

**OFFICER REPORT TO COUNCIL****RETIREMENT OF HM CORONER FOR SURREY  
MR MICHAEL BURGESS OBE AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS****KEY ISSUE/DECISION:**

HM Coroner for Surrey Mr Michael J.C. Burgess OBE has formally given notice of his retirement with effect from 31 March 2011. This report sets out the proposed appointment process for a new Coroner and asks the Council to delegate appointment of HM Coroner for Surrey to an appointment panel.

**BACKGROUND:**

1. A Coroner is an independent judicial office holder, with jurisdiction in a specified geographical area. Coroners are appointed and paid by the local authority. The county of Surrey is such an area and Surrey County Council (SCC) has a duty to appoint and fund HM Coroner for Surrey. Surrey Police contribute towards the Coroner's resources, by providing and paying the costs of Coroner's Officers. SCC pays for all other costs associated with delivering the Coroner Service, including administration support, Deputy Coroners and Assistant Deputy Coroners, NHS Hospital Mortuary Facilities and Technicians Fees, Inquest expenses and the transportation of bodies undertaken by Dignity Funerals Ltd.
2. Coroners inquire into violent or unnatural deaths, sudden deaths of unknown cause and deaths which have occurred in prison. It is a Coroner's duty to establish who the deceased was and how, when and where the deceased came by their death.
3. After serving as HM Coroner for Surrey for twenty-four years, Mr Burgess OBE, has given notice of his intention to retire with effect from 31 March 2011.

4. The process for recruiting a Coroner is complex and there is a requirement for the technical questions to be unique to each recruitment as candidates are likely to have applied for other recently advertised posts. It is not advisable to ask Mr Burgess OBE to act as the technical advisor as it would make it difficult for the existing Deputy Coroners and Assistant Deputy Coroners in Surrey to apply.
5. Following consultation with the Ministry of Justice and Coroners' Society of England and Wales officers have appointed Selena Lynch, former Coroner and current Assistant Deputy Coroner, to provide expert and technical advice during the entire recruitment process.
6. The intended process to recruit HM Coroner for Surrey is:
  - Remote assessments – These will not act to reduce the candidate pool rather to inform the non technical interview and will include:
    - Senior management in tray exercise
    - Psychometric assessment looking at working preferences.
  - Interview day – This will consist of:
    - 45 minute preparation on an unseen topic
    - 15 minute presentation
    - 45 minute technical interview
    - 30-40 minute non technical interview.
7. Although Surrey County Council appoints HM Coroner for Surrey, he or she will not be a Council Officer and therefore the People, Performance and Development Committee does not have authority to make the appointment. This report sets out the proposed appointment panel and seeks delegated authority for the panel to select a successful candidate.
8. Following advice, the following appointment panel is recommended for the recruitment of HM Coroner for Surrey:
  - David McNulty – Chief Executive
  - Yvonne Rees – Strategic Director for Customers and Communities
  - Ann Charlton – Head of Legal and Democratic Services
  - Carmel Millar – Head of HR and Organisational Development
  - Selena Lynch – Technical Advisor

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>
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It is recommended that Council agrees to the selection of HM Coroner for Surrey to take up post on the retirement of Mr Burgess OBE in accordance with the process set out in this report and delegates to the appointment panel authority to recruit and appoint the successful candidate.

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**Sources/background papers:**

Letter of retirement from Mr Michael J.C Burgess OBE  
Ministry of Justice 2008 guidance on Appointment of a New Coroner  
Email correspondence from André Rebello, Honourable Secretary of the  
Coroners' Society of England and Wales  
Email correspondence from Selena Lynch, former Coroner and current  
Assistant Deputy Coroner

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