



Recruitment and Selection Policy, Procedure and Guidance

**Human Resources
(Revised 2026)**

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Recruitment Flowchart

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council recognises that its ability to deliver high-quality services depends on having a skilled, capable and motivated workforce. The Council is committed to supporting employees to develop their skills and reach their potential, in a way that aligns individual development with organisational priorities. This policy applies equally to all posts within the Council.

Our approach is to ensure that roles are clearly defined, with responsibilities and expectations linked to the Council's priorities and values. Where possible, the Council will take a flexible approach to working arrangements to support recruitment and retention and to make best use of the skills and experience of its workforce. Our aim is to maintain an effective, high-performing workforce that takes personal responsibility, works collaboratively and delivers high-quality services.

All employees are expected to demonstrate the Council's values of Innovation, Transformation and Delivery, and to work in accordance with the Council's behaviours of Team Work, Can-do Attitude, Respect and Integrity.

Skills, experience, potential, and motivation will be the major determining factors in selecting individuals into jobs. The Council aims to provide all employees with the opportunity to develop long term careers appropriate to their abilities and ambitions. All posts are open to job sharers unless specifically excluded under the provisions of the post.

The Council is committed to maximising equality of opportunity and intends to select the best available person for every vacancy, regardless of any protected characteristic under the Equalities Act, involvement in a trade union, or criminal convictions which are 'spent'.

Therefore, all vacancies will be advertised internally and externally simultaneously unless there are overriding business reasons for not doing so (e.g., potential redundancy and redeployment situations) or where the Council's Management Team have determined a vacancy or opportunity to be suitable for internal only candidates as determined in section 6. below. We will use the most cost-effective advertising and recruitment methods available.

Our managers will be trained in all aspects of recruitment and selection, and only those who have carried out this training and demonstrated competency will be allowed to participate in the recruitment process. We understand that investment in these skills is important to ensure our turnover of staff is at an acceptable level. We recognise that high turnover has both obvious and hidden costs as follows:

- Recruiting – expense of advertising, administrative and management time
- Learning and Development – bringing the new employee up to speed, either through externally delivered training or work shadowing etc.
- Productivity – the learning curve of the new employee, and the loss of acquired organisational knowledge of the departing employee
- Morale – the enthusiasm of the recruit or existing employees when there is disruption within the team

- Culture – a mismatch between what is required and the personality of the recruit
- Management – the time and effort taken getting new starters accepted, observing their ‘fit’, communicating expectations and judging performance
- Reputation – dealing with recruitment errors that may harm our reputation

The Council is committed to ensuring that the necessary resources (time, skills and experience) are dedicated to effectively managing the recruitment process to attract and retain the right people for the right jobs. Information gained from the selection process will be used for development purposes during employees’ induction.

All employees must co-operate with the policy and procedures. They must not discriminate unfairly or persuade anyone else to discriminate unfairly. Intentional discrimination in decision making by an employee involved in selection, appointment or promotion on grounds which are unlawful will be regarded as serious misconduct which may lead to disciplinary action and, depending on the details of the case, could result in dismissal. Canvassing by an employee on behalf of an applicant for appointment shall be regarded as misconduct and may render the employee liable for disciplinary action.

The Council’s Code of Conduct prohibits employees from being involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant, or have a close personal relationship outside work with them.

2. THE ROLE OF CHIEF OFFICERS

Chief Officers will be responsible for the choice of interview panel and the testing methods to be employed.

3. THE ROLE OF MANAGERS

All managers are responsible for ensuring that they have employees with the skills, knowledge and ability for them to achieve the goals of the Council. The ultimate responsibility for recruitment and selection rests with the manager and they must be involved at all stages of the recruitment process. This includes:

- Making the decision to recruit and obtaining authority
- Identifying the job requirements
- Drawing up the Person Specification and Job Description
- Determining the selection methods to be used and having these approved by the Chief Officer
- Designing job related testing
- Interviewing and assessing candidates
- Making the final selection decision
- Notifying successful and unsuccessful candidates
- Inducting the successful candidate
- Notifying Human Resources of any Agency staff engagements

4. THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources offer support and advice both in the administration of the recruitment process and in the assessment of candidates. HR should also monitor recruitment

exercises and ensure that the Council's equalities policies are being adhered to, and provide support to managers in exercising their responsibilities specifically in the following areas:

- Administration of Job Evaluation and advising on pay and conditions
- Advertising externally, internally
- Tendering for media costs and advising on appropriate advertising media in the event
- Advising on appropriate recruitment methods and processes
- Advising managers of redeployment candidates and procedures
- Placing all posts on websites
- Preparing and sending out application packs
- Administration and monitoring of application forms
- Advising interview panels
- Obtaining employment references, medical clearance and DBS checks
- Monitoring equal opportunities
- Undertaking contract administration
- Ensuring the checking and recording of all appointees' (including Agency staff) Right to Work

5. JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND PERSON SPECIFICATIONS

All jobs must have a Job Description and Person Specification. This describes the role's broad responsibilities and key tasks. The Person Specification includes the skills, qualifications and experience required, as well as the behavioural competences of the role. Managers should consider how this post will help achieve the Council's objectives, and what skills and experience are required to carry out the role competently. Getting the skills and experience right is absolutely crucial to attracting the right candidate, provides a sound basis for selection by ensuring only candidates who meet the minimum standards are short listed, and plays a key role in any advertising campaign. It is important that applicants have enough relevant information for them to make a realistic decision about applying for the post.

Managers should consider the hours required to provide the service. Does it need to be full time or could it be carried out on a part time or job sharing basis?

Job Descriptions and Person Specifications should be written in clear and concise language, avoiding jargon wherever possible.

6. ADVERTISING VACANCIES

Recruitment & Retention is one of the four key pillars of the [Workforce Development Strategy 2025-2028](#), which includes a commitment to ensure recruitment approaches are sufficiently flexible to respond to nationally recognised hard-to-fill roles, whilst also maximising opportunities for the development and progression of existing employees.

All appointments will be made in accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution. The provisions below relate to recruitment decisions where authority is delegated to the Council's Management Team.

The Council's default position is to advertise posts both internally and externally. Exceptionally, and where there is a clear business rationale, posts may be advertised on an internal-only basis. This includes:

- redeployment under the '3Rs' Policy
- agreed internal development opportunities
- roles requiring critical organisational knowledge
- hard-to-fill posts where internal progression supports service continuity

All such decisions must be objectively justified and approved by Management Team.

Vacancies will generally appear first on the Council's job page and JobsGoPublic websites before they are advertised in other external media. In the event that the website advertising is unsuccessful in attracting a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced candidates will other media be employed.

Where vacancies are identified as hard to fill, either due to recent recruitment experience or as a result of a recognised national or sector-wide skills shortage, it may be appropriate to advertise the post externally at the first recruitment attempt.

In the event that other external media are used for advertising purposes, managers and Human Resources should consider the following for each vacancy:

- What advertising media should be used? There are a variety of local and national websites, jobs boards, professional association magazines/publications (physical copy and websites).
- When drafting text for an advert, care needs to be given to ensure the text accurately reflects the requirements of the Person Specification and Job Description. If there is a requirement for a DBS check then this needs to be included in the advert.
- Consider an appropriate closing date. At least 10 days should be left between the advert going live and the closing date, giving plenty of time for applicants to complete an unhurried application and return it. The standard length to advertise is for a minimum of 3 weeks with the role closing close to midnight on a Sunday.
- During holiday periods or over Christmas it is better to allow a later closing date or reconsider the timing of the campaign.
- Wherever possible, interview dates ought to be fixed before the advert goes out, then this can be included in the advert for the applicants' convenience.

7. SELECTION

7.1 Application form and CV's

The Council requires all applicants to complete a standard application form. These forms are all returned to human Resources and the relevant information for short-listing purposes is then passed to the manager. The advantages of using a standard application form include:

- The form directs the applicant to provide specific information
- The information is given by the applicants in a standard order
- Managers shortlisting can easily find their way to specific information
- Application forms contain a declaration that the information is accurate and truthful which the Council can rely on if, during the early stages of employment, it turns out to be false.

CV's may be accepted in exceptional circumstances, where a post has proved particularly difficult to fill, to make the process more attractive to the candidate. Candidates appointed through this route, are still required to fill out and sign the standard application form before commencing employment with the Council.

7.2 Information for applicants

As well as an informative and engaging advert, all vacancies advertised on the Council's website should include the following:

- Link to apply using the Council's standard application form
- Job Description
- Person Specification
- 'Join Us at TMBC' document detailing the key information and benefits all potential applicants should know about working for the Council.

7.3 Short listing guidance

Short listing is the period in the recruitment process that can cause un-necessary delays. It is important to remember that high calibre candidates will be expecting a speedy response, and that this Council may not be the only opportunity these applicants are looking at.

We need to ensure that their impression of us meets high expectations and will encourage them to attend any assessment and interviews. Statistics show that the longer the recruitment process, the more likely applicants are to drop out, so getting organised in advance is crucial. Wherever possible, applicants should be informed of the timescales and key dates for the process.

Managers should carry out short listing individually and then jointly as soon as possible after the closing date. To assist, there is a standard short-listing sheet which can be customised to accommodate specific vacancies. The panel should agree the short-listing criteria prior to seeing the application forms and the criteria must reflect the detail of the Person Specification. Each panel member should score how, in their view, the applicant meets each of the criteria.

All applicants with a disability who meet all the Essential criteria for a job vacancy will be offered an interview and considered on their merits. Managers will be informed by HR if they inadvertently do not short list such a candidate, in order that they can assess whether the candidate meets the minimum criteria. The disclosure of an unspent criminal offence should not necessarily disqualify a candidate from being considered for a position. All cases should be considered on their merits and aligned with the Council's DBS Policy.

Any applicant who meets the essential requirements should progress to the next stage of the recruitment process. Whilst there should not be a determined number to progress to the next stage, consideration should be given to the maximum number of applicants to be selected for the next stage. This may depend on costs, e.g., testing and expenses and time resources of the panel.

It may be relevant to have an additional stage i.e., long listing, whereby applicants are screened prior to interview. This often happens in larger campaigns or where there is an exceptionally large number of applicants meeting the essential criteria. Long listing can involve testing, telephone/MS Teams interviews or other selection techniques. If it is agreed that there are too many applicants, then the panel can move on to the 'desirable' requirements as detailed in the Person Specification, in an attempt to refine the short list.

Criteria for selection/rejection should be applied equally to all applicants. An applicant who has been rejected for a job and believes their rejection to be on the grounds of any Protected Characteristic, can take their case to an Employment Tribunal. If it is shown that the selection criteria were applied inconsistently, it leaves the Council exposed to allegations of unfair and unlawful discrimination. This would prove costly to the Council in terms of 'damages' and also to the reputation of the Council as a good employer.

8. ASSESSMENT

A variety of assessment tools are available, the majority of which can be managed internally. On occasion, it may be necessary to appoint specialist recruitment consultants for senior or specialist posts.

The minimum requirement for assessment is a panel interview comprising of at least two suitably trained employees, at a grade equal to or higher than that of the vacancy. Interviews should always be conducted with a minimum panel of two.

The following assessment tools can assist the manager in the overall assessment of a candidate:

- *Written Exercises* - Usually on the day of the interview and used to test the knowledge on a subject matter relative to the vacancy or prioritisation skills through an 'in tray' exercise.
- *Presentations* – Candidates may be required to prepare, either in advance of the interview or on the day, a presentation on a particular subject. Presentations will vary enormously, and unless presentations or public speaking are part of the job, they should not be used.
- *Group Assessment* – for certain posts it is useful to determine a variety of skills, in particular problem solving and influencing skills when working within a team.
- *IT Assessments* – if specific IT skills are required for the post, these skills should be tested in practice.

For those posts where written communication skills are an essential criterion, it is recommended that the competency of candidates is tested via a "simulated" test e.g., timed writing of reports, letters responding to enquiries etc.

The following tools may also be used but can only be administered by professionally qualified external consultants:

- *Psychometric Ability Testing* - A variety of tests are available and must be applicable to the vacancy. The tests vary in length and complexity and assess a candidate's ability in specific areas relevant to the post.
- *Personality Assessment* - This assessment requires a candidate to think about their own behaviour in the workplace and provides us with an indication of their working style and behaviour.

This must be discussed in advance with HR before proceeding as there are usually significant costs attached.

9. EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING

Interviews remain a commonly used assessment method, but on their own they are not always the most reliable way of assessing a candidate's suitability for a role. Unstructured interviews, in particular, can be a poor predictor of future performance.

The purpose of this guidance is to support managers to make robust, fair and objective appointment decisions by assessing candidates against the requirements set out in the Person Specification, including their skills, knowledge, experience and behavioural competencies.

All interviews must be structured and use competency-based interview techniques. Competency-based interviewing enables managers to explore not only what a candidate has achieved, but how they have achieved it, providing insight into the behaviours, judgement and approach they would bring to the role.

9.1 Preparing for the interview

A preparatory meeting must take place before any interviews are held. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure the interview process is well-planned, consistent and fair. Panel members should agree the interview questions, how responsibilities will be shared (including chairing the panel and recording responses), what additional assessment methods will be used where appropriate, and the timescales for decision-making.

Careful consideration should be given to the overall structure and style of the interview. A structured approach that encourages meaningful discussion is more effective than rapid or formulaic questioning, as it enables candidates to provide fuller and more informative responses. Interviews should be conducted in a professional and respectful manner and treated as a two-way process, allowing both the Council and the candidate to assess whether the role and organisation are a good fit.

Providing candidates with an early opportunity to speak about their experience and motivations can help them feel comfortable and supports a more open and productive interview discussion.

Where appropriate, managers may also consider including an independent panel member. Depending on the nature of the role, this may involve an internal colleague with relevant specialist knowledge or an external adviser, to provide additional objectivity and expertise.

9.2 Interviewing in person

The interview and assessment process may comprise a single interview or a number of stages, depending on the nature and seniority of the role. These stages may include, for example, an initial screening interview, a formal panel interview, presentations or other assessment methods. Where appropriate, certain stages of the process – particularly initial or first-stage interviews – may be conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams to support flexibility and efficiency for both candidates and the panel.

It is Council policy that where only one interview is being held, or where a final stage interview is taking place, this must be conducted in person. This ensures that the panel is able to fully assess the candidate, and that candidates have the opportunity to experience the working environment and the organisation more directly.

However, in exceptional and justified circumstances, alternative interview arrangements may be agreed with the approval of the relevant Director in consultation with the Head of Human Resources & Development

9.3 Question checklist and guidance

The questions should be designed to extract the evidence/information from the candidates to enable an assessment against the requirements stated in the Person Specification. Ideally, all candidates should be asked the same core questions to ensure they have the same opportunity to respond. It will often be necessary to probe further into a candidate's response and this is perfectly acceptable.

Interview questions must be designed to gather relevant evidence against the requirements set out in the Person Specification. Questions should be fair, objective and consistent for all candidates.

When developing interview questions, managers must avoid:

- hypothetical or purely theoretical questions that do not seek evidence of past behaviour, experience or achievement
- closed or overly restrictive questions that limit meaningful responses
- leading questions that suggest a preferred answer
- questions relating to personal circumstances that are not relevant to the role, including family responsibilities, marital status or childcare arrangements
- questions relating to a candidate's nationality, country of origin or intentions to remain in or return to another country
- questions that refer to protected characteristics, including age, sex, race, disability or any other personal characteristic, or that ask candidates to speculate about how they would feel being different from others in the team

Many such questions are discriminatory and unlawful. Where a role includes specific requirements, managers should frame questions neutrally and focus on the candidate's ability to meet those requirements. For example, questions should explore whether a candidate can fulfil working patterns or duties associated with the role, rather than making assumptions based on personal circumstances.

Many questions of this nature are discriminatory and must not be asked. Interview questions should be framed neutrally and focus solely on a candidate's ability to meet the genuine requirements of the role.

Where a post includes specific working arrangements or requirements, these should be stated clearly and candidates asked whether they are able to meet them. For example, it is appropriate to ask whether a candidate can fulfil a requirement to work specific hours or patterns, rather than making assumptions based on personal circumstances.

Questions relating to childcare, family arrangements or other personal matters are inappropriate and may be discriminatory, regardless of whether they are asked consistently of all candidates. Selection decisions must be based on merit and evidence against the role requirements, not on assumptions linked to personal circumstances.

A range of e-learning modules on recruitment and interviewing best practice is available to staff involved in recruitment and selection. These resources, alongside advice and support from the HR team, are designed to support fair and effective recruitment decisions and best practise.

10. MAKING A DECISION

The final decision must be made on merit and based upon the information gathered from the whole recruitment process, which includes the application form, any tests the candidates will have been required to do, the interview and references. The short list / selection matrix has been designed to assist in this process by providing a record of objective criteria on which to base a selection decision.

The selection decision is made as to the candidate who best meets the criteria that have been specified in the person specification. The job should only be offered to a candidate who meets all the essential requirements. If there is more than one candidate who meets the essential requirements then the desirable requirements must be taken into account.

The selection must be done as objectively as possible and based on the evidence gathered throughout the process. The panel members must record their initial findings and then come to a consensus of opinion and record the panel's decision. A manager may find that a decision is challenged so it is very important that to ensure that the process is undertaken fairly, objectively and has been recorded in writing.

Managers should bear in mind that they may not be in a position to offer the post to any of the short-listed candidates, in which case they may wish to hold second interviews or revisit the short list scoring to see if there are other candidates for whom an interview may be appropriate.

11. OFFER OF APPOINTMENT

Managers should make a *verbal* offer of appointment making it clear that it is subject to medical clearance, references acceptable to T&MBC and DBS check if applicable. Where the successful candidate has previously indicated that a reference cannot be applied for at that stage of the application process, they should be asked if they are happy for that reference to be taken up having been offered the position and advised to wait for clearance of references before handing in their resignation. In the case of a DBS check, advise candidates that there may be a lengthy delay.

Care must be taken when making verbal offers as anything said is contractually binding. Managers may wish to offer by saying "Subject to our receipt of references and medical clearance satisfactory to us, we would like to make you a conditional offer of employment as (job title) on a starting salary of £(salary)".

Managers must then immediately advise Human Resources of the terms of the offer. Human Resources will then obtain the necessary references, medical checks and DBS check where required, agree with the line manager as to their acceptability, and only then prepare and send the necessary contract documentation.

12. REFERENCES

12.1 Employment references

If the applicant has given permission, references will be sought immediately. In cases of external candidates, two written references will be sought: one being from the current/last employer/education facility.

References will be sought, unless previously permitted, once a verbal provisional offer of appointment has been given. References must only be sought by Human Resources and never without the candidate's prior knowledge, and shared with the line manager as soon as they are received.

In the event that a reference is deemed to be less than satisfactory, the matter should be discussed with the Chief Officer and HR in order to determine whether or not the conditional offer should be withdrawn.

In the rare instance that it is not possible to obtain a written reference, a verbal reference (fully recorded by Human Resources) will be accepted but only after permission to do so has been granted by the Service Chief Officer.

12.2 Medical clearance

All successful candidates must complete a medical questionnaire. This is confidential and is returned to the Council's Occupational Health Adviser (OHA) who will assess the candidate's fitness for the particular post and whether any further medical information is required. Some candidates may have a disability, and if necessary the OHA may make recommendations for reasonable adjustments. Information regarding a candidate's

health is confidential and will not be revealed to the manager or Human Resources unless the candidate gives their permission.

Internal candidates who have previously been medically cleared will not be subject to further medical clearance.

12.3 Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS)

Certain posts will require a DBS check. These posts have been identified in accordance with DBS guidelines and Human Resources can advise whether a particular post requires the check.

12.4 Right To Work processes

HR will be responsible for obtaining proof of identity to satisfy the Right To Work legislation. Candidates will be asked to bring their documents to their interviews and Customer Services will take photocopies of them (dating them individually), completing a summary sheet for each group of interviewees, and returning all documents to Human Resources.

On confirmation of an appointment, the successful candidate's documents will be filed on their personal file and the unsuccessful candidates' documents will be destroyed.

HR will be responsible for recording Right to Work checks for all appointments, including staff who have been employed previously and are 'returning'.

For non-British citizens, HR will be responsible for carrying out an on-line check using the Home Office Right to Work checking Service saving a PDF copy to the individual's personnel file.

13. START DATE

Once the manager has received confirmation from Human Resources that the necessary checks have been completed, the start date can be agreed with the candidate. For internal candidates the contractual period of notice applies unless both managers agree to an earlier or later start date.

Human Resources will notify unsuccessful candidates as soon as the interview panel has made its decision and the successful candidate has accepted the verbal offer of appointment. The manager will offer the unsuccessful candidate's feedback on the interview, if requested.

There will be no discrimination in the terms offered to disabled applicants, but reasonable adjustments can be made to the contract, e.g., standard hours may be reduced or rearranged where the disabled person has difficulty with public transport.

Under no circumstances can an employee start before references, medical clearance and DBS checks have been completed to T&MBC's satisfaction.

14. INTERVIEW EXPENSES

Candidates will not normally be offered reimbursement of interview expenses.

15. USING CONSULTANTS

Where the Council is proposing to offer a consultancy agreement to an individual rather than an employment contract, the individual concerned will normally be self-employed and the nature of the agreement should reflect this. However, the distinction between employee and self employed is a fine one and there is no one factor which will be decisive.

If a consultant is being appointed, his or her terms of appointment need to set out clearly not just the remuneration and other similar details but also what his/her objectives are, the deliverables, how the project will be monitored, its length, the responsibilities of the consultant and the Council and how the agreement may be terminated.

The Council needs to establish, to its own satisfaction, that the person it intends to appoint has the necessary skills and experience to carry out the proposed assignment and also the resources to do so successfully. If the Council is expected to find some of the resources, e.g., secretarial help, this too should feature in the agreement. Further advice can be sought from Human Resources or Legal Services.

16. PROCEDURE CHECKLIST

Recruiting manager = M

Human Resources = HR

Chief Officer = CO

Customer Services = CM

Task or Activity	Who
Resignation received – send resignation email/letter to HR as soon as possible	M
Complete Termination Form (note annual leave for the remainder of the notice period will need to be agreed before this can be sent). Deadline 3 rd working day of the month in which the employee is leaving.	M
Review or create Person Specification and Job Description	M
Request Job Evaluation where necessary	M
Obtain authorisation from Management Team to fill vacancy (where applicable)	CO
Meet with HR to agree recruitment process	M
Agree advertising media (where appropriate)	M/HR
Prepare advert and send to Manager for approval	HR
Agree closing date, interview and assessment dates and panel	M
Advertise on internet sites	HR
Place advert in press/external websites (if applicable)	HR
Receipt of applications on-line / by post	HR
Enter applications received onto Recruitment Monitoring spreadsheet	HR
Send applications to manager	HR
Arrange meeting of panel to agree criteria and short list	M

For psychometric testing, agree testing date with PS	M
Short list, record on short listing scoring sheet, and return to PS	M
Advise candidates of interview/assessment/test date time and place and take up references where permitted	HR
Where candidates with disabilities need reasonable adjustments to attend interview, participate in testing, ensure arrangements in place	M/HR
Book suitable room and any aids for presentations	M
Advise reception of names of candidates and appointment times	HR
Make admin arrangement to meet and greet candidates	M
Copy and date Right to Work documents and return header sheet and copies of documents to HR	CS
Interview candidates	M
Assess candidates and complete assessment scoring sheet	M
Obtain evidence of qualifications	M
Call successful candidate with conditional offer	M
Advise unsuccessful candidates and give feedback where requested	M
Negotiate terms with successful candidate including provisional start date	M
Send appointment form to HR	M
HR carry out Home Office Right to Work check for non-British citizens, taking PDF copy for filling.	HR
Obtain employment reference, medical clearance and DBS check and share with Manager where appropriate.	HR
Advise manager of completion of reference checks	HR
If references unsatisfactory, send withdrawal of offer	HR
Prepare and send contract	HR
Obtain acceptance of formal offer	HR
Make arrangements for Induction including organising appointments with identified officers, identity card, and IT facilities	M
Appointment corporate induction arranged and confirmed	HR

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APPENDIX 1

A guide on how to recruit – for hiring managers

