

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

17 MARCH 2022

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to HR Committee on the Council's recruitment process.

2. Description of Decision (Recommendation)

- 2.1 The HR Committee is invited to note the contents of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the last meeting of HR Committee on 18 November 2021 members requested a report on the Council's recruitment process. The recruitment process has in recent months undergone some changes and improvements under the Council's transformation programme – "Thinking Operating Model" (TOM).
- 3.2 As part of this work customer journey reviews are ongoing across all Corporate Support Services to identify opportunities for improvements. The Council's recruitment process was one of the first customer journeys to be reviewed under this programme.
- 3.3 The recruitment process is often the first experience that a prospective employee has of our organisation. The review process identified opportunities for improvements, taking on board feedback from managers who carry out recruitment, the HR team and employees new to the organisation. Whilst this work recognised the positive elements of the recruitment process it was particularly focused on identifying any "pain points" from the different perspectives. It was identified that some improvements could be made to the process, as in some cases there were delays in people starting in their post, a duplication of some processes, multiple hand-offs between those involved, as well as some concerns in relation to the overall length of the process which was reliant on manual processing.

3.4 This feedback was used to identify actions to improve the whole recruitment process. A project team worked with NEREO (North East Regional Employers Organisation) to explore opportunities within the functionality of the North East Jobs system to support the improvements. This is a system which is used by other local authorities in the region to advertise vacancies and to administer the recruitment process.

4. Improvements to the Recruitment Process

4.1 The majority of changes made to the recruitment process were to the internal process which is followed by the recruiting manager, panel members and the HR recruitment team as follows:

- A dedicated [Recruitment Hub page](#) with all information, advice and guidance was reviewed and updated so that the steps and actions within the process are clear;
- A digital recruitment form with help text, drop down lists and mandatory fields was introduced;
- Job description and person specification templates were reviewed, standardised and updated;
- All applications are shortlisted on-line (this includes any paper applications which are uploaded);
- The system automatically ranks the candidates, using the average scores from panel members (using improved scoring criteria against the essential criteria for the post), to identify shortlisted candidates;
- The manager uses the system to automatically send correspondence to the candidate by email, rather than sending details to the HR recruitment team to email or to send to candidates in the post;
- Interview invitations are sent to candidates directly from the system;
- Notifications and progress tracking is now in place e.g to confirm whether an interview invitation has been accepted, and to check progress on pre-employment clearances;
- Interview outcomes are formally recorded in the system which are then used as the basis of the employment record for successful candidates.

4.2 The following changes and improvements were made for prospective applicants:

- The [Benefits of working for Sunderland City Council](#) are more visible and are publicised on the Council's website;
- Information, advice and guidance regarding the recruitment process is clear and provided throughout the process;
- The redeployment process is clearer for employees;

- People can be notified of new vacancies which are of interest to them via the Talent Pool “push” notifications;
- The application form and process has been simplified;
- Applicants can choose an interview date and time rather than have it allocated to them;
- All correspondence is sent via the North East Jobs site;
- Applicants can track the progress of their application;
- Applicants are now notified if they unsuccessful at the short-listing stage;
- Once a start date is agreed, individuals are notified of when they will receive their first pay.

4.3 There are some exceptions to the electronic process which remain available if necessary:

- Prospective applicants can request a paper application form;
- Paper application forms can be uploaded to the system so that they are short-listed and progressed through the process in the same way;
- If no email address is held, communication will be undertaken using the contact details provided;
- Arrangements can be made to assist prospective applicants in using the on-line system via the public access points;
- Vacancies can be advertised in other ways appropriate to the vacancy e.g. social media, professional publications, websites, school offices, community groups.

5. Benefits

5.1 The following benefits have been delivered as an outcome of the developments:

- Authorisation timescales have reduced;
- There is a standard and simplified process for all vacancies;
- There are fewer data entry errors;
- Queries are quickly resolved;
- All information about the recruitment event is held in one place
- It is easier to identify which candidates have met the shortlisting criteria;
- Recruiting managers can easily view and check progress;
- Paper applications can still be made and added to the system so that they are administered electronically;
- All communications with the applicant about the vacancy is via North-East Jobs;
- Candidates who are not short-listed are informed that they are unsuccessful;
- The process from start to finish is quicker as there are less hand-offs between people;
- It makes the best use of the available technology;

- The application form is shorter and easier to complete with guidance text available when needed, with links provided to additional information sources;
- Information is gathered once and then used in different parts of the process
- All parties are informed when they need to take some action
- All parties are offered the opportunity to improve their digital skills
- All information is held in one place so it is easier to respond to queries

5.2 The new recruitment process became live on 1 October 2021. There was a period of “bedding in”, as some processes could not be fully tested until they were in the “live” environment. However, any issues that were identified were then resolved. In addition, feedback on the new process continues to be sought to identify any further improvements that can be made to the process.

6. Future Developments

6.1 The Council's Transformation Project Team are now working with Sunderland Care and Support to implement the same recruitment process. The developments are expected to reduce the time taken to recruit, save on administration costs and improve the experience of applicants in a very competitive market.

6.2 A demonstration of the new system has also been given to Together for Children (TFC). TFC now have access to the test environment and are working with NEREO to implement improvements. The North East Jobs system is already used by Together for Children to advertise vacancies within schools and academies. (Applications are issued and administered by each school and academy).