

Recruitment & Selection Policy

Introduction

The council is committed to providing continuously improving, efficient and effective services to the diverse communities of Brighton and Hove. However, in order to achieve this, the council recognises that it is crucial to recruit the right people with the right skills and values to the right job and that these individuals should reflect, as far as possible, the diversity of the local community it serves.

This Policy provides a framework to ensure the council has a fair, objective, consistent and transparent recruitment and selection process that promotes good practice and supports a proactive approach to equality and diversity.

As it only sets out the broad principles, recruiting managers should read it in conjunction with the more detailed guidance relating to each stage of the process published on The Wave.

If this Policy is successful, the council will not only be able to appoint talented people with the right skills, values and behaviours more consistently but the workforce at all levels within the organisation will more accurately reflect the City's economically active population.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals employed by Brighton & Hove City Council. It should be used for any appointment including permanent and temporary/fixed-term staff, apprentices, work placements and casuals.

Recruitment of the Chief Executive, Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officers (i.e. those who report directly to a Chief Officer but excluding support staff) will be carried out in accordance with this Policy's general principles and the rules set out in the council's Constitution.

It is recommended that schools adopt this policy.

Aims

This Policy aims to:

- ensure the council has a talented, skilled, flexible and motivated workforce that can deliver effective, value-for-money services in line with the organisation's strategic priorities, both now and in the future
- set out the standards to ensure that the council's recruitment processes are fair, consistent and transparent and comply with relevant legislation and good practice
- ensure that the right person with the right skills is appointed to the right job, first time

- increase the diversity of the workforce through the attraction and recruitment of high quality candidates from across the community, particularly from under-represented groups
- balance the benefits of recruiting externally with the aspirations of existing staff to develop and progress within the organisation
- ensure that new recruits are assessed not only on their technical ability, but also for their compatibility with the council's values and behaviours
- promote a positive image of the council as an employer.

General Principles

- The recruitment and selection process must be appropriate to the job concerned and be able to deliver a quality candidate for the job at a reasonable cost
- safer recruitment practices must be employed for all posts involving contact with children and/ or vulnerable adults
- vacancies to be advertised will be screened against council redeployees for potential "matches" in the first instance
- disabled applicants who meet the minimum essential selection criteria for the job will be guaranteed an interview
- no job will be advertised without having been job evaluated
- all appointments must be made on merit following assessment against clearly defined criteria
- the process should be undertaken by competent managers who have been trained in equalities and recruitment and selection and the Chair of the recruitment panel should be at least grade SO1/2
- the process must be transparent and auditable with detailed written evidence available to support the decision made in respect of each applicant
- the required pre-employment checks must be carried out on all preferred candidates
- no appointee can start work before receipt of satisfactory pre-employment checks.

Responsibilities

Executive Directors and Heads of Service are directly responsible for ensuring that:

- this Policy is followed within their own service areas
- their managers attend recruitment and selection training, including refresher training, as required
- their managers are held accountable for their practices.

Recruiting Managers are responsible for:

- familiarising themselves with, and adhering to, this Policy
- having a broad understanding of the current legislation relating to recruitment and selection
- adhering to the council's recruitment and selection processes, including safer recruitment practices where appropriate to the job role

- carrying out recruitment fairly, transparently and without prejudice in accordance with council procedures.
- maintaining their technical knowledge and skill levels by undertaking recruitment and selection training, including refresher courses, as required

Failure to carry out their responsibilities in line with this Policy may be viewed as a potential disciplinary or capability matter.

Reviewing the Vacancy

Before beginning the process to fill any vacant post, managers should review it against their service area's strategic plans to make sure there is still a need for the role in its current form. See guidance for more information.

Opportunities for Young People

The council is committed to helping young people get into work through its work placements and apprenticeships. Managers are, therefore, encouraged to consider creating suitable opportunities that would enable young, unemployed people to gain valuable work experience and skills. Managers should contact the council's Apprenticeship Programme Officer if they are interested in taking on an apprentice.

Use of Agency Workers

The council aims to fill all vacant posts with directly employed staff. The use of agency workers should therefore be kept to a minimum and used for short-term or emergency staffing needs only (up to a maximum of 12 weeks). For further information, refer to the "Using Agency Workers" page on the Wave.

Job descriptions and person specifications

All posts must have an up-to-date, accurate job description/ person specification or job role profile. The person specification or job role profile is the central tool of the recruitment and selection process as it sets down the experience, knowledge, skills, values and behaviours that are necessary to enable a person to perform successfully in that job.

All job descriptions/ person specifications or job role profile should be clear and written in easy to understand plain language, free from jargon and acronyms. Care must be taken to ensure that the person specification does not include excessive, discriminatory or desirable criteria.

Ideally, person specifications should have no more than 10 -12 key criteria against which applicants are to be assessed.

Customer-facing roles

When recruiting to roles where the employee is required, as a regular and intrinsic part of the job, to speak to members of the Public, either face-to-face or over the telephone, managers must have regard to the guidance within the "Code of Practice

on the English Language Requirement for Public Sector Workers”. This means that they must ensure that employees in such roles, irrespective of their nationality or origins, have a command of spoken English which is sufficient to enable them to perform the role effectively. The level of fluency required must be appropriate to the demands of the role and this must be specified in the person specification or job role profile.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Fluency does not relate to regional or international accents, dialects, speech impediments or the tone of conversations

See guidance for more information.

Vacancy Control Procedures

Managers must follow the vacancy control procedures in place at the time they propose to recruit.

Moves Not Requiring Selection Procedures

Vacancies will require a formal selection process except in the following circumstances:

- where an employee who is under notice of redundancy or dismissal on the grounds of capability has been “matched” to the vacancy under the council’s Redeployment Policy)
- voluntary or directed moves at the same grade as part of a service restructure that could prevent a potential redundancy situation
- where one half of a job-share partnership leaves, the remaining partner will be offered the position on full-time basis (see Job-Share Policy) before the position is advertised
- making a temporary/fixed-term employee, permanent but only where the employee had been recruited to that post through a competitive, external recruitment exercise.

Advertising the vacancy

Once released from redeployment, all permanent vacancies and temporary posts required for longer than a year will be advertised internally and externally at the same time.

Temporary vacancies for a period of less than a year, may, at the discretion of the recruiting manager, be advertised internally only. Such vacancies can provide development opportunities for existing employees and should therefore be advertised on a secondment basis. If, at the end of the initial contract period, there is a continuing need to fill the post, the vacancy must be advertised externally.

Only vacancies for a period of twelve weeks or less and which are not expected to be extended, can be covered using an agency worker. However, should it then transpire

that there will be a requirement to fill the post beyond the twelve weeks the vacancy should be advertised externally.

This approach will maximise the chances of recruiting the best person for the job by ensuring fair and open competition for jobs.

Advertising Media

Advertising will be designed to ensure that job opportunities are accessible to as wide and diverse an audience as possible and that they attract the strongest possible field of candidates.

Adverts

Recruitment advertisements should reflect the realistic requirements of the job with regard to skills, qualifications and experience and shall not include any unjustifiable or discriminatory requirements. See guidance for more information.

The council will include generic, positive action statements in its advertisements. Other targeted positive action initiatives may also be undertaken where there is data to justify this.

Executive Search

For a limited number of senior management positions or hard-to-fill professional posts, it may be appropriate to use a consultancy firm to assist with finding potentially suitable candidates. This approach may be used to complement advertising on the open market to attract a wide pool of suitable candidates.

The approval of the Head of HR&OD is required in all cases where it is proposed to use executive search techniques and the company to be used must be selected in accordance with the council's procurement rules.

Shortlisting

The recruitment and selection of employees is one of a manager's most important responsibilities. In view of this, only those managers who, as a minimum, have undertaken the council's recruitment and selection and equalities e-learning training can be involved in the recruitment and selection process. The Chair of the recruitment panel should be at least grade SO1/2 and be more senior than the post being recruited to.

Normally, all members of the recruiting panel should shortlist.

All must be impartial and be able to add value to the process. Under no circumstances must an individual who is a friend, family member or has, or has had, a personal relationship with a candidate participate in shortlisting or sit on an interview panel. The same would apply if an individual's knowledge of an applicant is such that their objectivity may be compromised. This may have particular relevance where internal applicants have been shortlisted.

In these circumstances, the individual must declare an interest and withdraw from the recruitment process.

Disabled candidates who meet the essential criteria for the role will be guaranteed an interview (see the Guaranteed Interview Scheme).

Interview Panels

For continuity and consistency, it will be usual for the same managers who were involved in shortlisting to also sit on the interview panel. Under no circumstances should a manager interview alone.

An employee who is leaving should not be involved in the recruitment of their successor.

In order to be able to Chair an interview panel, the manager must have successfully completed the council's recruitment and selection and equalities e-learning modules in the last 12 months and, normally, will also have completed its recruitment and selection skills workshop within the last 3 years. This recognises the important role the Chair plays in ensuring that the selection process is carried out fairly and objectively and that the recruitment decision is robust and will stand up to scrutiny. If a suitably qualified individual cannot be found to chair the Panel, then the recruiting manager should contact HR &OD who will assign a Chair.

In order to be able to sit on an interview panel the manager must have at least completed the equalities and recruitment and selection e-learning modules within the last 12 months. There is an expectation that they will also have attended a recruitment and selection skills workshop within the last 3 years.

Observers on recruitment panels must not participate in the decision-making process. Where a first-time recruiter is involved as part of their management development, there must be at least 2 other experienced recruiting managers on the panel.

Selection process

An interview must form the core part of every recruitment and selection process and, for a large number of posts, it will be sufficient to use it as the sole method of assessment.

However, for others, particularly more senior or technical roles, a more challenging selection process involving some form of testing might be appropriate.

Testing

Care must be taken to ensure that tests do not unfairly discriminate. Where a candidate is known to have a disability that may put him/her at disadvantage, the panel should make reasonable adjustments to the tests to enable the candidate to participate fairly. All proposed tests should be discussed with HR (see guidance on the use of tests).

Involvement of clients/service users

Where the successful candidate will have to work extensively and closely with children or vulnerable adults, it may be desirable to involve representatives of the clients/service users in the recruitment and selection process.

In order to make sure that the objectivity and robustness of the process is not compromised in any way, managers who are contemplating involving clients/service users in a recruitment exercise should read this guidance and seek advice from HR before doing so.

Post Selection Checks

The council reserves the right to undertake such pre-employment checks as are necessary to ensure the suitability of the applicant for the job in question. This means that before a conditional offer of employment is confirmed, a number of pre-employment checks must be carried out and the outcomes considered satisfactory. These include:

- appropriate written references (see below)
- health clearance
- verification of qualifications and/or professional registration where appropriate to the role
- Disclosure & Barring Service check where appropriate to the post
- Right to Work in the UK check
- Driving licence check where appropriate to the post

References

References should be sought from those referees identified on the candidate's application form. One of these should always be the current or last employer unless the candidate is a school or college leaver. A copy of the job description and person specification or job role profile must be sent to referees to enable them to make informed comment on the candidate's suitability for the job.

Two satisfactory references must be obtained for an external candidate covering at least the last three years of employment.

Where the preferred candidate is a current council employee, at least one reference must be obtained and this should be from the current line manager.

Additional references should be sought where, for example:

- the reference(s) provided contain only very limited information on the candidate's experience and abilities e.g. they are addressed "To Whom It May Concern" or only give dates of employment
- the preferred candidate has had more than two employers in the last three years
- where the original referee(s) does not provide a reference

For more information see the guidance on how to check references.

Record Keeping

Recruiting managers must keep accurate and detailed records of the recruitment and selection process in order to be able to provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates and as evidence in case the appointment decision is challenged.

All records including application forms and written evidence to support shortlisting and appointment decisions must be kept confidential and stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Records must be retained for a period of twelve months after an appointment has been made in case they are needed to defend an Employment Tribunal claim. After this time, all documents must be confidentially destroyed.

Feedback

Recruiting managers should always offer to provide feedback to candidates on the outcome of their application.

Feedback given must be accurate and any comments must be able to be substantiated by documentary evidence if required. Feedback must relate specifically to the individual's personal application and must not include comments about the specific performance of other applicants.

Complaints

Complaints relating to any aspect of the recruitment process or decisions made should be made in writing to the Head of HR in the first instance.

Monitoring

In order for the Council to ensure that recruitment and selection practices are undertaken in accordance with the principles set out in this policy, HR will monitor and review arrangements through any of the following:

- structured telephone discussions with recruiting managers prior to, and on completion of, the recruitment process
- random scrutiny of individual recruitment exercises
- manager surveys to review the ongoing effectiveness of the recruitment and selection procedures
- ad hoc surveys to review the candidate experience
- production and analysis of annual recruitment and selection statistics for the purposes of equalities monitoring.