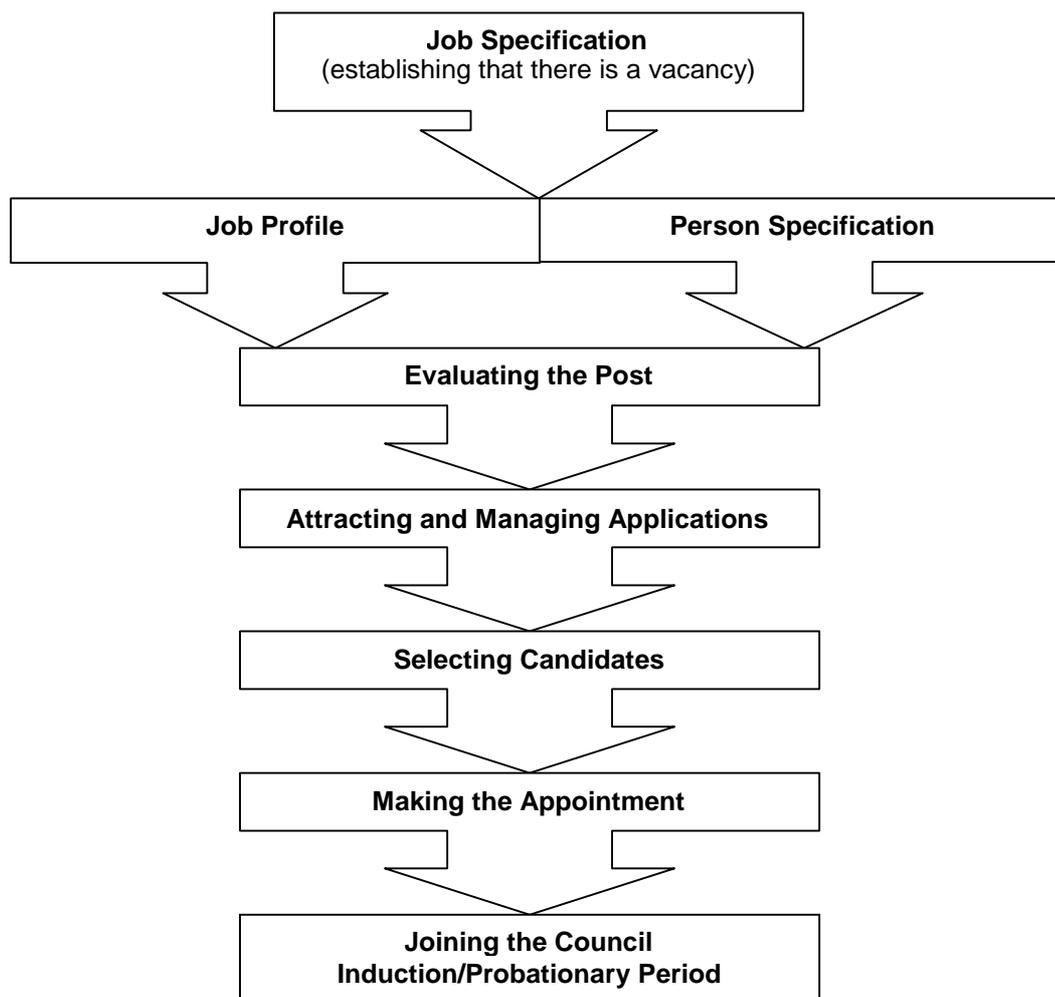


## **East Cambridgeshire District Council** **Recruitment & Selection Policy**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 East Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to delivering high quality services and recognises that the success of these services is greatly dependent upon the quality of the people that the Council employs.
- 1.2 This policy provides guidance on all the main aspects of the recruitment and selection process and has been drawn up, in consultation with Unison, staff and Council Members, to ensure that the Council's recruitment and selection procedures are clear, fair and reliable and in line with current employment legislation, best practice and relevant codes of practice.
- 1.3 This policy and handbook aims to:
- provide clear, step-by-step guidelines for recruitment and selection that can be applied consistently across the Council;
  - ensure that the Council recruits the most suitable candidate for a vacant post on the basis of their skills, experience and knowledge;
  - ensure that all candidates are treated fairly and equitably.
- 1.4 The content of this policy and handbook has been drawn up with reference to:
- Legislation, including the:
    - o Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974,
    - o Sex Discrimination Act 1975,
    - o Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000,
    - o Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Politically Restricted Posts),
    - o Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005,
    - o Asylum and Immigration Act 1996,
    - o Data Protection Act 1998,
    - o Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) and Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, and
    - o Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
  - Advice on good practice from the:
    - o Equal Opportunities Commission,
    - o Commission for Racial Equality,
    - o Disability Rights Commission and
    - o CRB

## 2. **THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS**



## 3. **JOB SPECIFICATION**

- 3.1 A potential vacancy may arise due to:
- a) the need for a new post (this also includes temporary posts to provide cover for existing staff (e.g. maternity leave); or
  - b) to fill an existing post following a resignation, promotion, transfer, dismissal, retirement, or inability to work for a period of time (e.g. long term sickness).
- 3.2 When a vacancy does exist, Executive Directors/Line Managers should consider the following issues before commencing a recruitment exercise:
- Is there still a need for the work to be done? If so, can it be absorbed by other posts within the section/department without causing detriment to the service provision or damage to the health of other employees?
  - Does the job still need to be done in the same way? Should changes be made to the job profile/person specification?
  - Is the requirement for work permanent/temporary/seasonal?
  - Is a full time post required? Is the post suitable for job-share?
  - Is the Council's Flexi-Time Scheme or any other flexible working arrangement appropriate or does the work require attendance at specific times?
  - Should the post be politically restricted, exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act or require a CRB check?

#### **4. DRAFTING A JOB PROFILE**

- 4.1 The job profile forms part of the employee's contract of employment and should detail the purpose, tasks and responsibilities of the job. It is the Executive Director/Line Manager's responsibility to draft the job profile.
- 4.2 A good job profile should include:
- (a) main purpose of the job - try to describe this in one sentence.
  - (b) main tasks of the job - use active verbs like 'supervise', 'provide', 'determine', 'record', 'research', instead of vaguer terms like 'dealing with', 'in charge of'.
  - (c) scope of the job - expanding on the main tasks and the importance of the job. Job importance can be indicated by giving information such as who they come into contact with (i.e. Members, the public), the number of people to be supervised, the degree of precision required and the value of any materials and equipment used or budget managed by the postholder.
- 4.2 The length and complexity of the job profile will vary according to the post but a simple description is important for every position to:
- help with induction and training;
  - provide the basis for drawing up a person specification and advert;
  - provide the basis for establishing the correct grade/remuneration for the job;
  - enable prospective applicants to assess themselves for the job;
  - provide a benchmark for judging each candidate; and
  - enable the recruitment of the best person for the job.
- 4.3 For those positions where a CRB Disclosure is required, the job profile will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position and renewed every two years thereafter.

#### **5. DRAFTING A PERSON SPECIFICATION**

- 5.1 Drawing up the person specification allows the Council to profile the ideal person to fill the job. A person specification is an assessment of the key skills, knowledge, attainment and attitude required to perform the job using objective criteria. It is the Executive Director/Line Manager's responsibility to draft the person specification.
- 5.2 It is very important that the skills, aptitudes and knowledge included in the specification are related precisely to the needs of the job; if they are inflated beyond those necessary for effective job performance, the risk is that someone will be employed on the basis of false hopes and aspirations, and both the employer and employee will end up disappointed in each other.
- 5.3 An up-to-date person specification will:
- provide the basis for establishing the correct grade/remuneration for the job;
  - act as a guide for preparing job advertisements;
  - act as a guide for planning the interview/selection process;
  - act as a guide for shortlisting candidates;
  - ensure the fair selection of the best person for the job; and
  - protect against claims of unlawful discrimination.
- 5.4 Person specifications must be job-related and not contract-related, i.e. the same criteria must be established for a temporary post as for a permanent post and the same standards must be applied equally to both posts during the selection/appointment process.

- 5.5 The person specification must be justifiable, quantifiable and measurable and of direct relevance to the job and as specific as possible. The very process of writing a person specification should help the employer to develop and implement a policy of equal opportunity in the recruitment and selection of employees.

## **6. EVALUATING THE POST**

- 6.1 If you are creating a new post or making significant changes to a current post, the HR department will evaluate the job profile and person specification (including the draft accountability statement) against the Council's job evaluation scheme.
- 6.2 The job evaluation scheme is an analytical scheme whereby jobs are broken down into components (known as factors) and each factor is assessed separately and points allocated according to the level needed for the job. The more demanding the job, the higher the points value. Job evaluation is an essential tool for ensuring equality of pay throughout the Council.

## **7. ATTRACTING & MANAGING APPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Drafting the Job Advertisement**

Any advertisement needs to be designed and presented effectively to ensure the right candidates are attracted. Advertisements must be tailored to the level of the target audience, and should always be clear and easily understood. They must be non-discriminatory, and should avoid any gender or culturally specific language. To support this, the Council includes a statement of commitment to equal opportunities in all of its advertisements.

For those positions where a CRB Disclosure is required, the job advertisement will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.

### **7.2 Agreeing the Recruitment Timetable**

The Executive Director/Line Manager will agree with a member of HR:

- the wording of the advert;
- the appropriate publication(s)/methods for displaying the advert and the date(s) that it will appear;
- the closing date for applications – this must be a minimum of 2 weeks to allow time for individuals to see the advert and enquire about the position, and for the job pack information to be completed and submitted to the applicant;
- the date and location for the selection process to be held;
- if any testing will be required;
- the people who will be sitting on the interview panel – this would normally include the Line Manager for the vacant post and a member of HR, although other people can sit on the panel where it is deemed appropriate for the appointment.

### **7.3 Publicising the Vacancy**

#### **7.3.1 Internally ONLY**

In certain situations it may be appropriate for a vacancy to be advertised internally only. In such circumstances the post will be advertised within the Council, and only open to internal candidates (including casual employees and students).

### 7.3.2 Internally and Externally

The HR department will liaise with the advertising agency concerning external advertisement ensuring that the advert appears in the corporate format and includes the equal opportunities statement and any appropriate logo's (e.g. beacon status, IIP etc).

### 7.4 The Job Information Pack

The job information pack includes the following:

- a message from the Chief Executive;
- information about East Cambridgeshire;
- information about the Council;
- the management structure and department overview;
- the Council's strategy, including its corporate objectives and priorities;
- the benefits for employees;
- valuing diversity & promoting equal opportunities;
- the application process, including the job profile and person specification for the post; a blank application form; a blank Equalities Monitoring form; the Council's Policy Statement on the Recruitment of Ex-offenders and the appropriate Criminal Convictions Declaration Form depending on the post being advertised.

The Council's Customer Services section is responsible for receiving enquiries and for sending out the job information packs.

### 7.5 Return of Completed Application Forms

Completed application forms are returned to the HR Department, together with the completed Equalities Monitoring form and Criminal Convictions Declaration Form\* (\*unless the post being advertised is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974).

These forms are separated from the application form and retained by the HR Department.

Following the closing date of the vacancy, copies of the original application forms are sent to those involved in the shortlisting process only.

### 7.6 Declaration of Interest

#### 7.6.1 *Candidates Related to/Friends of Members or Officers*

Any employee or elected Member who is involved in a recruitment and selection process must make a declaration to the Executive Director (HR) if an applicant is a relative or friend from outside the work environment. The Executive Director must decide whether or not it is appropriate for that person to take any further part in the recruitment and selection process.

Similarly, any manager who learns that a relative, or friend from outside the work environment has applied for a post in a section under their control must declare this fact to the Executive Director (HR). This applies whether or not that person intends to take part in the selection process.

For these purposes relative means: person living as husband/wife/civil partner or partner, parent or child, grandparent or grandchild, uncle or aunt, nephew or niece.

These relationships also apply to the person living as husband/wife or partner of the candidate.

The Executive Director must ensure that appointing panel is made aware of the relationship.

Candidates for any appointment must state in their application if they are related to a Member or an Officer at the Council. Anyone who fails to do this may be disqualified or, if appointed, liable to summary dismissal (dismissal without notice) on grounds of gross misconduct.

#### 7.6.2 Attempts to influence an appointment

Candidates who canvass Members will be disqualified.

An elected Member may give a written reference to accompany an application but must not try to influence the choice of candidate for an appointment.

Under no circumstances must people who have agreed to act as referees for a candidate take part in the recruitment process.

If a recruitment decision is challenged at any stage or discussed by a Member who is not directly involved in the recruitment process, the relevant officer must make a note of the conversation and be prepared to repeat it to the appropriate authority at a later stage if necessary.

## 8. SELECTING CANDIDATES

### 8.1 Shortlisting

Those responsible for interviewing for the post (including the nominated HR representative) should independently assess the applicants' experience, knowledge, qualifications and skills as stated on their application form against the person specification before meeting to agree the final shortlist. Ensure that the criteria are applied fairly and consistently to all applicants.

HR will contact all of the shortlisted candidates to confirm that they have been shortlisted, and to provide them with all of the necessary details for the interview, i.e. location, date/time, details of testing (if any), documents they must bring with them to interview (including a passport and relevant qualification certificates). HR will ask candidates if they have any special requirements at the interview e.g. wheelchair access etc.

#### 8.1.1 Unacceptable Reasons for Not Shortlisting a Candidate

The following are unacceptable reasons for rejecting an applicant:

- **Age**
- **Gender** – unless it is a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ\*) for the position as defined in the Sex Discrimination Act.
- **Marital Status**
- **Ethnic or National Origin** – unless it is a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ\*) for the position as defined in the Race Relations Act.
- **Religion**
- **Disability** - candidates whose application form indicates they have a disability should be shortlisted in the same way as other candidates. The Disability

Discrimination Act (DDA) and subsequent case law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability (this includes physical and mental disabilities). Where an applicant has identified that they have a disability on the equal opportunities monitoring form, the HR representative will be responsible for asking the appropriate questions at the interview regarding the need for reasonable adjustments to enable them to do the job.

- **Union Membership or Non-Union Membership** – the Council recognises a trade union and values the work of their officials. If an official is an applicant for a post, this fact is not relevant to selection.
- **Personal Information** – information volunteered by an applicant about family/domestic circumstances but not relevant to the job must be ignored for the purpose of shortlisting, which should focus on job suitability.
- **Criminal Conviction** – Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 – individuals do not have to reveal the convictions if they have become spent after a set *rehabilitation* period (**other than for exempt posts**), provided the individual has not been convicted of another serious offence during this time. Knowledge about a candidate's previous convictions or involvement is not a reason to reject the person without other substantial reasons (see the Council's Policy Statement on the Recruitment of Ex Offenders).
- **Health** – it is important not to reject an applicant on health grounds prior to seeking advice through the Human Resources Team, who may seek professional medical advice from the Council's Medical advisor and candidate's doctor(s).
- **Present contract/status** – current unemployment, recent redundancy, fixed term contract or existing temporary status should not be used as reasons to reject candidates.
- **Work Flexibility** – the wish to work as a job sharer or on a more flexible basis should not be used as a reason for rejection.
- **Sexual Orientation** – if this information is known and/or made available by an applicant, it should not be used to screen out that candidate.
- **Home Location** – unless it a criterion specifically indicated in the Person Specification, home location, domestic tenure, or travel to work distance, should never be used as reasons for disbaring candidates from selection.
- **Handwriting** – Some candidates use typescript whilst others prefer hand-written format. Both are acceptable unless the job requires handwriting of a particular quality and this had been included as a selection criterion.
- **Political Restrictions** – unless this is a politically restricted post, an indication of political activity should not be taken into account.

\*As a general rule it is unlawful to specify that you require somebody of a particular race or sex, unless it is a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ) for a position. An example of a genuine occupational qualification is where there is a need to pursue privacy or decency, e.g. the requirement for a male care assistant whose job involves helping men dress or use the toilet. In the event of the GOQ rule applying, this must be stated on the advertisement and job details. GOQs are always open to challenge and if an employer is challenged, the burden of proof lies with them to show that a GOQ applies to the job at issue. But it is only an employment tribunal who can give an authoritative ruling as to whether or not a GOQ is valid.

#### 8.1.2 Acceptable Reasons for Not Shortlisting a Candidate

The following are acceptable reasons for rejecting candidates, even though they may not appear in the Person Specification. Further advice will be provided by the HR Representative involved in the selection process.

- **Previous Dismissal (in some circumstances)** – not to re-employ employees previously dismissed for misconduct or poor performance.

- **Late Application** – provided the selection panel agrees not to proceed further. This is usually when the process has already commenced.
- **Criminal Convictions** – where these are declared and would exclude candidates from being appointed to the post (see the Council's Policy Statement on the Recruitment of Ex Offenders).

#### 8.1.3 Recording the Process

When the shortlisting process is complete it is essential that the HR Representative collects all of the paperwork from the selection process from everyone involved. All written material used in creating shortlists must be kept securely with the recruitment papers (in Human Resources) and retained for at least six months after the date of offer of appointment. Information obtained during the shortlisting process and within the context of the shortlist itself must be treated as confidential. Comments as to why candidates were or were not included must not be disclosed outside the selection group.

#### 8.1.4 Unsuitable Applicants - Common Problems

If there are no suitable candidates it will be necessary to re-advertise the post. The selection panel should review the quality of the whole process, especially the person specification, the advertisement, the publication(s) used, salary and potential sources of applicants. It may prove beneficial to benchmark the post against other similar posts across the region.

Where the response to an advertisement has produced a high number of candidates with variable quality and backgrounds, the selection panel should review the advertisement, media and person specification.

#### 8.2 Seeking References

On the Council's application form, all applicants are requested to provide details of two referees. Prior to interview, the HR department will write to the referees of all shortlisted candidates (unless the candidate has given express permission not to approach a current employer), enclosing the Council's reference request form and including a copy of the job description and person specification for the referee's consideration. The preferred option is to seek references at the shortlisting stage and ideally have them at the time of interview. If the references are not available at interview stage, then the job offer has to be subject to satisfactory references. If on receipt of a written reference the information provided is unclear, it is permissible for a member of the interview panel to contact the referee (subject to the agreement of all panel members).

If a verbal reference is taken over the telephone then this must be followed up in writing.

There is no legal obligation for a referee to provide a reference.

#### 8.3 Conducting the Interview

It is common that both interviewer and candidate are nervous. Thorough preparation will help both parties. The aim of the interview is to draw information from the candidate to decide if they would suit the job. The candidate should do most of the talking. Nevertheless, the interviewer will want to encourage candidates to relax and give of their best in what is, after all, a somewhat unnatural setting.

If possible, let the candidate have a brief tour of the place of work. This is particularly useful in the case of people new to the job market (school-leavers, returning men and women), who may have little or no experience of what to expect in a workplace.

#### 8.5 Practical Tests and Presentations

If the job involves practical and/or presentation skills, it may be appropriate to test for ability prior to, or as part of, the selection process. Any tests must, however, be free of bias and related to the necessary requirements of the job.

#### 8.6 Psychometric Tests

Psychometric tests can assist in measuring aspects of personality and intelligence such as reasoning, problem solving, decision making, interpersonal skills and confidence. Psychometric tests should never be used in isolation, or as the sole selection technique and can only be conducted by an officer with the appropriate qualification.

#### 8.7 Making the Decision

Decide whom to employ as soon as possible after the interview. Use of a structured scoring system helps here, particularly one that is based on the applicants' competencies.

HR will inform all the applicants of the outcome as soon as possible, whether successful or unsuccessful and will keep in touch if the decision is delayed.

### **9. MAKING THE APPOINTMENT**

#### 9.1 Right to Work in the UK

Before making an offer of employment, employers have responsibility under Section 8 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 (AIA) for checking that applicants have the right to work in the UK and to see and take copies of relevant documentation.

#### 9.2 Starting Salaries

The Council is committed to the principle of equal pay for all its employees, and therefore it is important to ensure that there is a consistent and fair approach to starting salaries within the recruitment and promotion processes.

The use of an analytical job evaluation scheme is one way in which the Council prevents any inequalities. Under the scheme, jobs are broken down into components (known as factors) and each factor is assessed separately and points allocated according to the level needed for the job. The more demanding the job, the higher the points value. This ensures that the salary range is correct for the post and is consistent alongside employees already in post. The grading of the post under the job evaluation scheme also ensures that the salary range for the post is not based on an individual's salary with a previous employer.

When deciding on a starting salary within the evaluated pay scale, the following criteria should be considered:

(a)	Previous relevant experience.	The successful candidate may have a large amount of previous relevant experience in the role that they are about to start. While length of experience may be considered an indicator of the future performance of an employee, this should not be the sole factor which justifies a salary offer above the minimum of the scale.
(b)	Equal Pay and Equal Opportunity Policies.	Is the starting salary being offered reasonable for the duties and scope of the post? Is it likely to result in inequality and a potential for dissatisfaction and an equal pay case?

### 9.3 Relocation Assistance

The Council operates a Relocation Scheme which may be payable in approved cases to newly appointed employees requiring to relocate to the East Cambridgeshire District in order to take up the appointment.

## 10. **JOINING THE COUNCIL: INDUCTION/PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

- 10.1 For new employees joining the Council, the induction process enables them to familiarise themselves with the Council's offices, systems and practices, and helps them to settle into the job. A good induction programme introduces the newcomer not only to their immediate colleagues, but to other workers with whom they may have less day-to-day contact.
- 10.2 Prior to a new member of staff starting in post, Human Resources will send the relevant Line Manager the Manager's Induction Checklist. The checklist is intended for supervisors, managers and Executive Directors who are responsible for the induction of a new employee. Induction need not be a very formal process but it needs to be properly managed. Having a structured checklist to follow is useful for both parties because it ensures that both the new starter and the manager know what has or has not been covered at any given time.
- 10.3 A good reception, with the Line Manager spending time with the new employee, is important on the first day.
- 10.4 During the new member of staff's first 5 days in post, a member of the HR team will meet with them to go over the terms and conditions of their employment, health and safety issues, and to complete any necessary paperwork. HR will also arrange for the new member of staff to attend the Council's corporate induction day (held 3-4 times per year).
- 10.5 All new starters are invited to an introductory meeting with the Chief Executive within one month of joining the Council. This informal meeting lasts approximately 10 minutes and gives the Chief Executive an opportunity to meet the new member of staff and to introduce himself. The meeting is an opportunity for the Chief Executive to find out

about the new employee's previous career, their reasons for joining the council and their first impressions about working for East Cambridgeshire.

- 10.6 All new entrants to local government employment are subject to a period of six months probationary service, with a review after 3 months and before the completion of 6 months service. Even for staff with previous local government service, or those recruited to a different job, who are not subject to the formal probationary period, managers should still follow the same process for reviewing their performance. In the case of fixed term staff with a contract shorter than the length of the relevant probation period, the probation process will be followed for a shorter period as specified.
- 10.7 As the job is explained to the new employee, the Line Manager must provide them with a copy of their accountability statement, make clear any service standards relating to the work of the department or area within which the employee works and the performance standards related to their particular post in terms of:
- attendance and timekeeping;
  - quality and quantity of output;
  - skills that must be acquired;
  - protocols that must be learnt (including the Customer Service Standards);
  - deadlines which must be met and how any changes to deadlines will be communicated; and
  - working relationships that must be developed with other staff etc.
- 10.8 The manager must also make clear how these standards will be monitored throughout the probation period and the frequency with which they will be formally reviewed. Executive Directors/Line Managers will be reminded of the requirement to complete these reviews by the Human Resources department.

## 11. **OTHER ISSUES**

### 11.1 **Monitoring**

HR will monitor applications at each stage of the recruitment process. This will help to measure the effectiveness of the Council's Recruitment Policy in relation to the Council's Corporate Equalities Policy.

### 11.2 **Data Protection**

The Recruitment Equalities Monitoring Form makes clear to applicants that their personal information will be held in the Council's computer or manual records and that strict confidentiality will be observed. The information will be held for the purposes of:

- Highlighting possible/potential inequalities in the Council's recruitment and selection policy and procedures;
- Investigating their underlying causes; and
- Removing any unfairness and disadvantage.

Applicants are advised that using their personal data in these ways will help the Council to ensure that all of its recruitment processes are equitable and fair, for the benefit of all.