

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

24th NOVEMBER 2022

REPORT OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

1. Purpose

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

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 17 March 2022 members were provided with an update on a range of improvements which had been introduced to streamline the recruitment activity within the Council under the Council's transformation programme – "Thinking Operating Model" (TOM).
- 3.2 Work to improve the applicants experience and further streamline the recruitment activity has been ongoing. This report sets out an update of the improvements that have been introduced or are currently being developed and some of the challenges the Council are currently facing in relation to recruitment.

4. Recent Improvements to the Recruitment Process

- 4.1 The majority of changes made to the recruitment process were introduced over the last twelve months. The work has focused on automating the internal processes which are followed by the recruiting manager, panel members and the HR recruitment team. These improvements included:
 - More accessible information and guidance for Managers and applicants
 - Simplified and standardised documentation, i.e. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

- Move to online processing of applicants including shortlisting, ranking and sending correspondence to the candidates
- Maximising the use of NorthEast Jobs for all current employees who are at risk of redundancy
- Creation of Talent Pools which notify candidates of new vacancies

4.2 In order not to exclude any potential applicant, a more traditional approach to recruitment has been maintained. This includes:

- 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 as online applicants.
- If candidates do not have an email address, alternative methods of communication will be agreed and utilised with the candidate.
- Arrangements can be made to assist prospective applicants in using the on-line system via the public access points available at City Hall and a number of other locations across the City.

5. Recruitment Activity – April 2022 onwards

5.1 Since April 2022, 254 adverts have been placed for a range of vacancies within the Council. Some of these adverts included multiple opportunities, e.g., Catering Assistants within Schools. The above figure includes 37 positions which have been re-advertised as the Council had been unable to appoint a suitable candidate.

5.2 Like most employers, the main challenge that the Council is currently facing is the shortage of skilled or experienced candidates. The following positions have proved challenging to recruit to and have had to be advertised twice:

Business Support Assistant / Courier
 Caseworker
 Catering Assistant - Rickleton 10 hours
 Civil Enforcement Officer
 Community Occupational Therapist
 Cost of Living Project Manager
 Customer Service Apprentice
 Cycle Instructor
 Domestic Abuse Homeless Reduction Officer
 Enterprise Technical Specialist - Windows & Databases
 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Lead
 Fleet Administration Apprentice
 Health Navigator
 Infrastructure and Commercial Technician
 Library Engagement Assistant PVH
 Maintenance Operative Technical (Electrician/Alarms Engineer)
 Maintenance Operative Technical (Gas Fitter/Heating Engineer/Plumber)

Move On Officer
Neighbourhood Enforcement Warden
Neighbourhood Officer
Occupational Health Clerk/Typist - 12 months
Occupational Therapist - Community
Physiotherapist - Care Home Therapy Team
Physiotherapist - Community Rehabilitation Team
Public Health Practitioner - Mental Health
Relief Catering Supervisor 27.5h
Relief Emergency Centre Officer
Risk and Assurance Specialist
Rough Sleeper Navigator
Senior Business Development Officer
Senior Strategy Officer
School Crossing Patrol Technical Officer
Temporary Accommodation Officer
Trainee Surveyor
Vehicle Technician / Fitter
Violence Reduction Legal Support Officer
Wheelchair Assessor

- 5.3 In order to address the high levels of turnover and the difficulty in filling the positions, an open advert is permanently live on NorthEast Jobs, for School Crossing Patrol Assistants, School Catering Assistants and Cleaning Assistants. These positions have historically proved challenging to recruit and retain employees within the positions. Work has commenced to modify, and simplify, the recruitment process to ensure suitable candidates are not being discouraged from applying.
- 5.4 Despite surveying over one thousand applicants, only twenty-eight responded to the post advertisement survey. Applicants were asked a series of questions covering all stages of the recruitment process and documentation. Of these a positive response was received in relation to all aspects of the process, including the application form. Candidates did express the follow concerns:
- Small word limit for completing the personal statement
 - Time consuming and pointless – current employee re: information the Council already holds.
 - Not enough information about the role
 - Older applicants may not have all of their employment history
 - Would rather fill in handwritten application form
 - Unable to utilise transferrable skills

6. Future Improvements

- 6.1 The Council's People Management and Transformation Project Team continue to work on improvements in order to reduce the time taken to

recruit, save on administration costs and improve the experience of applicants in a very competitive market.

6.2 Working closely with the Development Team at NorthEast Jobs in order to address some of the issues which have been identified, the following improvements are currently in the development stages:

- **Application Forms** – a variety of application forms are to be made available to the recruiting manager. The most appropriate application form for the position will be selected to capture the relevant information from the candidate. The option to upload a C.V. is also being added to the system. This will benefit the manager and have significant benefits to the candidates.
- **Interview bookings** – candidates will be able to select an interview date and time rather than be allocated a time. Again, this will benefit the candidates and hopefully the recruiting managers as a number of candidates fail or are unable to attend the interview.
- **Duplicate Jobs** – Managers will be able to select a previously advertised job to use as a template when uploading a job. This will save time as the manager will not need to reinput the same information again.
- **Reference Requests** – currently as soon as an application is shortlisted managers can request a reference prior to an interview. This can create difficulties for candidates with their current employer. In the future Candidates will be able to determine when the manager can obtain the reference.
- **Manager's notifications** – The system will notify a recruiting manager when the advert is closed, and the applicants are ready for shortlisting.
- **Autosave** – the system does not automatically save the application form as the candidate progresses through it. If the applicant has an IT failure, all of the uploaded information would be lost. The Recruitment team have agreed with the developers to add an autosave function for all applicants.
- **Council Documentation** – all standard documents will be automatically included in the conditional offer of employment letter which the successful candidate receives. E.g. Personal details forms, Opt out forms etc.

6.3 In order to recruit to some of the hard to recruit to positions, we intend to increase partnership working with Universities to target final year University students and provide a conditional job offer prior to successful completion of the final assessment/exams.

- 6.4 The HR Advice team are working hard to create strong links with the City's Year 10 and Year 13 pupils. This includes presence at recruitment fairs and presentations to targeted school groups with respect to careers within the Council, again focusing on areas where there is hard to fill positions and the potential to create apprenticeships. The HR Advice team have already made links with several schools within the City.
- 6.5 The Education Development Trust have contacted the HR Team requesting that they engage with KS3 pupils who have a SEND plan within the City. Apprenticeships could provide an ideal opportunity for some of the less academic students to enter the world of work.
- 6.6 To increase the awareness of the availability and range of Apprenticeships and career opportunities within the Council, the HR Advice team are proposing to hold a recruitment event in early 2023. This event will showcase the full range of opportunities within the Council, SCAS, TfC as well as working in partnership with other organisations based at City Hall to promote their vacancies. It is intended that this event could also be used to recruit residents of the City into substantive roles as well as increased awareness and interest in, T-levels, industrial placements, internships, and work experience. This event, if successful, will become an annual occurrence.

