

MINUTES of the meeting of Employment Panel held at Committee Room 1, Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Tuesday 31 March 2015 at 1.00 pm

Present: Councillor AW Johnson (Chairman)
Councillor (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: KS Guthrie, PM Morgan and AJW Powers

Officers: Bill Norman, TJ Postles

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor GA Vaughan-Powell and Councillor R Preece.

13. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no substitutions.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

15. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16. RECRUITMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The meeting was attended by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development and a representative from West Midlands Employers (WME), the organisation appointed to manage the recruitment process for the Director of Resources and the Director of Adults and Wellbeing.

A Member asked about value for money and cost effectiveness. It was explained that the recruitment strategy represents value for money in a number of ways. For the Director and Assistant Director of Adults and Wellbeing posts, the package includes executive search in recognition that these posts are known to be hard to recruit to. Recruitment for these posts includes a high profile advertisement and editorial feature in the Municipal Journal and the Guardian. The advertisement for the Director of Resources post has been published and is less high-profile, given that there is a wider pool of potential applicants for this post.

The overall approach is considered to be robust and WME's role is to support the process through to the final Employment Panel stages.

It was noted that the recruitment to the Director of Resources post will coincide with the election in May 2015. As the future membership of the Employment Panel will still be to be identified at that stage, the report recommends that the shortlisting for the Director of Resources be delegated to the Director for Economy, Communities and Corporate.

Detailed costings within the recruitment exercise include search costs of £6000 for the Director of Adults and Wellbeing which is a reduced rate for Herefordshire. In addition to the extensive advertising for this post a microsite and video has been produced. This features the Chief Executive and the current Interim Director, promoting Herefordshire and describing how the successful candidate can make a difference to peoples' lives. The overall advertising cost is £9000. The remaining cost covers support for the assessment and selection centre by the WME team and psychometric testing of candidates.

Responding to a question regarding the ease of attracting the right people to come and work in Herefordshire, WME explained that the measure of success would be in the appointees making a difference once in post. There is also a combination of factors that typically attract candidates, including job design, salary and other benefits, and a positive message that the role offers an exciting opportunity. The microsite will be a vehicle for the latter and its message is clear in changing the common perceptions of the county, with a message of growth including the university developments, and a positive, vibrant economy which makes a difference to people.

Successful appointment to the Assistant Director role will present more of a challenge due to the diversity of the role and the salary being comparatively less competitive.

A Member asked about tenure and it was confirmed that all three posts are permanent roles. It was recognised that permanency is key in ensuring that people are retained and can make a difference.

The matter of probationary periods was raised. Although it is common practice for local authorities to use a probationary period, this is no longer the policy within Herefordshire and therefore recruitment must focus on engaging the right person from the outset. However if any performance or capability issues were to arise once in post, these would be addressed through the appropriate procedure.

In response to a scenario where the strongest candidate requested interim rather than permanent tenure, it was the view of officers that the strongest candidate must be able to demonstrate commitment to Herefordshire, and there is confidence that a successful permanent appointment would be achieved. There is less confidence about the Assistant Director post on the basis of the salary. However, it is not envisaged that market forces would influence an increase in the salary unless to secure an outstanding candidate. There is more confidence about the Director of Resources post, however, as there is a wider pool of potential candidates. It was noted, however, that whilst this is a third-tier role, it is no less challenging.

A question was asked about the contingency plan in the event that an appointment is not made to the Assistant Director post. It was noted that the market needs to be tested for this role given its uniqueness and diversity and it would not be appropriate to apply the market forces salary increase without this test. The contingency therefore would be to adjust the role.

Further comment was made regarding the management of any performance and capability issues arising with the appointee once they are in post, and concern about the potential expense associated with addressing this. It was confirmed that the performance and capability processes would be invoked in such a case and these procedures provide the alternative to the probationary period arrangement in managing performance and capability without incurring significant costs provided they are concluded swiftly. It was further noted that probationary periods can present a barrier to applying for some potential candidates.

Clarification was provided about the recruitment timetable shown in Appendix C of the report. The process commenced on 16 March 2015 with a quarter-page advertisement, and the plan is that an appointment decision will be confirmed at the earliest opportunity following the elections.

Interview dates were proposed, noting that the membership of the Employment Panel will only be known after full Council on 22 May 2015:

- Confirmation of appointment of Director of Resources will take place on 5 June 2015
- Short-listing for Director, Adults and Wellbeing will take place on 9 June 2015
- Interviews for Director, Adults and Wellbeing will take place on 19 June 2015.

RESOLVED:

that (a) the proposed recruitment and selection process and timetable be approved: and

(b) approval of the shortlist for the post of director of resources (S151 Officer) be delegated to the director for economy, communities and corporate, in consultation with the chief executive.

The meeting ended at 1.28 pm

CHAIRMAN