

# North Tyneside Council

## Report to Council

### Date: 24 November 2022

#### Title: Appointment of Senior Coroner

<b>Portfolio(s):</b> Law and Democracy	<b>Cabinet Member(s):</b> Elected Mayor, Mrs Norma Redfearn CBE
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#### Report from Service

**Area:** Law and Governance

**Responsible Officer:** Jacqueline Laughton, Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer

**Wards affected:** All

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#### **PART 1**

##### **1.1 Executive Summary:**

This report invites Council to confirm the appointment of the new Senior Coroner for North Tyneside following a recent recruitment process.

##### **1.2 Recommendation(s):**

It is recommended that Council:

(1) Appoint Ms Georgina Nolan as the new Senior Coroner for North Tyneside.

##### **1.3 Forward Plan:**

Twenty eight days notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 14 October 2022.

##### **1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework**

This report does not directly align to the priorities in the Council Plan. The Authority has a statutory duty to appoint a Senior Coroner.

##### **1.5 Information:**

###### **1.5.1 Background**

1.5.2 The Senior Coroner is an independent judicial office holder but is appointed by the relevant local authority

- 1.5.3 The current Acting Senior Coroner for North Tyneside, Mrs Karen Dilks, has given notice of her intention to retire as Senior Coroner in early 2023. Mrs Dilks has been the Acting Senior Coroner for North Tyneside since September 2019 following the retirement of the previous Senior Coroner for North Tyneside. Mrs Dilks is also the Senior Coroner for Newcastle upon Tyne and is retiring from that role also. Whilst North Tyneside and Newcastle upon Tyne are currently separate coronial jurisdictions, the Authorities are in discussions with central government regarding the merger of the two jurisdictions into a single combined jurisdiction. The Authorities have therefore undertaken a joint recruitment exercise to appoint a Senior Coroner for both jurisdictions in anticipation of that merger.
- 1.5.4 The recruitment exercise was carried out in accordance with the procedures set down by the Chief Coroner for England and Wales. The Chief Coroner's Office was engaged at all stages of the recruitment process. Interviews of the shortlisted candidates were held at the Civic Centre, Newcastle in September 2022. The interview panel comprised of officers from both Authorities. The Chief Coroner also observed the interviews in person but was not a member of the interview panel.
- 1.5.5. After due deliberation, the interview panel decided to offer the post to Ms Georgina Nolan as the highest-scoring candidate. Ms Nolan is currently an Assistant Coroner for both the North Tyneside and Newcastle upon Tyne and jurisdictions, as well as the North and South Northumberland jurisdictions.
- 1.5.5 The appointment of Senior Coroner is subject to approval by the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor. Both approvals have now been received.
- 1.5.6 Newcastle City Council at its full Council meeting on 2 November 2022 appointed Ms Georgina Nolan as its Senior Coroner.

## **1.6 Decision options:**

The following decision options are available for consideration by Council:

### Option 1

To appoint Ms Georgina Nolan as the new Senior Coroner for North Tyneside.

### Option 2

Not to appoint Ms Georgina Nolan as the new Senior Coroner for North Tyneside.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

## **1.7 Reasons for recommended option:**

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

The recommendation to appoint Ms Nolan as the Senior Corner follows a recruitment exercise carried out in accordance with the procedures set down by the Chief Coroner for England and Wales. The Chief Coroner's Office was engaged at all stages of the recruitment process and both the Chief Coroner for England and Wales, and the Lord Chancellor have agreed to the appointment of Ms Nolan as Senior Coroner for North Tyneside and Newcastle upon Tyne.

## **1.8 Appendices:**

None

## **1.9 Contact officers:**

Jacqueline Laughton, Assistant Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer. Tel (0191) 643 5724

John Barton, Principal Lawyer (0191) 643 5354

Claire Emmerson, Senior Manager Financial Strategy and Planning (0191) 643 8109

## **1.10 Background information:**

The following background information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

(1) Coroners and Justice Act 2009

# **PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING**

## **2.1 Finance and other resources**

The Authority's Acting Senior Coroner and the Assistant Coroners have since September 2019 been based at the Coroner's Court at Newcastle Civic Centre. The costs associated with the maintenance of the office of Coroner including, staff and accommodation has been shared between the Authority and Newcastle City Council.

An option to merge the coronial areas of North Tyneside and Newcastle upon Tyne is currently being explored and a report on this is being presented to Cabinet on 28 November 2022. Irrespective of whether the merger is approved or not, the Authority will need to continue to fund it's share of the coroner's salary costs as per the current arrangements. Potential financial implications relating to the merger are included in the 28 November Cabinet report titled 'Future of the Coroner Service for North Tyneside'.

## **2.2 Legal**

In accordance with Schedule 3 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 the Authority must appoint a Senior Coroner for North Tyneside. The appointment cannot be made by the Authority unless the Lord Chancellor and the Chief Coroner consent to the appointment. As stated in the report, both the Lord Chancellor and the Chief Coroner for England and Wales have given their consent to the appointment of Ms Georgina Nolan as the Senior Coroner for North Tyneside.

## **2.3 Consultation/community engagement**

### **2.3.1 Internal Consultation**

The Cabinet and the Senior Management Team have been made aware of the proposed appointment of Ms Nolan as the Senior Coroner for North Tyneside subject to Council's approval.

### **2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement**

As stated in the report, a recruitment exercise was carried out in accordance with the procedures set down by the Chief Coroner for England and Wales.

## **2.4 Human rights**

There are no human rights implications from this report.

## **2.5 Equalities and diversity**

There are no equality and diversity implications from this report.

## **2.6 Risk management**

The Authority has a statutory obligation to appoint a Senior Coroner in accordance with the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. A failure to make such an appointment would mean that the Authority is not complying with that obligation.

## **2.7 Crime and disorder**

The Senior Coroner has a duty to investigate certain deaths, including those where the deceased has died a violent or unnatural death, or the cause of death is unknown.

## **2.8 Environment and sustainability**

There are no environment and sustainability implications from this report.

## **PART 3 - SIGN OFF**

- Chief Executive ☐
- Director(s) of Service ☐
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) ☐
- Chief Finance Officer ☐
- Monitoring Officer ☐
- Assistant Chief Executive ☐