

SANDWICH TOWN COUNCIL

RECRUITMENT POLICY

A Introduction

This procedure provides guidance to those involved in selecting staff on what Sandwich Town Council considers to be good practice.

The Council has made clear its commitment to equal opportunities for all by the adoption of an Equal Opportunities Policy. All selection processes must take place within the framework laid down by this policy.

All those involved in selecting candidates for jobs should be aware that legislation increasingly regulates employment behaviour. Failure to follow certain basic steps can lead to an aggrieved candidate referring a matter to an employment tribunal.

B Aims

The key aims of the Council's selection procedures are

- i) to maximise the effectiveness of the selection process;
- ii) to ensure that selection practice is in accordance with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and with equal opportunities legislation;
- iii) to ensure that a consistent and fair approach is adopted across the Council in the recruitment and selection of staff.

C Elements in the Recruitment Process

1 Job description

The job description and the person specification (*see 2 below*) form the basis for the selection process. On these depend the advertisement, further particulars, shortlisting criteria, structure of the interview and final selection.

Before deciding whether or how to fill a post the description of the duties associated with it will be reviewed by the Town Clerk to clarify the essential elements of the job and to ensure that the components remain relevant.

The job description will be included in the further particulars.

2 Person specification

The person specification constitutes essentially a list of abilities, experience and qualifications which are essential and/or desirable to do the job. Candidates will be assessed against it. Once these criteria have been identified they must be maintained throughout the selection process. The list should be drawn up by referring to the summary of duties or job description the appointee will be required to undertake.

A person specification functions as a yardstick in the selection process and is essential to good recruitment practice. It is also important in the event of decisions being challenged by unsuccessful candidates.

Particular care should be taken to avoid indirect discrimination.

3 Advertisements

Posts will be advertised both internally and externally. All advertisements will be approved by the Town Clerk and conform to an agreed Council style.

The aim of advertising is to attract an appropriate number of candidates of suitable calibre and qualification and to demonstrate that the Council is an equal opportunities employer. The advertisement should be consistent with the person specification and the job description/summary of duties and all requirements stated should be justifiable and objective. If there is some flexibility available this should be stated - for example, that applications from part-time or job share candidates would be considered. The advertisement should not be too wordy as this reduces impact.

4 Further particulars

Following advertisement of a post the pack which is issued to enquirers will include the relevant Conditions of Service and, where appropriate, a set of Further Particulars. The purpose of the further particulars is to provide general information about the Council, its activities and about the particular post. They will expand on the information given in the advertisement and should specify any particular selection criteria associated with the post. These should be consistent with, and based on the job description/summary of duties and the person specification.

The further particulars should contain a reference to a contact to whom informal enquiries regarding the nature of the post will be directed (normally the Town Clerk).

5 Applications

The Council uses application forms for recruitment in respect of all staff. All potential applicants should be directed to apply formally through the official named contact. This is essential to ensure co-ordination of the recruitment process, appropriate equal opportunities monitoring, and notification of unsuccessful candidates at the conclusion of the exercise. The form is designed also to elicit essential information from candidates.

6 Shortlisting

As soon after the closing date as possible those involved in the shortlisting will meet to draw up a shortlist. The composition of the Shortlisting Panel will vary according to the type of post being filled. Shortlisting will be undertaken by more than one person.

The person specification and the further particulars must be used as the basis for shortlisting against the factual elements and criteria specified. At this stage particular care should be taken to avoid both direct and indirect discrimination.

It is essential for monitoring purposes and for defence purposes in the event of a claim for unlawful discrimination that the Council keeps records of reasons for *not* shortlisting candidates.

Ideally, no more than six candidates should be identified for interview.

Particular care should be taken in fielding any queries from candidates not shortlisted, or unsuccessful following interview (*see 7 below*).

7 Interviews

The Interview Panel will comprise normally the members of the Shortlisting Panel.

The aim of the interview is to ascertain who is the most suitable candidate for the job and to ensure that the candidates have a clear picture of what the post entails.

Before the interviews begin the Panel will establish at the outset the aspects of the candidate's qualifications and experience to be explored by each Panel member. To ensure equity, all candidates should be asked similar questions, with supplementary questions structured around each candidate to enable individuals to demonstrate their relevant skills and abilities.

Interviewers should be careful not to imply discrimination by asking questions about personal circumstances which are unrelated to the job. Such questions are contrary to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy. Panel members should be aware that asking the same question of all candidates does not necessarily ensure non-discrimination; the use to which answers are put may be discriminatory. It is, however, legitimate to ask questions about health where this seems relevant.

Note taking is highly recommended at interviews to ensure that relevant information is not forgotten when assessing all the candidates at the end of the interviews.

When all candidates have been interviewed the Interview Panel should compare their formal decisions about each candidate taking care to ensure that comparison should be primarily against the defined criteria in the person specification rather than against the other candidate/s.

Once a decision has been made on whom to appoint, the reasons for *not* offering the post to the other candidates should be recorded. This information is for the Council's own monitoring purposes and is essential for reference in the case of a claim of unlawful discrimination. The reasons given should relate to the comparison against the person specification.

8 Notification

An offer of appointment may be made verbally following the interviews but by authorised personnel only (normally the Town Clerk) and must be confirmed in writing by the Town Clerk.

Members of the Interview Panel are recommended not to enter into discussion with unsuccessful candidates but to refer them to the Town Clerk. Similarly, they should not enter into 'negotiations' with the successful candidate; this is the responsibility of the senior officer (normally the Town Clerk).