

## PFCC Decision Report

**Please ensure all sections below are completed**

**Report reference number:** 044-23

**Classification** (e.g. Not protectively marked/restricted): **Not Protectively Marked**

**Title of report:** **Recruitment of Governance Officer 1-year fixed term**

**Area of county / stakeholders affected:** **Countywide**

**Report by:** Darren Horsman

**Chief Officer:** Darren Horsman

**Date of report:** 28.2.2023

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### 1. Executive Summary

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in decision report 04-23 agreed an Accessibility Strategy to improve the accessibility of information they publish and meet The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

It was agreed in that decision report that once the resource requirement to implement this strategy was better understood a further decision report would be submitted to address this. This decision report builds on the decisions taken in 04-23 and sets out a resource proposal to help implement the previously agreed strategy.

### 2. Recommendations

That the Commissioner agrees to recruit a 0.92 FTE Governance Officer on a 1-year fixed term contract at SO1, at a cost of £38,075 (SO1 full time cost is £41,386 ) to

address the additional requirements of implementing the first year of the accessibility strategy and cover the other responsibilities set out in Appendix A.

### **3. Background to the Proposal**

The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 requires that all public sector websites are accessible to everyone. This came into force on 23 September 2018 and websites were required to be compliant by September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020.

In preparation for this change the Commissioner commissioned Formation Media to perform a website audit and help produce an accessibility statement for the PFCC website. This decision was made in decision report 09-20 with the work completed prior to September 2020. As with most public sector organisations the Commissioner's site complied with these regulations by altering and improving the website and identifying areas where it was not possible to fully meet the standards set out in the regulations. This can be because of the use of third-party content or technology, historical information or an undue burden being placed on the organisation. These were clearly set out in our Accessibility Statement as required by the regulations.

Since introduction of the regulations the public sector has been adapting to these new regulations. One area that has proved difficult over the last two years is the treatment of documents uploaded onto official sites. PDFs in particular can cause significant accessibility issues. However, government transparency requirements mean that there is still a significant need to publish documents detailing the operation of government business.

In 2022 the Commissioner's site was randomly selected by the Cabinet Office's Website Accessibility Team and underwent an accessibility test. Though the site performed well a range of areas were identified for improvement. As a result of this an updated audit was undertaken of the full site and content. The findings from this audit along with the results provided by the Website Accessibility Team have led to a number of improvements being made to the site as set out in the Essex PFCC Accessibility Summary.

Two issues remained that were not easily fixed, the use of images on the site and the use of PDFs. To address these issues an Accessibility Strategy was developed setting out the approach to be taken and the pace of that work and an updated Accessibility Statement to publish on our site.

Since the strategy was agreed further work has been undertaken to understand the time requirement needed to implement the strategy. In terms of alt tags on images the Communications and Engagement Team has been able to work at a faster pace than previously anticipated and over a two-month period has now rectified all of the images held on our website for the last two years. PDFs have proven trickier and while we have purchased additional software to allow a wider range of people to update PDFs, due to capacity issues within our scrutiny officers this work is proving to be hard to implement.

Our experience so far is that on average each PDF will take one hour to update with longer more complicated documents requiring more time. At the moment we are unable to keep up with the current flow of PDFs being produced by the office and as a result are still adding to the number of PDFs that need to be edited and changed. Without a change of approach this is likely to remain the situation.

To change this pattern additional resources are required and it is proposed that this is combined into a previously evaluated and agreed job description for a Governance Officer. This role would pick up some of the responsibilities that are currently being backfilled within the team so would provide added additional capacity to manage resources issues elsewhere in the office.

It is proposed that this role is advertised on a fixed term 1-year basis to allow the longer-term solution to be worked through.

#### **4. Proposal and Associated Benefits**

This short-term appointment would help move forward the Commissioner's accessibility strategy while also providing additional support for the administration of their decision making process. These would help to improve the current accessibility of the PFCC's decision making and allow stronger, clearer transparency of the decisions they are making.

#### **5. Options Analysis**

The Commissioner could decide not to appoint to this post but that would increase the risk that they will be unable to deliver against their accessibility strategy and meet their statutory responsibilities.

Unless the Commissioner was able to identify a different route to comply with these regulations there would be an increased risk that they would be referred to the Equality and Human Rights Commissioner for noncompliance. The site could also be highlighted as an example of non-compliance.

The public sector is learning together how to create and maintain accessible websites that allow everybody to participate. That is a journey we are all on together and benefiting from developments in this field will help the Commissioner achieve their vision and deliver their objectives within the Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan. The short-term nature of this role will allow the PFCC to work through a more permanent solution.

#### **6. Consultation and Engagement**

There has been no direct consultation on this issue with staff, however, we have engaged with other PCC offices who have been audited and shared information. We have also sought expert independent advice when putting together this proposal.

#### **7. Strategic Links**

Engagement with the public is a core part of both the Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan and transparency underpins this.

## **8. Police operational implications**

There are no operational policing requirements arising from this decision.

## **9. Financial implications**

The recruitment of this role on SO1, for which the full time salary is £31,434 to £33,348, will cost £38,075 for 0.92 of an FTE. This cost will be met from the 2022-23 underspend.

## **10. Legal implications**

Compliance with these regulations is a legal requirement and failure to do this may result in further action by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

## **11. Staffing implications**

This decision will provide additional support to staff helping to clear arrangements which are currently in place to backfill existing vacancies. The appointment will provide short-term support while the longer-term implications are considered.

## **12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications**

This will have a direct positive impact on equality and diversity. It will also support the PFCC's commitments within the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, specifically making the information relating to the scrutiny of Essex Police and Essex County Fire and Rescue Services' implementation of their own obligations under the Equality Act 2010 more accessible.

## **13. Risks and Mitigations**

It is possible that this role will not be able to be recruited to, however, with the support of Essex Police Recruitment services this can be mitigated by advertising the role well.

## **14. Governance Boards**

This was discussed at the Commissioner's Management Team on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February and their Senior Management Team on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **15. Links to Future Plans**

This is not linked to any future plans.

## **16. Background Papers and Appendices**

*Governance Officer Job Description*



**Report Approval**

The report will be signed off by the PFCC's Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.

Chief Executive / M.O. Sign: DHorsman

Print: Darren Horsman - Deputy Monitoring Officer

Date: 3.3.2023

Chief Financial Officer

Sign 

Print Janet Perry

Date: 03 March 2023

**Publication**

Is the report for publication? YES  NO

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)

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If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

**Redaction**

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet? YES  NO  2. Of Appendix? YES  NO

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

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Date redaction carried out: .....

**Chief Finance Officer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only**

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign: .....

Print: .....

**Chief Executive / Chief Finance Officer**

**Decision and Final Sign Off**

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Jane Gardner

~~PFCC~~/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: 13 March 2023

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

.....  
.....  
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Sign:

Print:

**PFCC/Deputy PFCC**

Date signed: