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**Report to:** West Yorkshire Combined Authority

**Date:** 27 July 2023

**Subject:** **Appointment of Combined Authority Returning Officer**

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**Director:** Alan Reiss, Chief Operating Officer

**Author:** Rebecca Brookes, Legal Corporate Service Lead

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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To agree to appoint Tom Riordan, Leeds City Council Chief Executive and Local Returning Officer, as the Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO) in respect of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Mayoral election, due to take place on Thursday 2 May 2024.
- 1.2 To note the intention that Ben Still, Chief Executive of the Combined Authority will be appointed as a deputy CARO.

## 2. Information

- 2.1 The Combined Authorities (Mayoral Elections) Order 2017 provides that each Combined Authority must appoint one of its officers or one of the officers of a constituent council to be the Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO). If the latter this will normally be a Local Returning Officer.
- 2.2 The CARO will have overall responsibility for the election of the Mayor. In addition, the CARO will be responsible for accepting nominations and coordinating the regional result.

- 2.3 As this is a legal requirement, there are no other options other than to formally appoint a CARO to ensure the Combined Authority undertake their statutory duty and to ensure that the election is fair, transparent and that everyone has confidence in the result.
- 2.4 Following local discussions, it is proposed that the Chief Executive of Leeds City Council, Tom Riordan, be appointed to this position and that he be supported by the Combined Authority's Chief Executive, Ben Still, as one of his Deputy CARO's, alongside any other deputy appointments the CARO chooses to make. The formal appointment of deputies a matter for the CARO.
- 2.5 This appointment mirrors the arrangements that were put in place for the 2021 Mayoral election. It reflects a recognition of the extremely complex arrangements involved in the running of any election with the need for an experienced CARO to lead the process alongside a similarly experienced elections team. This appointment would instil confidence in the elections process and the integrity of the election itself.
- 2.6 Combined Authority officers are working closely with the Electoral Services Manager at Leeds City Council to support election preparations and will agree pragmatic allocation of responsibilities, including but not limited to preparation of the election booklet, which is a statutory requirement.

### **3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications**

- 3.1 There are no climate emergency implications directly arising from this report.

### **4. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 4.1 There are no inclusive growth implications directly arising from this report.

### **5. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 5.1 There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

### **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 Costs associated with the Mayoral Election are subject to confirmation and will need to be met from Combined Authority funds. Unlike for local authority elections there is no funding from government for mayoral elections.

### **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 The legal requirement for the Combined Authority to appoint a CARO is set out in the body of the report.

### **8. Staffing Implications**

- 8.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

## **9. External Consultees**

- 9.1 Leeds City Council's Head of Electoral Services has confirmed support for the proposed CARO appointment.

## **10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 To agree to appoint Tom Riordan, Leeds City Council Chief Executive and Local Returning Officer, as the Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO) in respect of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Mayoral election, due to take place on Thursday 2 May 2024.
- 10.2 To note the intention that Ben Still, Chief Executive of the Combined Authority will be appointed as a deputy CARO.

## **11 Background Documents**

None.

## **12 Appendices**

None.