

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 April 2025

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Appointment of Returning Officer

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To appoint the Council's new Chief Executive, Laurence Rockey, as the Returning Officer for the East Lothian area.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Council is asked to appoint the new Chief Executive, Laurence Rockey, to carry out the role of Returning Officer within the East Lothian area, with immediate effect.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As reported to Council on 18 February 2025, Laurence Rockey has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of East Lothian Council. Mr Rockey will take up his post on 22 April 2025.
- 3.2 The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires every local authority to appoint a Returning Officer (RO) for each election of councillors for the authority. By virtue of this appointment, the holder also automatically becomes responsible for discharging the duties of RO at UK Parliamentary elections and Scottish Parliamentary elections. This would extend to the duties of Local Counting Officer in support of any national referendum. The appointment is personal and, in common with most Scottish councils, in East Lothian it has traditionally been offered to the Chief Executive.
- 3.3 Once appointed, the Council is required by statute to place at the disposal of the RO the services of staff and other resources for the purpose of discharging their elections responsibilities. The RO is not accountable to the Council for their actions in respect of the conduct of elections and the Council cannot direct or instruct the RO on how to carry out any aspect of the election process.

- 3.4 Since the retirement of the previous Chief Executive, Monica Patterson, in February 2025, the Head of Corporate Support, Hayley Barnett, has acted as the interim Returning Officer. It is proposed that Mr Rockey is appointed as the Returning Officer with immediate effect.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – none
6.2 Personnel – none
6.3 Other – None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Report to East Lothian Council, 18 February 2025: Appointment of Chief Executive and Interim Arrangements

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