

# **Recruitment Policy and Procedure**

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## Vacancies

1. Vacancies can arise through:
  - New posts being created
  - A post holder leaving the Council and so creating a vacancy
  - A post holder moving to another job within the Council
  - An existing post holder reducing their hours of work and so creating a part time vacancy

## New Posts

2. Cabinet must agree to the creation of any new post that will cause an increase in the staffing budget.
3. Reports seeking new posts must set out why the post is needed, when it is needed, the hours needed, the job evaluated grade and any benefits for the post, the overall cost of the post, whether it is temporary or permanent and if temporary, for how long. Departments should discuss the proposal with Personnel before the report is written. If it is not possible or advisable to agree the grade of the post before Cabinet has had a chance to comment on the post, then the grade must reported as "subject to job evaluation" and graded later.
4. If the Director of Finance and Community Services agrees that a new post can be accommodated within the existing staffing budget, through alterations or deletions of other posts, then Cabinet's authority is not needed. Heads of Department should inform the relevant Lead Councillor of the proposal. All proposals must be made having job evaluated the new and any changed posts.

## Vacancies Arising From Someone Leaving or Changing Jobs

5. Before these vacancies can be filled they must be job evaluated (unless an exactly equivalent job has been evaluated within the last year). If they are not in Waste and Recycling or funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) then the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Community Services and Director of Planning and Environmental Services must have agreed that they can be filled. Managers should send details of why the post needs to be filled to Personnel who will co-ordinate getting agreement.

## Vacancies Arising From a Reduction of Hours

6. These vacancies may be advertised at the current grade for the post without job evaluation or agreement from the Chief Executive and Directors.

## Advertising

7. Vacancies do not normally need to be advertised if:
  - The vacancy has arisen during the first three months of employment, and the department and the Personnel Unit feel that a suitable appointment can be made from the previously interviewed candidates.
  - A transfer of an existing employee on the same grade and in a similar job is possible.
  - The vacancy is suitable for redeployment within the Council's Redundancy and Redeployment Procedure or Medical Redeployment Procedure.
  - The vacancy may be filled by an existing part-time employee increasing his or her hours of work, where the existing post and the vacancy are identical.
  - The vacancy can be filled by a suitable existing employee, which would allow the total employee costs of the department to be reduced.
  - The vacancy can be filled by an existing employee in a designated training post, or by a trainee on the Council's Modern Apprenticeship Scheme, where that person has successfully obtained the qualifications normally needed for the post in question.
  - The Employment Committee so determine.
8. Local authorities are required to appoint "on merit" so the employing department must ensure that any vacancy is filled by a suitable candidate. This is much easier to demonstrate after a competitive exercise involving external applicants. But internal only advertisements are acceptable under certain circumstances and the Personnel Unit and the employing department will determine whether or not an internal only advertisement is appropriate.
9. Internal only advertisements can only be used where it is clear that there is at least one strong candidate who will meet all the essential criteria for the vacancy. But even if there is, the department is free to advertise externally if it wants.

## The method

10. The usual practice to fill a vacancy will be via advertisement. Recruitment agencies will only be used in exceptional circumstances and their use will be agreed between the employing department and the Personnel Unit.
11. The Personnel Unit will agree the appropriate advertising method with the employing department based on:
  - The target audience, as determined by the criteria set in the Person Specification, e.g. Whether the use of a specialist magazine is justified if a particular qualification is essential for the post
  - The cost
  - The past record using a particular publication or medium
  - The need to ensure that the advertisement is likely to be seen by all sections of a community i.e. that any particular group will not be disadvantaged because the advertisement's placement is such that it would be unlikely to be seen by that group
12. Most response to advertisements these days comes via the internet, which is also considerably cheaper than print. As a result, there is no need for all advertisements to be placed in the local press, although it will still be the most appropriate medium for some jobs.
13. The content of the advertisement is important in attracting a wide range of suitable applicants. Information in the advertisement should include:
  - The job - an indication of how it fits into the organisation, describe the duties and its location;
  - Essential criteria from the person specification to be used in short listing;
  - Closing date, interview date;
  - The salary and benefits, such as training, car allowance, relocation;
  - How to apply - address and telephone number for obtaining recruitment pack.
14. Individual candidates must not be asked to call for an informal chat before applying for the job as this can be a source of discrimination.

15. All advertisements must carry a statement "In promoting Equal Opportunities Lewes District Council welcomes applicants from all sections of the community."
16. More information on advertisements is included in the guide on Infolink.

### **Documentation**

17. In order to recruit we need a Job Description, Person Specification, Advertisement and Recruitment Pack. If someone has left to create the vacancy then Personnel need a completed Leavers Form as well.
18. The Job Description, Person Specification and advertisement should be drafted by the department and Personnel will comment as necessary. Guidance notes for the Person Specification and Job Description are on Infolink. Personnel will put the recruitment pack together.
19. The Job Description and Person Specification will be needed before any Job Evaluation can take place.

### **The Application Process**

20. All applications are received by Personnel. Applications are numbered, copied and sent to the short listing panel. A copy of the Application Assessment Form (AAF) is sent with the first batch of returned applications.
21. Any applicant who canvasses any Councillor or officer for her or his support in obtaining the appointment or fails to disclose a personal relationship with any Councillor or Senior Officer shall be disqualified.
22. Applications received after the closing date will not be considered.
23. The recruitment process depends on the capture and use of personal data and steps have to be taken to ensure we comply with the Data Protection Act. Most of those steps are built in to the procedure and documentation by the Personnel Unit, but there is a separate guide on Infolink on Data Protection requirements in recruitment.

### **Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

24. All applicants will be asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring form as part of their application. These will be returned to and kept by the Personnel Unit. This form will not form part of the normal application process.

25. From the form the Personnel Unit will:

- Advise departments of any disabled candidates who may qualify for an interview under the Council's disabled preference scheme
- Ensure that applicants for posts have complied with the requirements of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act
- Identify possible adaptations that may be needed under the Disability Discrimination Act so that these can be discussed with applicants
- Analyse the information provided and report on an annual basis in the Council Plan

### Short Listing

26. Short listing is the responsibility of the employing department, although the Personnel Unit will assist as necessary to ensure the process is completed successfully.
27. The short listing officers should be those who will be interviewing, and they should have been involved in the preparation of the Person Specification.
28. Before the actual short listing process can start, some thought must be given to the practicalities of the interview process. This will determine how many applicants should be short listed. Interviews will last at least 30 minutes and could be up to 90 minutes for senior posts.
29. A shortlist for a single vacancy ideally should be no more than six and it is not advisable to interview only one candidate unless there are special circumstances, such as an internal candidate only under one of the special provisions for filling vacancies. If sufficient numbers of candidates have not been attracted, it is important to review the person specification, the content of the advertisement, the publications used and consider re-advertisement.
30. However in areas where historically there have been difficulties in the recruitment of employees, interviews for one or two will be inevitable.
31. If more than one officer is involved in the short listing they must each follow the procedure below for all applications. At the end, the panel should agree the shortlist, based on a final agreed joint assessment.
32. The AAF must be used to assess applications to decide who to shortlist for interview. It sets out the criteria on the Person Specification and the short

- listing officer must assess each application form to see whether or not it indicates that the criteria are met.
33. In each appropriate column on the AAF, the short listing officer should indicate whether the criterion is met by entering the appropriate code.
- M Meets Criterion
- F Fails to meet criterion
- P Possibly meets criterion - either because it is unclear or the panel cannot agree on the interpretation of information on the application form.
34. If there is no mention at all of the criterion, or evidence that might possibly support it, the code given should be F.
35. Application forms must be processed fairly. For example, they should not be used as a literacy test if this is not a requirement of the job. If forms are to be used as measure of literacy, prospective candidates must be informed.

#### Selecting the Final Shortlist

36. The Person Specification has two sets of criteria; Essential and Desirable. Essential criteria should be just that – criteria that have to be met in order to be given the job. If they are optional i.e. are just “nice to have” or could be learnt on the job then they are desirable. It will be very unusual for there to be more essential criteria than desirable. More information on criteria is given in the person specification guide on Infolink.
37. For some posts, either none of the applicants or too few to form a reasonable shortlist may meet all the agreed essential criteria. When this happens, the panel and the Personnel Unit must consider whether to not it is possible to proceed to interview, if the applicants clearly fail to meet the criteria necessary for the job.
38. The process can proceed if the panel and the Personnel Unit agree that either:
- The essential criteria are wrong or are set too highly, and that re-advertising will not result in a significantly better response from applicants.
  - The essential criteria are right, that re-advertising will not result in a significantly better response from applicants, and that the applications indicate that it is possible to select someone who will make up any deficiency quickly, with the appropriate training or guidance.



39. If the view is that the essential criteria were specified incorrectly, and that a better response from applicants would be obtained with an amended set of essential criteria, then the post should be re-advertised. This is most likely to happen when a one-off post is advertised and it becomes clear that the "recruitment market" is short of the job skills specified, i.e. the Council is asking for skills which are in short supply.
40. If the decision is to proceed, the panel must:
- Decide whether any of the essential criteria are more important than others;
  - Ensure that preference is given to those applicants who have met the essential criteria earlier agreed as more important;
  - Ensure that when two or more people meet essential criteria in exactly the same way they are treated equally - that is all or none are deemed eligible for interview.
41. Decisions on the relative importance of criteria must be recorded and attached to the AAF when it is returned to the Personnel Unit.
42. If there are more candidates who meet all the essential criteria than can be reasonably interviewed then the desirable criteria may be used in the selection. Those applicants who meet all the essential criteria and the desirable should be given preference over those who meet the essential criteria alone.
43. However, applicants with disabilities who meet all the agreed essential criteria must be interviewed, whether or not the desirable criteria are met.
44. Desirable criteria must not be used to select a shortlist in preference to essential criteria. The desirable criteria must only be used to separate applicants who on their essential criteria alone are indistinguishable.
45. Again, none of the applicants or too few to form a reasonable shortlist may meet all the agreed desirable criteria. When this happens, the panel must:
- Decide whether any of the desirable criteria are more important than others;
  - Ensure that preference is given to those applicants who have met the desirable criteria earlier agreed as more important;

- Ensure that when two or more people meet desirable criteria in exactly the same way they are treated equally - that is all or none are deemed eligible for interview.
46. Decisions on the relative importance of criteria must be recorded and attached to the AAF when it is returned to the Personnel Unit.
  47. Applicants either meet or do not meet criteria which are the minimum standards required. Therefore, there must be no attempt to select candidates by grading their experience or qualifications, e.g. if one years' experience is specified, two years' experience is not better.
  48. Likewise, one type of experience is not superior to another. For example, paid experience is not more valuable than unpaid.
  49. The AAF should be completed by the chair of the short listing panel and returned to the Personnel Unit with the shortlist marked, where it should be held until the interviews take place.
  50. Departments should retain their short listing notes with the interview notes for six months and then destroy them.

## **Interviews**

51. The selection method will vary according to the circumstances, but the minimum will be an interview, based on an up to date job description and person specification.

### **Arranging the Interview**

52. The Personnel Unit will make the arrangements with the selected applicants for interview but it must not ask anyone for interview unless it has a completed AAF for that post. This is because rejected applicants contact Personnel for feedback and without the AAF it is impossible to give it.
53. The Personnel Unit will check the information given on the equal opportunities monitoring form to see if any accessibility issues have been mentioned by the short listed candidates. The interview location must be able to meet any accessibility issues identified.
54. If it is necessary for candidates to visit an establishment before or during an interview, then all the short listed applicants should be invited to visit at a pre-arranged time, and given the same factual information. Ideally the visit should be conducted by someone who is not connected or involved in the interview process. Any feedback to the interviewing panel at this stage

regarding the candidates should be avoided as this could prejudice the recruitment process and decision.

### Planning the Interview

55. The interviewing group must plan the structure of the interview and work out who will ask which questions. It is good practice for the group member asking the questions to maintain eye contact with the candidate whilst the other group members take notes.

56. In addition, the group should agree on what their understanding of the Person Specification is and what they expect candidates to demonstrate in order to meet requirements. For example, if one of the criteria on the person specification was the ability to deal effectively with enquiries from the public on the telephone, the panel might agree the evidence required to meet this criterion to be:

- determining the real nature of the enquiry;
- giving and receiving information clearly and simple;
- ensuring that the caller is referred to the appropriate person or a message is relayed;
- ensuring the caller knows that action has been taken.

57. Whilst discussing the evidence a clear agreement should be reached on the content of answers which the interviewing group would expect, enabling consistent assessment when the candidates are rated.

58. The purpose of asking questions at the interview is to assess the candidate's ability to carry out the duties of the job. Use the Person Specification to draw up a list of opening and follow up questions which will seek to establish whether the candidate meets the previously agreed criteria outlined in the Person Specification. The same questioning areas should be covered for each candidate. You may need to probe for evidence and this means a number of follow-up questions. Whilst many of these subsequent questions cannot easily be prepared in advance, the group should be clear what sort of evidence they are looking for.

### The interview

59. All interviews must be carried out by at least two people. There is no maximum, but interviews needing a panel of more than three should be very rare. A representative from the Personnel Unit will attend all interviews except for Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing jobs.

60. All interviewing employees and councillors should have previously attended the Council's in-house interviewing skills training course. On some occasions this is not possible, but at least one of the interviewing panel (excluding Personnel) must have been trained in this way. Interviewers who have not attended should be added to the waiting list for the next available course in case they need to interview in future.
61. Vacancies for members of CMT i.e. head of department, have special rules that are set out in the Council's constitution. Councillors are not allowed to be involved in recruitment to any posts but these.
62. Occasionally, because of the nature of the post, there may be a need to involve someone from a partner organisation at an interview. That is allowed, but the decision to appoint or not is solely that for the Council's staff to take.
63. At the interview the lead officer of the interviewing group must ensure that interview notes are completed by each member of the group, since this will provide the evidence for assessment and subsequent acceptance or rejection. In the event of a candidate appealing against the group's decision on the grounds of unfair discrimination, such notes would provide written justification of the group's decision.
64. After each candidate has been interviewed, each interviewing group member should apply the following rating system to the candidate based on the notes taken during the interview. In the first instance ratings should be noted on the CAF without reference to other members of the panel.
65. The rating system is:
- 5      Comprehensively meets requirements
  - 4      Nearly meets the requirements
  - 3      Partially meets the requirements
  - 2      Hardly meets the requirements
  - 1      Does not meet requirements at all
66. Interview group members should then discuss their rating scores and the evidence supporting their ratings with the other group members so that a final rating score can be determined. This should be recorded on a separate CAF for the whole group. Candidates with similar evidence should be given similar ratings.

67. Additional points should not be awarded for those candidates who exceed the minimum requirements for both the essential and desirable criteria as laid down in the person specification. Full points should be awarded to candidates where they fully meet the requirements in the person specification.
68. Each candidate must be rated according to the extent they meet the criteria in the person specification and not in comparison to other candidates.
69. The interviewing group should be aware of transferable skills which may have been utilised or gained through one area of experience and which could be transferred to another. For example, ability to file or retrieve information from a filing system would not necessarily require formal work experience in filing. It could have been obtained by keeping household bills in order, maintaining a comprehensive CD collection, keeping books in order in a library or at home.
70. Candidates often need help in identifying their own transferable skills since unpaid or voluntary work has not been recognised generally as valuable work experience. Where abilities are not immediately apparent the interviewing group will need to probe for areas where transferable skills may be applicable.
71. At the end of the interview the lead interviewing officer should invite the applicant to provide any other information they feel may be relevant. Two useful questions to conclude the interview are:
- Is there anything else in your experience relevant to the post which we haven't given you the chance to talk about?
  - Are there any questions you wish to ask us?
72. The interviewing group should be careful of making early acceptance or rejection signals. One study showed the average decision time in interviews was under four minutes. After that the decision led the interviewers to take more note of information which reinforced the decision.
73. Interviewers should encourage and support all candidates during the interview.
74. Every opportunity should be given to candidates to explain how their skills, knowledge, activities and experience match the person specification. The onus is on the interviewing group to cover all questioning areas and

candidates should not be penalised for the group's failure to do so or lack of probing where there is insufficient evidence.

## Testing

75. All short listed applicants will be interviewed but departments may wish to use some form of test as part of the selection process to help assess some of the criteria for the post.
76. Properly used, ability, aptitude and personality tests can provide useful additional information about a candidate and can be moderately good predictors of job performance.
77. Departments who wish to use tests must discuss them with the Personnel Unit who will ensure that they are relevant and fair. Accreditation to administer the nationally recognised psychometric and personality tests exists in the Personnel Unit.
78. Where a test is to be used, short listed candidates must be informed when being invited for interview.

## Making the Selection

79. An overall assessment of the pattern of ratings should be made, bearing in mind the difference between essential and desirable criteria, in order to distinguish between candidates. Candidates should score at least 4 on the essential criteria.
80. If more than one candidate meets the essential criteria then the desirable criteria should be assessed. To do that the panel should decide whether any of the desirable criteria are more important than others ( this may already have been done as part of the short listing process in which case the same importance rankings must be used)
81. Decisions on the relative importance of criteria must be recorded and attached to the CAF when it is returned to the Personnel Unit.
82. The ratings for all criteria should not be added up. Adding up the ratings can distort the final assessment, since candidates who may have scored 5 in areas given priority weighting but 3 in areas giving less weighting may have the same total score as candidates whose scores are reversed.
83. It has been agreed that adherence to the Council's Comprehensive Equalities Policy will form part of the contract of employment. It is therefore essential that candidates meet the equal opportunities criteria on the person specification in order to be appointed. Appointing a candidate

- who has indicated that they could not treat all groups fairly would be in contravention of Council policy.
84. If more than one person is considered suitable for appointment (i.e. if two or three of the candidates are considered equal first) the interviewing panel should re-examine their notes and ascertain whether the interview has been thorough and all the important aspects of the person specification have been covered.
  85. If it is not considered that the interview has been thorough the two or three candidates considered first may be re-interviewed. At this stage, particular care needs to be exercised in applying the Comprehensive Equalities Policy.
  86. It is acceptable at this stage that agreed ratings for candidates should be changed in order to avoid an equal first situation.

### **Notification of Outcome**

87. The Personnel Unit will contact the successful candidate and make the job offer.
88. All unsuccessful short listed candidates will be notified of the outcome and be offered the opportunity to discuss the reasons for their non-selection. These should be related to specific items on the person specification.
89. The employing department is expected to discuss the reasons for non-selection with all unsuccessful internal candidates.
90. Offers of appointment will be made subject to references and medical clearance. Depending on the post there may be other conditions too such as Criminal Records checks, confirmation of qualifications or confirmation of entitlement to work in the UK. The Personnel Unit will handle these checks.

### **References and Medical Clearance**

91. These days, references are nearly always sought after an offer has been made. If references are available at the interviewing stage, they should only be opened after the final assessment and a provisional appointment has been agreed so that non job related information does not influence the selection process. References will not be requested at the short listing stage if a candidate has specifically requested that references should not be taken up before interview.

92. All offers are subject to medical screening by the Council's Medical Adviser. Short listed applicants are asked to return their confidential medical questionnaire before interview. When it is decided to make an offer, the questionnaire together with a job description is sent to the Council's Medical Adviser, who usually responds within two working days. Normally starting dates should not be agreed before the outcome of the medical is known.

## **Complaints**

93. If any of the applicants, or member of the short listing or interviewing group or a trade union representative considers that there has been unfair discrimination or that this Code of Practice has not been complied with, they should inform immediately the Director of the Department and the Head of Business Services who can direct that the proceedings be suspended pending the resolution of the complaint.

94. All short listed candidates should be notified, with their invitation to attend for interview, of the Council's procedure for dealing with complaints of unfair discrimination as follows:

“The Council is keen to ensure equality of opportunity in its recruitment and selection process.

If you consider that any unfair discriminatory practice took place during the interview or recruitment process you should write to the Director of the Department and the Head of Business Services within five working days of receipt of your rejection/selection outlining the nature of your complaint so that it can be investigated. This in no way prejudices your right to take the matter to an Employment Tribunal if you so wish.”

95. On request, the person specification, the job description and the Application Assessment Form, all application forms and a list of short listed candidates will be made available to any investigation about Equal Opportunities.

## **Data Protection**

96. How the information captured from applicants is handled is explained in the document “Data Protection Policy and Procedure for Employee Information” available on Infolink. (to follow)