

Meeting:	Employees' Consultative Forum
Date:	Tuesday 5 July 2005
Subject:	Recruitment and Selection Practices
Responsible Officer:	Executive Director, Organisational Development
Contact Officer:	Jon Turner, Group Manager, Human Resources
Portfolio Holder:	Portfolio Holder for Strategic Overview & External Affairs & Portfolio Holder for Communications, Partnership & Human Resources
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part I

## **Section 1**

### **1.0 Summary**

1.1 This report provides information on recruitment and selection (R&S) practices in the Council based on Harrow's R&S policies and procedures.

### **1.1 Decision Required**

N/A – Report is for information only.

### **1.2 Reason for report**

As requested by the Forum – minute 142 Employees' Consultative Forum 19-04-05.

### **1.3 Benefits**

To provide the Forum with information on Harrow's recruitment practices.

### **1.4 Cost of Proposals**

N/A

## 1.5 Risks

N/A

## 1.6 Implications if recommendations rejected

N/A

## **Section 2: Report**

### 2.1 Brief History

#### **Recruitment and Selection Procedure and Guidelines**

2.1.1 The existing recruitment and selection procedure and guidelines were agreed in September 1998 at the Corporate Joint Committee. The policy is applicable to all employees and recommended for adoption by school governing bodies.

2.1.2 The aim of the R&S procedure and guidelines was to provide officers with guidance to make recruitment decisions in the context of good practice, fairness, consistency, equality of opportunity and within employment and discrimination legislation.

2.1.3 The key principles of the policy are that:

- All posts must have a job description and person specification
- The person specification criteria must be specific and relevant to the post and be measurable and realistic. It must also indicate at what stages in the recruitment process the criteria will be measured.
- The recruitment panel must be of at least two people who have been suitably trained in the Council's R&S procedures. For posts graded POA and above the panel must wherever practicable have an ethnic minority officer on the panel and for all other posts every effort should be made to ensure that the panel is balanced in terms of ethnicity and gender.
- Posts are normally advertised internally and externally simultaneously.
- Shortlisting should be undertaken individually by panel members against the person specification criteria (personal details of candidates are not provided to the panel at this stage).
- Where appropriate and necessary selection testing can be used.
- The panel conduct the selection interview with questions based on the person specification to explore fully the skills, abilities and experience of the applicant.
- Measurement, scoring and ranking system for interview questions against the person specification criteria is recommended for panels to agree and use.
- The panel score the interview individually and then come to a panel score and make a joint decision. The final decision rests with the appointing officer.
- The appointing officer monitoring records are completed and written reasons of decisions must be kept for 6 months.

- Requirements to undertake necessary employment checks.
- Non compliance to the policy or unlawful discrimination may lead to disciplinary action.

2.1.4 The policy recognises that minority groups are under-represented in the Council's workforce and suggests positive steps that can be taken to encourage applications and increase the appointment of disabled people and black and minority ethnic people in the community.

### **15 point Equality Action Plan**

2.1.5 In recognition of the under representation of black and ethnic minorities (BME) in the workforce, in November 1998 the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Group agreed a 15 point equality action plan aimed to focus recruitment activities in order to increase the number of applications and appointments from the BME community.

2.1.6 The efforts made by the Council in implementing this action plan reaped rewards as the percentage of applications from BME applicants increased as did the proportion of BME employees in the workforce. In addition, during the first year of introducing the action plan the success ratio of BME appointments compared to white appointments increased from 0.49 to 0.68.

### **Disability 'Two-Tick' symbol and Retention of Disabled Employees Policy**

2.1.7 The Council has also actively encouraged applications, appointment and retention of people with disabilities. The 'two-tick' symbol adopted by the Council places 5 specific commitments on the Council to employ and retain people with disabilities. In addition, the Council has a policy on the Retention of Disabled Employees which outlines good practice to retain the skills and experience of staff who become disabled or whose disability deteriorates.

### **Asian Applicants Review Group (AARG)**

2.1.8 A review group was established in January 2003 as recommended by the Employees' Consultative Forum to investigate the disproportionate adverse impact between black and minority ethnic job applicants and white job applicants and ways of improving the success of particularly of Asian applicants.

2.1.9 The group commissioned various research and analysis. This included sending questionnaires to unsuccessful BME applicants, BME panel members, a workshop for unsuccessful Asian applicants and analysis of recruitment monitoring statistics.

2.1.10 The group developed an R&S action plan, which was agreed by the Employees' Consultative Forum in July 2004. The action plan identified short to medium term actions to be taken to improve R&S procedures and training which will assist all applicants regardless of ethnicity.

### **Chairperson's Guide**

2.1.11 The issue of unsatisfactory feedback was identified as a recurring factor by the research activities carried out by the AARG. As a response to address this issue, the

Chairperson's Guide on interviews and providing feedback was agreed and issued as an appendix to the R&S Procedure in December 2003.

- 2.1.12 This guide detailed the chairperson's responsibility before, during and after the interview process. It also gives particular guidance on the need to provide constructive, meaningful, accurate and timely feedback to unsuccessful candidates on the reasons why they were not appointed.

### **Recruitment and Selection Policy Statement and Toolkit**

- 2.1.13 The existing R&S policy and guidelines are currently being reviewed. An R&S policy statement was agreed at the Corporate Joint Committee in March 2005 following consultation with key partners, see appendix 1. The policy statement summarises the intention of the Council to recruit and select staff in a fair, effective and efficient manner using principles of best practice, within a legislative framework.
- 2.1.14 To support the R&S policy statement an R&S Toolkit is currently being developed. The toolkit will provide a flexible framework with guidance and information on key processes and techniques used in R&S. It will be supported by skills based theory and examples of good practice as well as practical tools e.g. checklists to assist recruitment panels in following the procedure and recording decisions throughout the process.
- 2.1.15 Many of the recommendations proposed in the AARG action plan will be implemented and incorporated in the development of the R&S toolkit e.g. training requirements, specific guidance for panel members, standardisation of processes and consistency in application.
- 2.1.16 A series of consultation meetings for development of the toolkit have been arranged from June to September 2005 with Unison, Harrow black workers group, employees with disabilities group and Human Resources. During this consultation, the actions proposed by the AARG will be reconciled within the proposed toolkit. Consultation with local community organisations e.g. HCRE and HAD will take place when a draft Toolkit has been finalised.

### **R&S Response Handling and Advertising**

- 2.1.17 From March 2005, the Council's response handling transferred to an external partner, Contact III.
- 2.1.18 From April 2005, the Council's R&S advertising transferred to an external partner, WDAD.

### **Management Competencies**

- 2.1.19 From April 2004, the Council introduced new competencies for the Council.

## **2.2 Options considered**

- 2.2.1 N/A

## **2.3 Consultation**

2.3.1 This report is an information report requested by ECF in April 2005. Therefore, no consultation has taken place.

## **2.4 Financial Implications**

2.4.1 N/A.

## **2.5 Legal Implications**

2.5.1 N/A.

## **2.6 Equalities Impact**

2.6.1 This report presents information on the R&S procedures in a factual way. Applicant monitoring information over a number of years shows that there is a disproportionate adverse impact on black and minority ethnic applicants and particularly Asian applicants during the recruitment and selection process.

2.6.2 The Asian Applicants Review Group was established to investigate the adverse impact of the recruitment process on BME applicants. The proposed action plan and recommendations made by the group are being actioned and will be encompassed as part of the R&S policy review and toolkit development.

## **Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents**

### Appendix 1 Recruitment & Selection Policy Statement

Documents available on request:

- Equal Opportunities Monitoring Group – November 1998
- Corporate Joint Committee minutes – July 1996, September 1998, December 2003, March 2005
- Employees' Consultative Forum – January 2003, July 2004, April 2005
- Recruitment & Selection Procedure
- Recruitment & Selection guidelines
- The Chairperson's guide – Interviews & providing feedback

### POLICY STATEMENT

#### Statement of Intent

Harrow Council will recruit and select all employees in a fair, effective and efficient manner. We recognise that recruiting and selecting the right people is central to the provision of high quality services. To support this, recruitment and selection will be based on a flexible framework, which promotes best practice and adopts a proactive approach towards equality and diversity when recruiting and selecting staff.

#### Introduction

We recognise that the Council operates within an environment in which other professional organisations are competing for the same talent. In view of this, we believe that it makes good business sense to ensure that effort is put into making well-informed recruitment and selection decisions. This, supported by effective induction, will improve our ability to retain employees as well as achieve our full potential by meeting our priorities as stated in the Councils Strategy for People:

- Becoming an employer of choice through a valued, committed and motivated workforce;
- Ensuring staff are supported and trained to undertake their tasks and develop their full potential;
- Embracing diversity by ensuring services are culturally appropriate and through an increase in the diversity of staff providing services.

We wish to set standards to which others aspire, and ensure that recruitment is a positive experience for all of those who are involved in the process, especially candidates. This will guarantee that unsuccessful applicants are left with a positive image of the Council, and that successful applicants have a clear understanding of what will be expected of them.

#### Best Practice Principles

We will promote best practice throughout recruitment and selection processes, and ensure that these are carried out in a lawful, efficient and cost effective manner. In this way the interests of the Council and its reputation as a fair employer will be protected.

The principles underpinning the process are designed to ensure that:

- It is applied in a consistent, fair and open manner;
- All forms of discrimination are avoided;
- Current legislation is complied with.

To achieve this:

- All panel members will have attended the Council's Recruitment and Selection training course;
- All job descriptions/person specifications and role profiles will be reviewed prior to recruitment activity;
- All recruitment and selection processes will be planned and agreed before a post is advertised;
- All applicants will be considered according to their ability to carry out a given job based on justifiable, objective criteria, which are clearly related to the key accountabilities of the job.

Recruitment and selection is a key point of engagement between the public and the Council. We should remember that 'choice' applies equally to both the Council and the applicant. The shrewd applicants will always choose the employer who applies a professional and fair approach to recruitment.

## Equality of Opportunity

We are committed to ensuring that no employee or job applicant receives less favourable treatment on any grounds including race, colour, nationality or national origin, religion, sex, sexuality, marital status, age, or disability, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements, which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

In line with best practice, references to age, sex, marital status, nationality and ethnic origin will not be released to the recruitment panel prior to interview and will be collated separately for equal opportunities monitoring purposes only. Applicants will be asked to provide information relating to disability to ensure that reasonable adjustments may be considered and made during the selection process or the work environment.

We are also committed to a positive approach with regard to applications from all under represented groups. For example we will:

- Make reasonable adjustments to the work and work environment to accommodate people with disabilities;
- Encourage applications from under represented groups by ensuring that advertisements include a positive equal opportunities statement, use appropriate and positive language, and are placed in a variety of media specifically to attract the attention of under represented groups;
- Structure the selection process to take account of specific needs e.g. provide an interpreter/signer, ensure locations are accessible.
- Prior to conducting an interview ensure that the approach meets the requirements of Council procedures, which incorporates best practice and guidance drawn from relevant codes of practice.

## Legislation

It is our responsibility to ensure that statutory obligations placed on the Council by employment legislation are strictly adhered to and we will provide clear guidance relating to the duties and responsibilities of all individuals involved in the process. The process will be reviewed in anticipation of new legislation to ensure compliance.

Advice and support will be readily available from a range of consultants within Human Resources.

## Confidentiality

Application forms and all associated paperwork will be treated as strictly confidential and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Applicants will have the right to access any documentation held on them in accordance with the Act.

This paperwork will be stored securely and confidentially at all times. All paperwork relating to unsuccessful applicants will be destroyed 6 months from the date of appointment.