

- Hi, I'm Julie Towers from Penna. And I'm here today interviewing Sean Harriss, the Chief Executive of the London Borough of Harrow. We're doing a great role at the moment called The Corporate Director of Communities. And I asked Sean a few questions to help you as a prospective candidate, think about the role. Firstly, Sean you've been Chief Executive in three local authorities. What made you come to Harrow?

- Great question, Julie. And the reason I'm at Harrow is because it's a really good mixture of being a great place to work. Great team, great councillors, great place. But also there are a number of challenges. So there's lots of opportunities in terms of regenerating the borough. There's lots of work to develop the council, inspire and motivate our staff. So overall it's a great package, both in terms of what we're doing now and what we can do in the future.

- That's great Sean. What do you think some of those specific challenges and opportunities are for perhaps candidates looking at this role?

- Number of things. We've got a big and ambitious regeneration programme which is gonna transform the borough over the next five to 10 years. We've got lots of challenges as you would expect around our broader environmental services as well; what our residents are most interested in, the environment, our parks, street cleaning, all those sorts of things that excite councillors and local residents. And also there are big challenges around housing and also supporting and developing the economy after COVID. So overall there's a big package of interesting challenges and good to things to build upon across the whole remit of the directorate.

- Thank you. And it's good to know that the current candidate Paul, is off to be a Chief Executive in Herefordshire, which is fabulous, so shows that the role is great for progression. And also I think denotes that you want Corporate Directors, that word means a lot to you. So say a little bit about the sort of senior leadership environment that candidates will be joining and what you'll expect of them as a Corporate Director.

- Yeah, absolutely. And it is what we want to engender. We want people who can contribute across the whole of the council. Clearly we want people who can lead the services that they're responsible for but actually being able to be involved in place-shaping across the borough, working with all our partners, being responsible for taking a view across the whole of the council's operations, being responsible in terms of helping drive the financial scenario, the future of the borough in terms of where we want to see us in 10 years time. It is the whole package. And absolutely, I want someone who was interested in being part of the leadership team of the organization as a whole, not just someone who is interested or responsible for a set of services.

- Yeah, that's really helpful. I think will appeal to many. You've been very proactive in your advertising messages about welcoming diversity of background and skills and experience. And also as a very diverse Borough of London. What key attributes are you really looking for, On the basis

that you're not just looking for somebody who's been in local government for a long time, you're very welcoming of transferable skills?

- That's absolutely right, Julie. I mean, one of the things that we've recognised is that we have more to do in terms of diversity in particular, making sure that the leadership of the the council is more representative of our existing staff group and communities. So we are keen to encourage diverse candidates to apply for the role. One of the things we're also keen to do is to open this up to talent across a whole range of experiences. Absolutely, we want people if they've got local government experience to apply but we're also open to people from perhaps housing associations, civil service, other public bodies. The most important thing we're looking for in terms of this role is somebody who is a great leader. Somebody who can support and develop the team. Someone who's got vision and can work with our communities and our politicians to deliver our overall objectives. So very much looking for leadership and talent not just someone who comes from a traditional local authority background.

- Yeah, and I think that will really help candidates because often they feel that their transferable skills are not welcome, but you've also put in place some really good development support, which I know is something Harrow are very committed to. Something that will really help interest people. And do you hope that they will look at that sort of positively?

- Absolutely. I mean, obviously as I say, we're looking for leadership potential, attitude, enthusiasm, all the sorts of things that will make somebody a really good leader. And we know that sometimes for people coming into local government who've perhaps got all of that, but don't know everything about the sector or don't know everything about Harrow, that they'll need help and support to get there. And we're very, very committed to supporting the right candidate for the medium to long term, not just for day one.

- Yeah, that's great. I think it's been really helpful for me with my conversations with candidates from different sectors. So thank you for that. So that's great. Thank you, Sean, for sharing your insights. I'm sure that will help candidates to think further about the role and hopefully apply. So thank you.

- Absolutely, really want to encourage people to apply for what's an exciting role in a great place.

- Thanks Sean.