

Report to Senior Recruitment Task and Finish Panel

Date of meeting:

Subject: Senior Management Recruitment - Review

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Recommendations

- (1) That Council agrees clear Terms of Reference for the Appointment Committee, in every senior management appointment process;
- (2) That the proposed checklist (set out in Appendix 1 to this report) be approved and included in the Senior Management Appointment Guidance Notes; and
- (3) That the following key elements be included in the accompanying Guidance Notes;
 - (a) Early appointment of a legal advisor to the recruitment process, whether internal or from an appropriate external source;
 - (b) Where an appointment is made by Council, a transparent approach should be taken and the provisional appointee named in the report subject to the agreement of the applicant at the time of disclosure;
 - (c) Where appropriate external recruitment advice should be procured on a competitive basis for senior positions;
 - (d) Contracts of employment should be drafted with legal advice at the earliest possible stage of recruitment and before a provisional offer is made, such contracts to conform to a standard form but reflecting, where necessary, any specific requirements of the Authority;
 - (e) External venues should be used for senior appointments;
 - (f) Recruitment and selection of candidates should include a wide range of tests and exercises suitable to the post in question.

Report

1. The Senior Management Recruitment Task and Finish Panel requested feedback on the recruitment process undertaken for the appointment of the Chief Executive. The Panel asked that candidates, the Appointment Committee and the Council's consultants were asked to submit their views on the process.

2. Separate web based surveys were developed for the candidates and members of the Appointment Committee and a word document sent to the Council's consultants.
3. In addition the Officers involved in this recruitment process have also had an input into the recommendations set out in the report.

Terms of Reference of the Appointment Committee

4. The Terms of Reference agreed by Council for the Chief Executive Appointment Committee gave the Committee the flexibility to manage the process and providing Council with regular updates throughout the process. This arrangement worked very well and allowed the Appointment Committee to make the necessary decisions to progress the process. To assist Council with what to include in the Terms of Reference, a Checklist has been developed at appendix 1 for future recruitment exercises.

Survey Feedback

5. Four members from the Appointment Committee responded and the results can be seen at Appendix 2.
6. In summary;
 - (a) The clarity around the role of the Committee was viewed as good to excellent.
 - (b) The assistance of the Council's consultants was felt to be good to excellent.
 - (c) Gilwell Park was viewed as a good/excellent venue. Those members who responded preferred the remote venue for the final assessment rather than the Civic Offices. One member commented that the venue was a positive choice as it was in the District, the suite of rooms was useful and the catering was good.
 - (d) Overall the exercises for the assessment centre were scored as average to good. One member thought that perhaps the role play session was unhelpful.
 - (e) The overall rating for the recruitment process from members was good to excellent. One member would have found it useful to understand the status of notes taken by the Committee and their use
 - (f) The length of the process was scored as good.
 - (g) Officer support was scored as excellent.
7. Only two candidates responded and the results can be seen at Appendix 3.
8. In summary;
 - (a) The Council's consultants were scored as good to excellent. Candidates found them to be open, professional and helpful.
 - (b) Candidates were asked to rate the appropriateness of the individual exercises at the assessment centre. They scored the individual exercises as good to excellent. However, one candidate was not sure how helpful the free flow presentation was at the final interview. Also, having a large Panel made it difficult for probing questioning.
 - (c) Overall, candidates thought that the exercises provided them with the opportunity to display their skills and abilities.

- (d) They rated Gilwell Park as average/excellent for a venue as a guest and good/excellent for the recruitment process. It should be noted that Gilwell Park does not offer evening meals for those staying overnight.
 - (e) The overall rating for the recruitment process from candidates was excellent. One candidate commented that the process was really professional and that if the recruitment process was the window of the organisation then they wanted to be part of EFDC.
9. The Consultant's view of the recruitment process is set out in Appendix 4.
10. In summary;
- (a) They thought that the process was well managed and they appreciated the officer support.
 - (b) They rated Gilwell Park as excellent for the recruitment process but not really viable as a residential facility as evening meals are not available.
 - (c) They have not identified any improvements for the recruitment process.

Use of External Consultants

11. As the Panel will be aware the Council has not externally recruited to the Chief Executive role for over 20 years, therefore there is very little experience within the Council of this type of recruitment. The advantages of using external recruitment consultants were;
- They provided extensive experience to support the Council throughout the recruitment process to officers and members.
 - They had thorough knowledge of the recruitment market for Chief Executive positions.
 - They provided additional resources for setting up the micro site, response handling and the assessment centre
12. The type of support is likely to vary depending on the nature of the post, however the report recommends the Council using external consultants to support it recruiting to senior management posts.

Legal Advice

13. Unfortunately, there were time delays at the end of the process due to the drafting and agreeing the employment statement. The report recommends that the drafting of the document happens at an early stage and the 'At a Glance' process diagram is amended accordingly.

Disclosure of the Successful Candidate's Name

14. A few Councillors voiced their dissatisfaction about the disclosure in the Appointment Committee's report to Council of the name of the successful candidate. Those members felt that the process of asking them to agree the appointment after the verbal offer had been made to the successful candidate was meaningless. However, it would be extremely difficult for Council to put itself in the position of the Appointment Committee as members would not have been involved in the assessment process. In practical terms, Council would be required to support the Committee's decision. Furthermore, it would be inappropriate for prospective candidates to be interviewed by the entire Council.

15. The Council does have the responsibility for appointing the Head of Paid Service (who is usually the Chief Executive) and therefore it is recommended that the name of the proposed candidate is made in open session provided that they have notified their employer and key members are aware of the appointment.

External Assessment Venue

16. The feedback indicated that the use of an external venue was preferred to the Civic offices for the assessment centre. The configuration of available rooms at Gilwell Park meant the assessment centre was undertaken in privacy and was easy to manage by the facilitators.

Assessment Exercises

17. A number of challenging exercises were selected by the Appointment Committee to test a range of skills and behaviours of the candidates. The role play exercise proved to be challenging to candidates and perhaps took them out of their 'comfort zones' which provided further insight for the Appointment Committee.

Background Papers

Survey Forms – Additional Comments. Exempt information, categories 1 (information relating to an individual) and 2 (information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)