communities - Report of the Member Appointment Panel

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	Following the promotion of the previous postholder to Deputy Chief Executive, the role of Strategic Director Housing and Communities became vacant. It was decided by the Leader, Chief Executive, and Deputy Chief Executive as a fundamental role to replace on a permanent basis. The report outlines the recruitment process undertaken. Approval of appointment of a Chief Officer of the District Council is required to be done by the full Council.
Recommendation(s)	That Sophie Sajic is appointed Strategic Director, Housing and Communities.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	The recommendation is made following the recruitment process outlined below.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jill Cleary – Leader of the Council
Strategic Director(s)	Kate Ryan – Chief Executive
Officer Contact	Heleana Aylett HR Service Manager 02380 285662 Heleana.aylett@nfdc.gov.uk

Appointment of Strategic Director, Housing and Communities

1. This role became vacant when the previous postholder was promoted to the new post of Deputy Chief Executive in October 2025, following a review of the Leadership team. The role of Strategic Director, Housing and Communities is required to be filled on a like for like basis, to ensure we are able to deliver our council priorities and continue to meet the requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Act and other key pieces of legislation and public protection.

2. By virtue of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 (as amended) ('the Regulations'), approval of appointment of a Chief Officer of the District Council is required to be done by Council.
3. The Appointment Panel consisted of the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive.
4. Tile Hill (executive recruitment agency) were commissioned to help recruit to this role alongside Human Resources and provided long and shortlisting of proposed candidates. Initial preliminary interviews were also undertaken by them with thorough feedback provided to the Panel.
5. Several external candidates were shortlisted, and they attended interview with the Appointment Panel on 12th January 2026 (there were no internal candidates).
6. The candidates were asked to prepare a presentation on implementing a new phase of collaboration and engagement to ensure the views and lived experience of a diverse group of tenants is received, which was delivered at the start of each interview. They also had guided question sessions separately with direct reports and peers. Feedback from the guided question sessions was discussed with the Panel.
7. A number of candidates were invited back for a second interview on 2nd February, to assess the candidates' leadership styles in action.

The second interview process started with completing a 'Congruity' in-depth personality profile in advance of the day so that insights were available to probe further in person. On the day, the process included a 'real time' housing crisis where four Housing Service Managers participated, and the Deputy Leader, Deputy Chief Executive and Interim Service Manager Housing and Communities observed the exercise. Feedback was sought from the participants afterwards. Candidates also then met with the observers for an informal discussion and exercise debrief.

8. Following the second interview process, the observers met with the Chief Executive and agreed that Sophie Sajic was their recommended candidate.

Recommendation for appointment

9. By virtue of the requirements of the Regulations and the Council's Standing Orders, following selection of a preferred candidate Cabinet is required to be notified as to details of the proposed appointment,

and not to have any objection to the recommendation of the Members' Appointment Panel. The Executive has accordingly been informed as to details of the preferred candidate and has no objection to the appointment.

10. In accordance with the Regulations and Standing Orders the Council is now required to approve the appointment.

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

None