



Essential Reference Paper “B”

Review of East Herts Council’s Recruitment Process

June 2015

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Recruitment at East Herts Council is currently managed in-house by managers with support from Human Resources. This has been the case since May 2013. From 2009 to 2013 recruitment was outsourced to Manpower under a shared contract arrangement with Hertfordshire County Council.
- 1.2 East Herts Council's process for managing recruitment is outlined in its Recruitment Policy (May 2013) – see Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The CIPD Annual Survey Report 2013 on Resourcing and Talent Planning found that more than two-thirds of responding organisations, regardless of size or sector, conduct recruitment activity in-house (69%). Only a very small minority (3%) outsource all recruitment activity, while just over a quarter (28%) combine in-house and outsourcing approaches. The results are similar amongst local authorities in the East of England: - 77% conduct recruitment activity in-house and 23% combine in-house and outsourcing approaches. There were no local authorities reporting they outsourced all recruitment activity.
- 1.4 East Herts Council is currently exploring options for a new HR and Payroll System with the aim of implementing self-service for both managers and employees. As part of this process the Council will consider whether to use a recruitment function that is already built into the HR and Payroll System package or whether to choose a separate online recruitment system that will support both candidates and recruiting managers.

2.0 Aims of the review

- 2.1 This review considers how we can improve our current recruitment process to ensure that it attracts candidates and promotes East Herts Council as being a great place to work. It also aims to ensure that the process is fit for purpose, supports

managers and ensures the Council meets the legislative and equality/diversity requirements.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Each stage of the recruitment process has been assessed and the findings and recommendations for each stage are outlined in Sections 4 to 10. Section 11 explores the Council's commitment to equalities and diversity in its recruitment processes and what improvements can be made. Section 12 covers the Council's current spend on recruitment and how this compares to other employers. Conclusions of the review and the key recommendations are outlined in Section 13.

3.2 As part of the review, information was collated using the following methods:

- feedback from managers who have recruited in the last 6 months;
- interviews with external candidates;
- discussions with Human Resources employees;
- scrutinising recruitment forms and documentation;
- testing the external application process;
- demonstrations of online recruitment systems by external providers;
- comparing our recruitment processes with those of other local authorities in the East of England;
- looking at recruitment best practice and trends.

4.0 Accessing recruitment information and documents on the intranet (for recruiting managers)

4.1 Information for recruiting managers on the recruitment process as well as template forms and letters can be found on the

intranet. Recruiting managers have commented that it is often difficult to find all the recruitment documents they need and weren't aware of some of the documents available such as the like for like recruitment request form

4.2 The review found that there are several different routes to access recruitment information on the intranet and each route takes the user to different pages and gives access to varying different documents. Please see Appendix 2 for further information.

4.3 It also found that a number of the documents on the intranet are out of date. For example it refers to a Recruitment Checklist which contains out of date information and a Recruitment Guide dated 2003 which refers to outdated job titles such as 'Assistant Director (Human Resources)'.

4.4 Recommendations

4.4.1 Update the recruitment page on the Council's intranet so that it contains all recruitment information including links to all the documents needed:

- The Council's aims/vision statement on recruitment e.g. reinforcing it is a great place to work, its commitment to having a diverse workforce and using fair and transparent recruitment processes etc.;
- A summary of legislation governing recruitment e.g. Equality Act, DBS;
- A summary of the recruitment process;
- A link to the Recruitment Policy;
- A link to the online recruitment system;
- Access to all recruitment forms and template letters (through the online recruitment system, if using);
- A link to current job vacancies;

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the recruitment process to assist recruiting managers;
 - Information on available recruitment training for managers
- 4.4.2 Retain the different routes that recruiting managers can follow to access recruitment information and template letters/forms on the intranet to give them maximum flexibility; however ensure that each route directs them to the same information and the information is comprehensive.
- 4.4.3 Remove or update old and out of date recruitment documents from the intranet.

5.0 Stage 1 – Reviewing the job description and person specification

5.1 Current process

- 5.1.1 Reviewing the job description and person specification is covered in Section 4.0 of the recruitment policy. The policy states that before requesting authority to recruit, the line manager of the vacancy should review the current job description and person specification to ensure it is fit for purpose for the service now and the changing needs of the authority.
- 5.1.2 A template job description and person specification can be found in Appendix 3.
- 5.1.3 Where there are substantial changes to the job description and person specification, the line manager should consult with HR to determine whether the job should be subject to evaluation. The job evaluation policy and procedure was reviewed in March 2015 as a separate piece of work and therefore, it has not been covered here.
- 5.1.4 Line managers determine how each criteria on the person specification should be assessed and assign 'F' for Application

Form, 'I' for Interview or 'T' for Test next to each criteria. Line managers also split the criteria into 'essential' and 'desirable'.

- 5.1.5 Suggestions were made under the Here to Help Programme in 2014 regarding incorporating the Council's Values and Behaviours into the recruitment process e.g. included in person specifications.

5.2 Managers' feedback

- 5.2.1 Managers were generally happy with this stage of the recruitment process. They stated that they would like to have more training on writing job descriptions and person specifications.

5.3 Recommendations

- 5.3.1 Training to be arranged for senior managers on the job evaluation process, so that they can support their managers with writing good quality job descriptions and person specifications;
- 5.3.2 Review the job description and person specification template to ensure it reflects best practice. Include a date on the job description to show when it was last reviewed and the date of the job evaluation;
- 5.3.3 Include the Council's core values and behaviours in the person specification for all posts. See Appendix 4.

6. Stage 2 – Authorisation to recruit

6.1 Current process

- 6.1.1 Authorisation to recruit is covered in Section 5.0 of the recruitment policy. It states that all recruitment is subject to approval by the Corporate Management Team (CMT). This includes permanent, temporary, consultants, casual and secondment appointments.

- 6.1.2 Managers are required to complete a Recruitment Request Form (see Appendix 5a) to outline the business case or justification for wanting to recruit to a post including how the post will be funded. The request is then considered by CMT who meet every fortnight.
- 6.1.3 Since the recruitment policy was last updated in May 2013, an alternative approval process was agreed. If the recruitment is for a 'like for like' replacement, only approval from the Director is needed. As a result a shorter version of the request form was created called the Recruitment Request Like for Like Recruitment form (see Appendix 5b). In these instances, managers are not required to provide a business case.
- 6.1.4 The demonstrations of online recruitment systems seen so far (by Jobsgopublic and Vacancy Filler) have shown that a recruitment authorisation process could easily be set up on the system and template forms uploaded.

6.2 Managers' feedback

- 6.2.1 Some managers felt that the recruitment request form duplicated the information provided as part of the CMT approval process and therefore they did not see a need for it. Managers also wanted to be made aware when the CMT deadlines were.
- 6.2.2 Some managers said that they were not aware of the alternative approval process for 'like for like' recruitment and this should be made clearer.
- 6.2.3 Managers wanted to be able to complete and submit the Recruitment Request Form electronically. They also wanted the form to be properly formatted.

6.3 HR feedback

6.3.1 The Request to Recruit form is important as it includes key details needed for the recruitment to proceed that are not always apparent from the CMT approval e.g. the grade and hours of the post and the recruiting manager's contact details. HR shortened the form in 2014 in response to managers' feedback so that it is now two pages long.

6.3.2 HR have found that the Recruitment Request Form does not allow for multiple posts to be captured and would like to make minor revisions so that it can do this.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Retain the current approval process and make minor revisions to the request to recruit forms as follows:

- make it clear on the forms when approval is required from CMT or from the Director;
- include space on the forms for multiple vacancies to be captured;
- ensure that the electronic forms are formatted properly (if an online recruitment system is implemented this can easily be achieved through standard online forms).

6.4.2 Ensure that, if the Council decides to use an online recruitment system that it includes an appropriate authorisation process which allows for electronic signatures.

7. Stage 3 – Advertising and application process

7.1 Current Process

7.1.1 The advertising and application process is covered in Sections 6.0, 7.0 and 8.0 of the recruitment policy. The policy states that internal positions will be advertised on the intranet and via a weekly vacancy bulletin by Human Resources. The aim of advertising internally first is to encourage staff development. Positions are generally advertised for 2 weeks. Agency

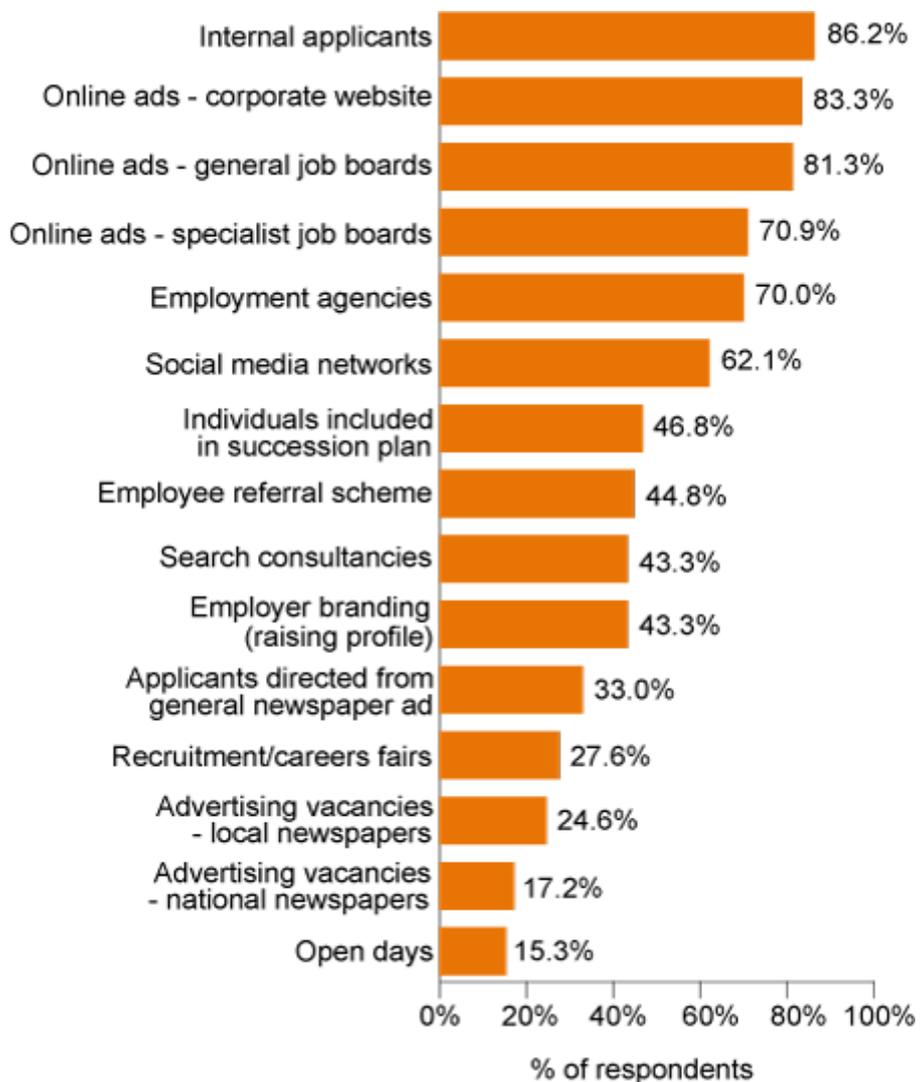
employees who work for the Council are able to apply for internal vacancies.

- 7.1.2 The policy states that should internal recruitment be unsuccessful the recruiting manager may proceed to external recruitment, provided permission to do so was given by CMT at authorisation stage. In some cases CMT will agree to internal and external recruitment commencing simultaneously.
- 7.1.3 Managers have the responsibility for drafting internal and external job adverts. An advert template (see Appendix 6) can be found on the intranet however it is very basic and should be updated. HR support managers in finalising the advert, ensuring that the Council's branding is consistent and clear (e.g. includes the relevant logos such as the Two Ticks disability symbol and the Investors in People logo), and details such as grade and salary are correct.
- 7.1.4 If advertising externally, HR will negotiate rates with the appropriate advertising provider and arrange for the advert to be placed.
- 7.1.5 The Council currently uses a variety of candidate attraction methods depending on the role it is recruiting to including:
- internal candidates;
 - online adverts on the Council's website;
 - general job boards (e.g. totaljobs);
 - specialist job boards (e.g. jobsgopublic);
 - employment agencies;
 - local newspapers;
 - national newspapers;
 - Job Centre.
- 7.1.6 When advertising externally, the Council tends to use online adverts on its website in addition to at least one other of the

methods listed above. Each method directs candidates to the Council's website.

- 7.1.7 The XpertHR Recruitment Trends Key Metrics Survey 2014 reported on employer's use of candidate attraction methods. Chart 1 on the following page shows to what extent the different candidate attraction methods are used.
- 7.1.8 The data indicates a rise in the use of online job boards since 2012 (general use of job boards increased from 64% to 81.3%, and specialist boards are up from 57% to 70.9%). The use of employment agencies has also risen significantly - from 54% to 70%. XpertHR commented that these changes reflect the need to increase effectiveness as recruitment activity and skills shortages increase.
- 7.1.9 In the same vein, the use of newspaper advertisements has decreased since 2012 (from 45% to 24.6% for local advertisements, and from 22% to 17.2% for national papers)

Chart 1 - Employers use of Candidate Attraction Methods



Survey of 203 organisations (71% from private sector services companies, 14% from manufacturing and production sector and 15% from the public sector)
 Source: XpertHR.

7.1.10 The Council’s use of candidate attraction methods reflects those used by the employers above. It also reflects those used by other local authorities in the East of England. However, the Council does not currently use social media as a candidate attraction method compared to 59% of local authorities who

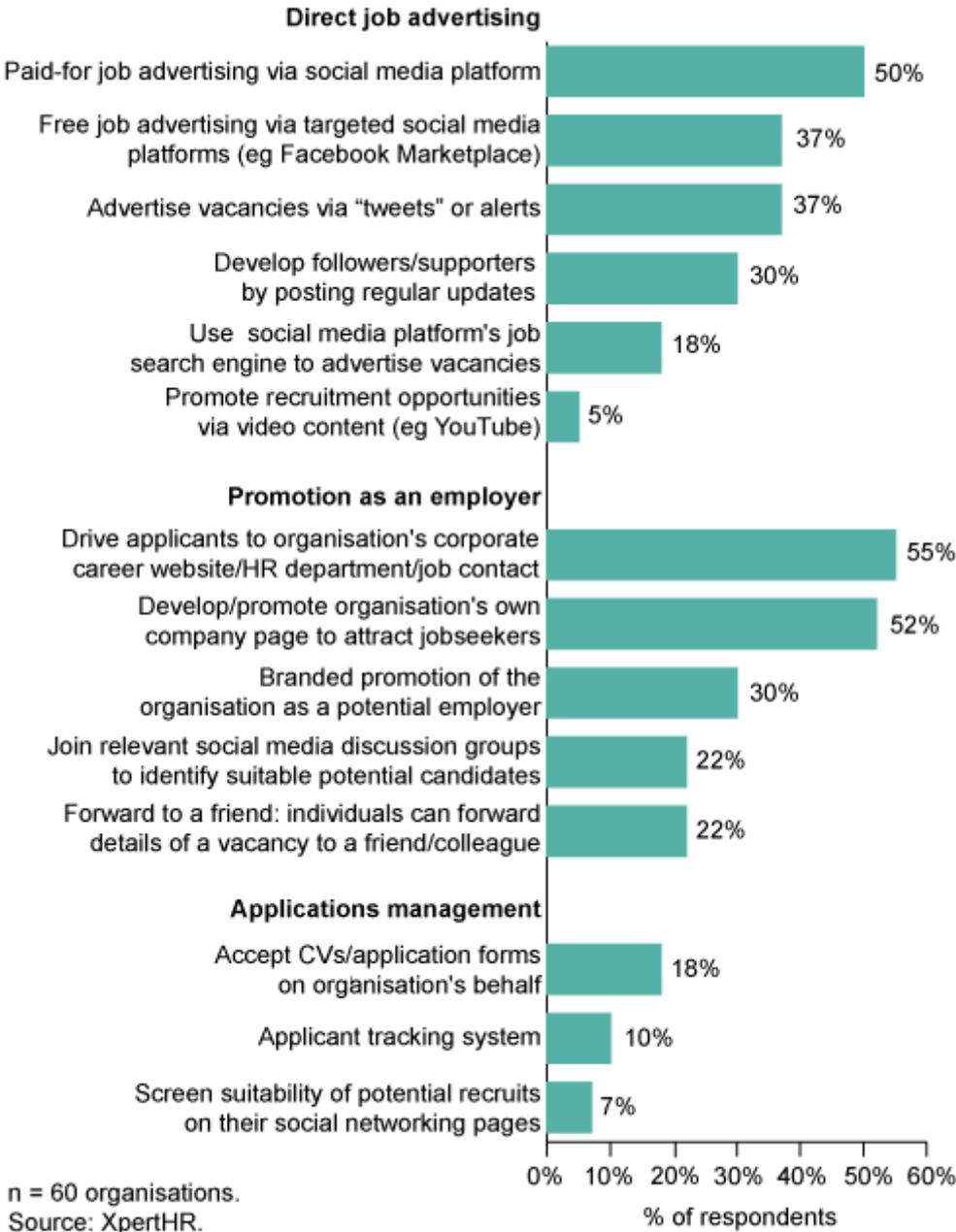
reported they used social media and 62.1% of the organisations in Chart 1 above. The Council is therefore missing out on an important tool to attract candidates.

- 7.1.11 A 2013 XpertHR Survey on the use of social media for recruitment reported that although the use of social media as a recruitment tool is still relatively new, their findings indicate that it is a rapidly increasing feature of many organisations' recruitment strategies.
- 7.1.12 The survey found that the most popular social media channel that employers use to advertise their vacancies is LinkedIn (used by 78% of employers), followed by Twitter (48%), Facebook (37%), YouTube (10%); and Google+ (6%).
- 7.1.13 Just 19% of respondent organisations using social media advertise all of their vacancies using these channels, “suggesting that employers are careful about choosing the most suitable candidate-attraction techniques to appeal to the target audience for each particular vacancy”.
- 7.1.14 The findings show that employers tend to use social media at the early candidate-attraction stage of recruitment rather than at the subsequent applications-management stage, as Chart 2 shows.
- 7.1.15 However, those recruiting do not generally restrict their use of social media to just one or two recruitment activities; on average, four different ways are used to help fill their vacancies.
- 7.1.16 The most common way for organisations to use social media is to promote themselves as an employer, either by driving candidates to their own corporate or careers website or by developing the organisation's corporate page on a social media platform.
- 7.1.17 XpertHR say that “it is a simple undertaking to build a business presence on a social media channel such as Facebook. Once registered, it is possible to upload corporate images and

information about the organisation and for a fee, run corporate advertisements on the site”.

- 7.1.18 They also say that “there are more sophisticated candidate-attraction options on offer through social media sites, such as LinkedIn's "Recruiter" tool (external website). This enables organisations to "search the widest, most qualified talent pool and get all details to better assess candidates". The tool uses "an advanced search interface" with refinement filters such as "years at company" to help target the most potentially suitable candidates, and allows recruiters to use up to 50 search alerts per month to spot new talent automatically”.
- 7.1.19 “This sophisticated kind of social media approach is less commonly used by the panel of employers when sourcing candidates - for example, just 18% of employers use the social media site's own search engine to advertise their vacancies”.

Chart 2 – How social media is used for recruitment



- 7.1.20 Whilst the Council records the candidate attraction methods it uses for each vacancy it advertises, it does not analyse the successfulness of each method. An online recruitment system would enable the Council to easily monitor and report on this data.
- 7.1.21 The Council does not regularly negotiate advertising packages with providers. Local authorities in the East of England were asked whether they negotiated advertising packages with certain providers. 8 authorities (47%) said that they did negotiate a number of adverts for a set fee, 3 authorities (18%) said they didn't negotiate and 6 authorities (35%) did not provide an answer to the question.
- 7.1.22 Using a combination of the methods listed in paragraph 7.1.5, the Council achieved a 68% success rate in filling its job vacancies on the first attempt during the period 2014/15.
- 7.1.23 During 2014/15, the Council had difficulty recruiting to various posts, predominantly in Revenues and Benefits and to a lesser extent in Planning and Building Control. On average, two or three attempts were made to recruit to each post costing the Council additional time and money.
- 7.1.24 One approach that helped the Council to find suitable candidates for posts in Revenues and Benefits was to advertise the posts on its website for a continuous period of approximately two months. An option currently being considered for hard to fill posts in Planning and Building Control is to recruit trainees, develop them internally and support them with obtaining a relevant qualification.
- 7.1.25 As the candidate attraction methods direct candidates to the Council's jobs and careers page on its website, it is important that the page is used to its maximum effect to promote the Council as a great place to work.
- 7.1.26 The jobs and careers page (see Appendix 7) currently has headings on the following: Job vacancies, Equal Opportunities,

Working Arrangements, Learning and Development, Benefits, and Forms and Information.

- 7.1.27 Whilst these pages provide some information to candidates, the Council could do so much more to promote itself as a great place to work. Examples include highlighting its commitment to employee health and wellbeing, promoting the various schemes it runs to attract younger candidates such as the apprenticeship scheme and the graduate programme, using different media such as videos and blogs e.g. a video of one of the graduates talking about the graduate programme and what it's like working for the Council.
- 7.1.28 Candidates who wish to apply for a job vacancy at the Council candidate are required to complete an application form which they can either complete online, as a Word Version and then email it or post it to Human Resources. Most applications are completed online. Our current recruitment policy states that CVs are not accepted.
- 7.1.29 An XpertHR Recruitment Trends Key Metrics Survey 2012 reported that the most common application method is an electronic application form (75% of employers used this method). Paper based application forms were offered by 68% of employers, sending a CV (65% of employers) and a letter of application (47% of employers). On average, at least two application methods per employer are available to potential candidates.
- 7.1.30 It would be difficult currently for the Council to accept CVs as the sole application method as its recruitment policy states that candidates are assessed according to how they demonstrate on the application form that they meet the criteria in the person specification. For CVs to be accepted as an application method, the Council would need to reassess its recruitment processes.
- 7.1.31 There are two versions of the Council's application form, internal and external. The version for external candidates is

much more comprehensive than the internal version as the former requires candidates to give personal details such as their home address and national insurance number, details of referees, education and qualifications, and a declaration of any criminal offences whereas the latter does not. Both versions of the application form, along with the full details of the differences between the two, can be found in Appendix 8.

- 7.1.32 It is generally appropriate for the Council to have two versions of the application form. Permanent employees wishing to apply for an internal vacancy have already provided the information on the external application form (home address, education, referees etc.) when they first applied for a permanent position and therefore, it wouldn't be necessary for them to provide it again. However, agency staff working for the Council can also apply for internally advertised job vacancies using the internal application form. Unlike permanent employees, however, agency staff won't have necessarily already provided the Council with the aforementioned information which could put the Council at risk.
- 7.1.33 To help candidates complete their application form, the Council provides Guidance Notes on its website (see Appendix 9). The guidance notes are generally fit for purpose.
- 7.1.34 On receipt of the application form, HR detaches the Equalities Monitoring Form (see Appendix 10) and logs each application received on a candidate tracker spreadsheet along with the equalities data. This enables the Council to monitor whether our recruitment processes are attracting a diverse group of candidates reflective of East Herts residents and this data is reported on at the end of each financial year in the Annual Equality and Diversity Report. Recruiting Managers do not see the Equalities Monitoring form. See Section 11 for further information on Equalities and Diversity.

- 7.1.35 The return rate of the Equality Monitoring forms is not currently reported on. An online recruitment system would enable easy reporting of this data.
- 7.1.36 Some sections of the Equalities Monitoring Form do not reflect the 2011 Census (e.g. ethnic origin groups) and therefore these should be updated.
- 7.1.37 As soon as possible after the closing date, application forms are emailed to the manager along with the shortlisting and interview assessment sheet.

7.2 Managers' feedback

- 7.2.1 Managers would like support with writing adverts.
- 7.2.2 Some managers said they have difficulty knowing where to advertise jobs.
- 7.2.3 Managers felt there needed to be a quality check on the advert before it is placed and once it has been placed to check that it is correct as sometimes links haven't worked or the information is incorrect. Managers would like to see final version of the advert before it is placed.
- 7.2.4 Candidates should receive an acknowledgement to confirm receipt of their application as sometimes they go missing.

7.3 Candidates' feedback

- 7.3.1 Many candidates have stated that there isn't sufficient space on the application form to write a full supporting statement and the form didn't allow them to format the statement.
- 7.3.2 Some candidates said they had applied online; however, they weren't sure whether their application had been received.
- 7.3.3 Some candidates said that when applying online the system timed them out and didn't automatically save their application and therefore they had to start their application again.

7.4 Feedback from testing the Council's application process

- 7.4.1 Testing on the Council's application process was undertaken as part of the review to determine whether the process was fit for purpose. Various screenshots have been included in Appendix 11 to provide further details for each stage that the candidate has to progress through to apply for a job with the Council.
- 7.4.2 The process for completing an *online* application form was found to be quite arduous with the candidate having to enter information that could be automatically entered e.g. post number, job title, service and location. It also found that the system does not allow the candidate to save their application and return to complete it at a later date.
- 7.4.3 The process for completing the Word version of the application form could also be made easier. E.g. the form does not allow the candidate to copy and paste text from other documents such as their CV.
- 7.4.4 It was also found that most employers' job application processes allowed candidates to set up job alerts, save and return to their application at a later date and basic information was automatically entered on the form.
- 7.4.5 It was also found that most employers inform candidates that if they have not had a response within two weeks of the closing date they should assume they have not been successful. The Council also informs external candidates in a similar way (by way of its Guidance Notes); however, the Council writes to internal candidates who have been unsuccessful at the shortlisting stage.

7.5 Recommendations

- 7.5.1 The Council should continue to use the candidate attraction methods it currently uses as these have proven successful on the whole however it should explore the use of social media as an additional method to alert potential candidates of job vacancies and direct them to the Council's website. It is

suggested that LinkedIn and Twitter are used in this way in the first instance and then to explore whether other social media could be used, e.g. Glass door, and at a later date to consider the more sophisticated candidate attraction options on offer through social media sites, such as LinkedIn's 'Recruiter' tool.

7.5.2 The Council should closely monitor the performance of the candidate attraction methods it uses for each post being recruited to which will ensure that it is providing good quality candidates in the most cost effective way. An online recruitment system would enable this data to be captured and reported on effectively.

7.5.3 The Council's jobs and careers page on its website should be refreshed and updated to promote the Council as a great place to work. Suggestions include:

- Promote the various schemes the Council offers to support young people such as the apprenticeship scheme and the graduate programme;
- Include a link to the Local Government Association's document on career opportunities in local government for young people. It explains the wide range of jobs available in local government, different career paths that are available and the benefits of joining local government.
- Use a variety of media such as videos and blogs to promote the benefits of working for the Council e.g. a video of one of the graduates explaining his/her role, how the graduate programme works and the support they have received from the Council;
- Promote the benefits of working for the Council e.g flexible working, generous holiday leave, learning and development, and pension scheme.
- Highlight the Council's commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of its employees by providing

information/links to initiatives such as Step Jockey, Workplace Challenge and the Cycle to Work Scheme;

- 7.5.4 Update the advert template to highlight the main benefits of working for the Council and include logos such as Investors in People, Two Ticks and H2H.
- 7.5.5 Agency staff working for the Council should complete the external application form when applying for internally advertised jobs.
- 7.5.6 It is recommended that the Council considers having an online recruitment system which is either (a) an integral part of the HR and Payroll system or (b) a separate package that can interface with the HR and Payroll system. An online recruitment system would provide a self-service process for candidates and recruiting managers. The benefits would be as follows:
- Saves time for recruiting managers and Human Resources – e.g. letters can be automatically generated, references can be automatically chased, and shortlisting can be completed electronically;
 - Promotes a more professional image to candidates – e.g. candidates can book interview slots themselves, the system can save their personal details so that they don't have to enter them again if they wish to apply for more than one role, they can register for job alerts, they are automatically kept up to date with where their application is in the process, and they can link their social media accounts to their application;
 - More environmentally friendly – most of the process can be done electronically without needing to print off documents - e.g. authorisation process, shortlisting, invite to interview letters;
 - Monitoring and Reporting of data is easier – standard reports are available such as time to hire, cost to hire, equalities monitoring etc.

7.5.7 Explore whether it would be beneficial for the Council to negotiate advertising packages with external providers e.g. jobs go public

7.5.8 *Recommended Changes to the application form:*

- Include the HR email address before the postal address to encourage more candidates to email their applications to us;
- Include a space for referees' email addresses to help speed up the process of obtaining references;
- Allow more space in the supporting information section and allow the candidate to format this section;
- Include a question which asks the candidate where they saw the job advertised.

7.5.9 *Recommended Changes to the Equalities Monitoring Form:*

- Align the ethnic origin groups stated on the form with those used in the 2011 Census;
- Include options for religious groups in line with the groups used in the 2011 Census;
- Include a question regarding sexual orientation with options to tick in line with the groups used in the 2011 Census;
- Remove the question where did you see the post advertised and include it on the application form;
- On the last page, where it states where to return completed forms to, include the HR email address as well as the postal address;
- Include the Investors in People and Two Ticks symbols on the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

8. Stage 4 – Shortlisting candidates

8.1 Current Process

- 8.1.1 Shortlisting candidates is covered in Sections 8.0, 9.0 and 10.0 of the recruitment policy. Shortlisting is carried out by a panel. The policy states that recruitment panels should be 'representative of gender and, if possible, by race'. At least one member of the panel must be trained by the Council in recruitment and selection. The same shortlisting panel should be used to interview.
- 8.1.2 The recruitment panel shortlists the candidates against the criteria in the person specification using a scoring system of 0 to 3 where 0 is no evidence provided and 3 is exceeds requirements of the person specification
- 8.1.3 The panel are required to record their scores against each criterion on a shortlisting grid (see Appendix 12). Candidates scoring less than 12 overall are rejected and the highest scoring candidates are invited to interview.
- 8.1.4 Managers contact successful candidates to invite them for interview. There is a template letter available on the intranet (see Appendix 13).
- 8.1.5 External candidates are advised in the Guidance Notes that if they have not heard anything within two weeks of the closing date, then they can assume that they have not been shortlisted. This is standard practice in many organisations. Internal candidates in the Council, however, are informed in writing if they have been unsuccessful and a template letter is provided (see Appendix 14)
- 8.1.6 The Council operates a Disability Two Ticks Scheme (see Appendix 15) which means that candidates with a disability who have indicated they wish to be considered under this scheme and meet the essential criteria of the person specification will be guaranteed an interview. Managers are informed by HR of any candidates who have applied under this scheme. More

information on the Two Ticks Scheme can be found in Section 11.

8.2 Managers' feedback

- 8.2.1 Some managers commented that they did not like the format of the shortlisting grid and they only use it as a summary to send to HR. They often develop their own shortlisting form so they can capture more information and to use should they be asked by candidates to give feedback;
- 8.2.2 Managers weren't always clear whether they could take into account what was written on the application form when scoring candidates at the interview;
- 8.2.3 There was a suggestion by some managers that HR should send the invite to interview letters out as managers don't have time to do this;
- 8.2.4 Some managers hadn't realised that they didn't have to inform external candidates if they had been unsuccessful at the shortlisting stage. They said that if this is the case it should be stated in the advert;
- 8.2.5 Most managers said they gave feedback to unsuccessful candidates at the shortlisting stage as they felt it was the right thing to do;
- 8.2.6 One manager felt that the sentence on the shortlisting grid which states 'candidates scoring less than 12 overall should be rejected, leaving a shortlist of candidates for interview' was misleading as it suggests that the panel have to interview all those scoring 12 or above.

8.3 Candidates' feedback

- 8.3.1 Candidates gave positive feedback on the shortlisting process and only one candidate experienced a delay in being invited for an interview following the closing date. Candidates reported that the communication was clear and they were offered a suitable date and time for the interview.

8.4 Recommendations

- 8.4.1 To change the wording in the Recruitment Policy to state that all panel members should be trained in the Council's recruitment processes rather than 'panels should be representative of race and gender'. The recruitment training will cover equalities and diversity and legislative requirements.
- 8.4.2 Include wording in the advert and on intranet pages which states that if candidates haven't had a response within 2 weeks of the closing date they should assume that they have been unsuccessful.
- 8.4.3 On the shortlisting grid, add the following sentence to address the issue raised in paragraph 8.2.6:

"From the shortlist, managers should invite the highest scoring candidates for interview"
- 8.4.4 To review the shortlist grid form to ensure it is fit for purpose.

9. Stage 5 - Interviewing

9.1 Current Process

- 9.1.1 Interviewing is covered in Sections 8.0, 9.0 and 10.0 of the recruitment policy.
- 9.1.2 The policy states in Section 10.5 that candidates must bring proof of their right to work in the UK and relevant qualifications (as stated on their application form) to the interview. Copies should be taken before the interview takes place and securely retained by the recruiting manager until the appointment is made.
- 9.1.3 The panel should meet before the interview to discuss and finalise the questions that will be asked at interview. Questions should be designed to assess whether the candidate meets the requirements of the person specification.

- 9.1.5 Tests can be used as an additional method of assessing candidates.
- 9.1.6 Each panel member takes notes during the interview and individually scores the candidates using a scale of 0 to 5 where 0 is 'does not match the specification' and 5 is 'exceeds the specification'
- 9.1.7 An Interview Assessment Sheet (see Appendix 16) is completed by the panel for each candidate
- 9.1.8 An offer of appointment is made to the candidate who scores the highest points in the interview (and any tests if applicable). If none of the candidates meet the requirements of the role the panel is not obliged to offer the job.
- 9.1.9 Managers inform unsuccessful candidates using the template letter provided (see Appendix 17).

9.2 Managers' feedback

- 9.2.1 Managers find there are problems with finding suitable rooms to interview in (e.g. at Bishops Stortford there are only 2 large rooms available). Sometimes the rooms are untidy and have boxes stacked in them. They are concerned that it doesn't give a very professional image of the Council;
- 9.2.2 Managers would like more guidance on interviewing candidates with disabilities e.g. what adjustments should be made;
- 9.2.3 Some managers felt that the scoring criteria for shortlisting should be the same as for interviewing;
- 9.2.4 Managers would ideally like to have a bank of interview questions that they can choose from.

9.3 Candidates feedback on the interview process

- 9.3.1 Candidates gave positive feedback on the interview process. They said they didn't experience any delays being invited to interview and the interview itself was as expected.

9.4 Recommendations

- 9.4.1 The Council should consider introducing core values and behaviours into the interviewing process for all posts which will explore the candidates' professional experiences around the values the Council sees as essential such as Trust, Integrity and Diversity.
- 9.4.2 Training to be arranged for recruiting managers on managing candidates with disabilities.
- 9.4.3 Consider developing a bank of example interview questions for recruiting managers to select from.
- 9.4.4 Consider whether the definitions for shortlisting and interview scores should be the same.

10. Stage 6 – Provisional offer and pre-employment checks

10.1 Current process

- 10.1.1 The provisional offer and pre-employment checks stage is covered in Section 11.0 of the recruitment policy.
- 10.1.2 When the panel has decided who to appoint to the post, the recruiting manager contacts the successful candidate and offers the appointment. The candidate is informed that the offer is conditional on satisfactory pre-employment checks (see 10.1.5 below). The recruiting manager discusses and agrees the starting scale point and salary with the candidate.
- 10.1.3 Recruiting managers complete a statement of employee particulars (see Appendix 18) and attach the successful candidate's application form, interview assessment sheets, copies of their right to work in the UK and qualifications and send them to HR. The manager should also return all application forms to HR.
- 10.1.4 It is important that **all** the paperwork is returned to HR. An Internal Audit Report completed in August 2014 commented

that in most cases the appropriate documentation was retained on file however there were omissions noted in respect of shortlisting and interview and selection documentation being retained. This has been addressed and actions taken by HR to reinforce the message to recruiting managers.

- 10.1.5 On receipt of all the paperwork, HR undertake the pre-employment checks which include:
- two references (one of which should be from the current employer)
 - medical clearance from Occupational Health and,
 - a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (where applicable for the post).

The paperwork is currently sent by post.

- 10.1.6 Once managers are satisfied with the outcomes of the pre-employment checks, HR send out the letter of appointment and the statement of particulars.
- 10.1.7 HR retain the recruitment paperwork for one year after the closing date and then destroy it as confidential waste.

10.2 Managers' Feedback

- 10.2.1 Managers think that the pre-employment checks take too long.
- 10.2.2 One manager suggested that the pre-employment check documentation could be given to candidates to complete at the interview stage e.g. the occupational health questionnaire could be completed and sealed in an envelope and passed to Occupational Health if they candidate was successful or shredded in envelope if they were unsuccessful.
- 10.2.3 Some managers said they weren't sure whether permission to request references was stated on the application form.

- 10.2.4 One manager said that a candidate was asked to bring in their passport three times – once at interview, once to provide ID to HR and once for DBS purposes.
- 10.2.5 Managers thought it would be useful to have Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to give guidance on e.g. the process when a fixed term job becomes permanent.

10.3 Candidate feedback

- 10.3.1 Candidates felt that this part of the process was fine and they didn't experience any delays. They said that they understand that delays can often be caused by their referees.
- 10.3.1 Candidates suggested that referees should be emailed to speed up the process; however, there was no room on the application form to include email addresses.

10.4 HR comments

- 10.4.1 Pre-employment checks are progressed promptly by HR; however, there are often delays with receiving references. HR chase referees where there is a delay and when necessary notify the candidate so that they can also chase the referees themselves.
- 10.4.2 XpertHR survey 2013 reported that, of the 208 employers taking part in the research, just 14 (6.7%) do not conduct background checks on candidates as part of their recruitment process. Three employers in four (75.5%) carry out checks on all candidates, while the remainder (17.8%) do so for some vacancies.
- 10.4.3 The main types of checks that employers carry out are:
- references (99.5% of employers);
 - seeing originals (or certified copies) of documents that confirm the candidate's identity (89.7%);
 - seeing original copies (or certified copies) of qualifications (78.4%);

- using the interview to follow up information given in the candidate's CV or application form (73.7%);
- Disclosure and Barring Service/Disclosure Scotland/Access NI checks (70.1%);
- declarations from the candidate about unspent criminal convictions (64.4%); and
- seeing original copies (or certified copies) of documents that confirm the candidate's address (59.3%).

10.4.4 The XpertHR survey also found that when employers obtain references on potential recruits, the most common approach is to obtain two references - this is the case for almost nine employers in 10 (87.6%). Just 2.6% of recruiting organisations rely on one reference alone, while one in 10 (9.8%) seek three or more references.

10.4.5 When looking at responding employers that obtain background checks on candidates, the survey found that all of them accompany their request for a reference with guiding information to help referees produce a more tailored reference. Three employers in four (75.1%) provide guidance for the referee on information they should supply. Other types of information provided include:

- a copy of the job description for the vacant role (46.6% of employers);
- a copy of the person specification (37.3%); and
- a summary of the vacant role (28%).

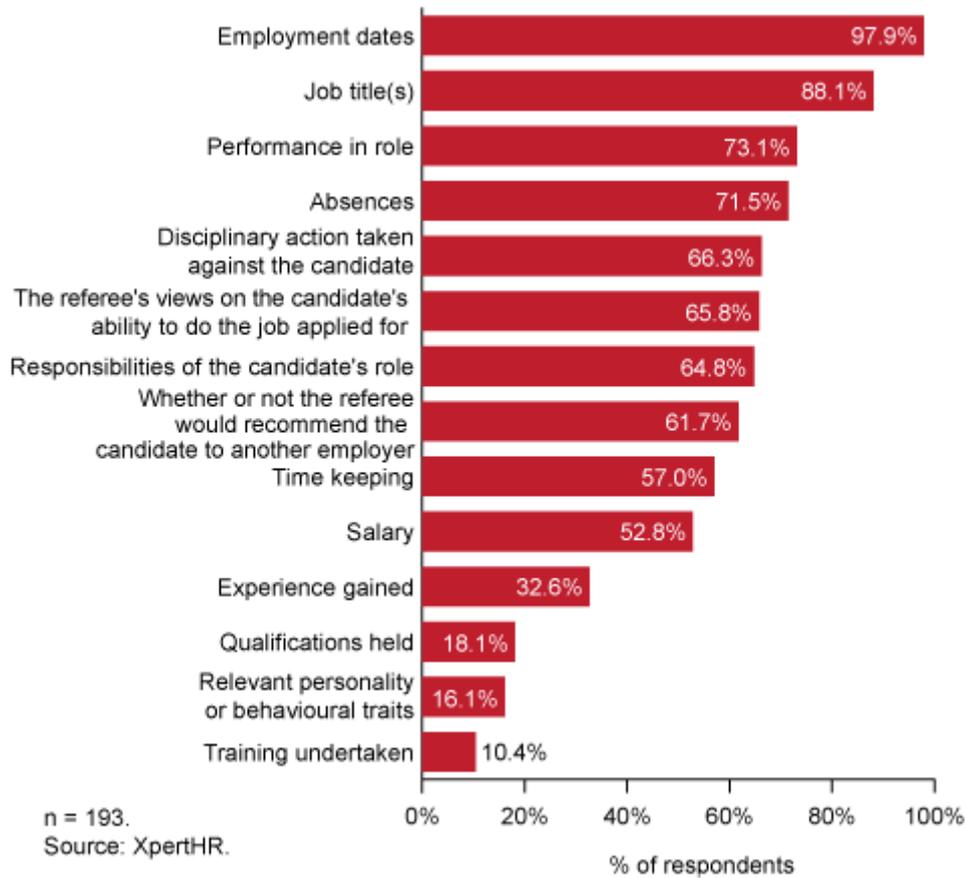
10.4.6 The Council's reference request asks previous employers for the following information about candidates:

- Dates of employment
- Position held
- Reason for leaving

- Whether the employee was honest, industrious, reliable, a good time keeper and able to get along and work well with others
- Whether the employee enjoyed good health during their employment
- How many days sickness absence the employee had in the last 2 years
- Whether they would re-employ the employee and, if not, why not
- Any other information which could help the Council make a decision on the employee's application

10.4.7 The XpertHR survey found that employers seek a wide range of information on potential recruits when obtaining references, as shown below in chart 4.

Chart 4: Types of information employers seek when obtaining references



10.4.8 The Council, therefore, follows best practice in terms of the information it requests in its reference request form; however, unlike some employers, it does not attach documents, such as the job description, to the reference request.

10.5 Recommendations

10.5.1 The pre-employment checks can be speeded up by asking candidates to include email work addresses for their referees on the application form.

11. Equality and Diversity

11.1 The Council states on the jobs and career page on its website that it is firmly committed to providing and promoting equality for all its employees and the wider community. A link to its Equality and Diversity Policy is provided on the page which

states that “the Council will recruit and treat candidates for jobs or promotion on objective criteria, having regard to relevant experience, potential, skills and abilities. No candidate or employee will be placed at a disadvantage by requirements or conditions which are not necessary to the job, or which constitute direct or indirect discrimination”

- 11.2 Equalities data for external candidates is collected from the Equalities Monitoring Forms which candidates are asked to complete as part of the application process. The Council reports on this data in its Equality and Diversity Annual Report.
- 11.3 The annual report analyses the data using 5 of the 9 protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 - Gender, Ethnicity, Age, Religion or Belief, and Disability Status.
- 11.4 Comparison data is used to understand whether the Council is successful in attracting a diverse range of candidates that reflects the residents of East Hertfordshire. The report highlights any issues and makes recommendations to address these issues.
- 11.5 The 2013/14 Annual Equalities and Diversity Report found that the Council attracted a diverse range of external candidates in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, religion and belief, and disability status which is reflective of the profile of East Hertfordshire residents.
- 11.6 The Council takes steps to ensure that it does not discriminate against particular groups e.g. recruiting managers do not see the Equalities Monitoring Forms, and in the letter inviting candidates to an interview it asks them to notify the recruiting manager if they need any adjustments.
- 11.7 Equalities monitoring data is currently analysed for external candidates at the application stage only. In order to fully understand whether any part of the recruitment process is impacting on certain groups, it is recommended that equalities data is analysed at the shortlisting and interview stages.

- 11.8 Recruiting Managers are trained in the Council's recruitment process which covers equalities and diversity issues.
- 11.9 The Council is approved by Job Centre Plus to use the 'Two Ticks' Disability symbol. Employers who use the symbol have agreed that they will take action on five commitments which are:
1. To interview all disabled candidates who meet the minimum (essential) criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities
 2. To ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss, at any time, but at least once a year, with disabled employees what can be done to make sure they can develop and use their abilities
 3. To make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment
 4. To take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make these commitments work
 5. To annually review the five commitments and what has been achieved, plan ways to improve on them and let employees and Jobcentre Plus know about progress and future plans.
- 11.10 The Council is currently meeting all the commitments. With regard to commitment 1, this is clearly stated in the recruitment policy and the review found that this is happening in practice.
- 11.11 The Council is meeting commitment 2 in various ways: the Equalities Officers Group supports the Corporate Management Team by guiding the implementation of the Comprehensive Corporate Equality Plan; employees can feed back any issues through the Here to Help Forum and the Staff Survey; support can be sought from Human Resources and Occupational

Health; and issues can also be raised through one to one's or through the PDR process.

- 11.12 With regard to commitment 3, the Council has a policy on Employing and Managing People with disabilities which ensures that people with disabilities are offered all reasonable support, equipment and facilities to assist them during the recruitment process and whilst in employment.
- 11.13 The Council is meeting commitment 4 through e.g. training its recruiting managers on equalities issues and supporting employees with reasonable adjustments, and it is currently offering various awareness briefing sessions on topics such as mental health, deafness and dementia.
- 11.14 The Council had an annual review with Job Centre Plus in August 2015 and is therefore meeting commitment 5.

12. Recruitment Statistics

12.1 Recruitment Spend

- 12.1.1 The Council reported in its Turnover Report 2014/15 that it spent £57,499.26 on recruitment. There were two senior management appointments made during 2014/15. The recruitment spend, which covers advertising costs, agency and search fees, was for 53 vacancies. This equates to an average cost per hire of £1,084.89.
- 12.1.2 An XpertHR Recruitment Trends Key Metrics Survey 2014 reported that the typical (median) costs associated with filling a vacancy are £4,000 for a manager and £1,000 for other staff. Only a fifth (20.7%) of employers have managed to reduce the cost of hiring a new employee. Four respondents in 10 (41.9%) said the cost to hire is actually rising at their organisation, while almost three in 10 (31.5%) say it has remained the same.

12.2 Time to hire

- 12.2.1 The Council does not currently analyse the average time to hire a new employee. Again an online recruitment system would be able to report on this data.
- 12.2.2 The aforementioned XpertHR survey reported that, based on the median figures provided by respondents, recruitment - from the point that a vacancy has been identified until the start date - typically takes 22 weeks for directors, 14 weeks for managers and 8 weeks for other staff.
- 12.2.3 For most employers, the time to hire has remained the same in the past 12 months.

13. Conclusion and Key Recommendations

- 13.1 The review has found that, on the whole, East Herts Council's recruitment process is working reasonably well and is in line with best practice. However there is significantly more that it could do to attract and retain candidates.
- 13.2 The Council uses candidate attraction methods which are reflective of those used by other local authorities in the East of England and other employers in general, and these have been successful in recruiting to most posts.
- 13.3 However, unlike the majority of employers, the Council does not use social media as one of its methods. The use of social media as a recruitment tool is predicted to continue to grow and therefore it is recommended that the Council should follow this trend.
- 13.4 The most popular social media channels were found to be 'LinkedIn' followed by 'Twitter'. It is recommended therefore that the Council uses these channels alongside its current candidate attraction methods to direct candidates to job

vacancies on its website. Depending on the success of this, the Council could then explore whether to use more sophisticated candidate attraction options on offer through social media sites such as LinkedIn's 'Recruiter' tool, or whether to use other social media such as 'Glassdoor'.

13.5 The Council has difficulty recruiting to various posts in Revenues and Benefits and Planning and Building Control. The Council should explore different ways to attract candidates into these roles. For example, recruiting managers could use their LinkedIn networks to target particular candidates

13.6 The Council's jobs and careers page on its website, which candidates are directed to if they wish to apply for one of its job vacancies, provided some information on e.g. working arrangements and equal opportunities, however it did not promote the Council as a great place to work. It is recommended that this page is refreshed and updated as appropriate. It should e.g. highlight the Council's commitment to the health and wellbeing of its employees and the various initiatives it is currently running. It should also do more to promote the various benefits of working for the Council such as generous annual leave, flexible working and an excellent pension scheme. It is recommended that different formats are used such as videos and blogs to make the site more interesting and appealing to a wide range of potential candidates.

13.7 The application process could be made easier for candidates. The most common complaint the Council receives from candidates is there not being enough space on the application form for them to address how they meet the person specification and the form not allowing them to format what they have written. A test of the online application form found that candidates had to enter text which could be automatically inserted for them such as the post number and job title. The test also found that the online process does not consistently

allow the candidate to save their application and return to complete it at a later date. Research of other employer's application processes found them to be more sophisticated than East Herts Council's regarding the above and they also allowed candidates to set up email job alerts.

- 13.8 The Council does not currently accept CVs as an application method however many employers do. Submitting a CV is a less time consuming method of applying for a job compared to an application form and therefore the Council needs to ensure that, if it continues to require candidates to complete an application form, it makes the process and the form as simple and quick to complete as possible.
- 13.9 Concerns have recently been raised that agency staff currently working for the Council are only required to complete the Council's internal application form resulting often in insufficient information being collected presenting a possible risk to the Council. Agency workers who work for the Council should therefore complete the external application form.
- 13.10 In order to create a more professional recruitment experience for candidates and to have a more efficient process for managers and HR, an online recruitment system is recommended. The Council will need to decide whether this is an integral function of the HR and Payroll system it chooses or it operates as a separate package which can integrate with the former.
- 13.11 Access to recruitment information and documents on the intranet could be easier. The review found that there are currently various different routes to access recruitment information and documents on the intranet. Each route directs users to a different page which does not contain all the recruitment information that they might need. One recruitment page should be set up containing all recruitment information and documents.

- 13.12 Managers were generally happy with their role in the current recruitment process. In addition to minor changes to some of the recruitment forms, they reported they would like more support with writing job adverts and job descriptions and they would also like to receive training on interviewing candidates with disabilities. Managers would like Frequently Asked Questions to be put on the intranet.
- 13.13 Candidates reported a generally positive experience of the Council's recruitment processes. They said that the communication with them throughout was very good and the process met their expectations.
- 13.14 The review found that minor changes were needed on some of the recruitment documentation e.g. having space on the application form for email address for referees, and allowing space for requests to recruit to multiple posts on the request to recruit form.
- 13.15 The review found that the Council complies with the Equality Act 2010 with regard to how it advertises vacancies, shortlists and interviews candidates. The Council demonstrates this through best practice recruitment processes such as monitoring equalities information, using the Disability Two Ticks System, and training recruiting managers in equalities and diversity.
- 13.16 The recruitment policy is generally fit for purpose; however, it will need some minor amendments if the recommendations in this review are accepted. Once an online recruitment system is implemented, it is recommended that the recruitment policy is reviewed further.