

CODE OF PROCEDURES ON RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION FOR CONSULTATION - JULY 2025
Belfast City Council Response

SECTION 1: THE PURPOSE OF THE CODE

Do you have any comments on the amendments in this section?

Response:

No comment.

SECTION 2: LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Do you have any comments on the removal of the descriptions of each legislative requirement?

Response:

The definition of the legislative requirements should be retained within the code as an aide memoire for panelists.

SECTION 3: THE GENERAL PRINCIPALS UNDERPINNING THE CODE

Do you have any comments on this section?

- The Code states at 3.3 *'Record the assessment and decision of members for shortlisting and interview panels and all those in attendance at panel meetings and retain the records for a period of not less than 1 year'*.

Response:

The Council currently has a 7-year disposal timeframe, although it is noted that the Code advises 'not less than 1 year' which would allow for the current disposal timeframe.

- The Code states at 3.5 *'Employees of all Councils will be eligible to apply to local government trawls.'*

Response:

This requires further clarification as not all local government posts are circulated amongst all Councils. Trawls advertised internally within Council are eligible for Council employees and agency assignees when applicable.

SECTION 4: THE APPLICATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RECRUITMENT PRINCIPALS IN RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Do you have any comments on this section?

- 4.2 Outlines the role of the HR Section.

Response:

It should be noted within the Council not all functions are carried out with the HR remit such as modifying job descriptions. It may be appropriate to clarify that it is a line-management responsibility.

- The Code states at 4.6.1 *'Councils should nominate one designated officer to take responsibility for canvassing issues, and if possible, someone who is not involved in the recruitment process'*.

Response:

Within the Council, the responsibility for canvassing issues is that of the Principal HR Advisor (Employee Resourcing). In circumstances where the Principal HR Advisor (Employee Resourcing) is a panel member, it would be the responsibility of the Corporate HR Manager. Further clarification required to confirm the designated officer is not involved in the recruitment exercise, in which a canvassing matter has been raised.

SECTION 5: RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE RECRUITMENT PRINCIPLES

Do you have any comments on this section?

- The Code states at 5.3 *'The job description should not discourage or preclude a person with a disability applying'*.

Response:

Should this refer to the employee specification which details the qualification and / or experience required to be eligible to apply for a vacancy rather than the job description?

- The Code at 5.4 states *'The line manager in conjunction with the human resources section should prepare a person specification for consideration and endorsement by panel members at the preliminary meeting of the panel, before the selection process commences'*.

Response:

It is the Council's view that it is not always necessary that this is undertaken via a meeting, but that engagement between panel members and operational HR is suffice.

- The Code at 5.4 states *'non-essential requirements that could have the effect of excluding persons with disabilities should not be specified'*.

Response:

The wording in the current Code is preferable, 'Particular care should be taken to avoid overstating the requirements in order to avoid directly or indirectly discriminating against applicants'.

- The Code at 5.6 provides a table detailing how panels should be convened.

Response:

Councils should be able to enhance the proposed panels. Appendix 2 (attached) provides the panel compositions as agreed (by Committee and LGSC) for Council Chief Officer posts.

In addition, the Council currently has the agreed deviation from the Code of Procedures:

1. For panels for posts above Grade 7 (excluding Director/Chief Executive), three departmental officers (with one of these not necessarily being an HR Officer); and
2. For panels for posts at Grade 7 and below, a minimum of two and a maximum of three panel members (with one of these not necessarily being an HR Officer).

The Council ensures that a HR professional will be available for ongoing consultation at all stages of the recruitment process when a HR Officer is not present on the interview panel. This wording is in the current Code, and it should remain in the revised Code.

The Council wish to continue with the above panel compositions.

The wording about panel members being "equal to or above the grade of the post being recruited" should remain in the revised Code.

- The Code at 5.7 states *'Where a service level agreement exists between the Council and the external body, then subject to the terms of the agreement, the panel should be constituted as detailed in this Code'*.

Response:

Further clarity is required. This advocates that a potential funder (if agreed in a service level agreement) may be a voting member on a panel which conflicts with how a panel should be constituted as detailed in the Code.

SECTION 6: CONDUCTING SHORTLISTING AND INTERVIEWS

Do you have any comments on this section?

- The Code at 6.3 states *'Candidates who request a reasonable adjustment in relation to meeting the eligibility criteria, the panel will consider the appropriateness of the adjustment. Adjustments may include waiving the requirements to meet all or some of the desirable criteria if used to shortlist candidates'*.

Response:

As part of our commitment to equality of opportunity we offer a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for the post.

- The Code at 6.5 details what Councils should ensure with regards assessment testing.

Response:

The original Code states 'Councils should not devise assessment tests internally, unless the officer designing, administering and evaluating such tests has been fully trained to do so and the tests have been equality proofed'. This has been removed from the proposed Code, and it is our view it should remain with clarification provided on "equality proofed".

- The Code at 6.7 states *'After giving the presentation, candidates should be required to take follow-up questions from panel members and the Professional Assessor in order to provide clarification or further information'*.

Response:

Could this be amended to state *'After giving the presentation / briefing exercise, candidates may be required to take follow-up questions from panel members and the Professional Assessor in order to provide clarification or further information'*.

- The Code at 6.7 states *'At the end of the interview, the candidate should be given the opportunity to ask any questions in relation to the post'*.

Response:

This should be in circumstances where time permits.

- The Code at 6.9 states *'Recruitment processes should be fully documented. Effective management systems and arrangements (including document management) should be in place'*.

Response:

Could this be detailed as essential.

- The Code at 6.10 states *'The offer of appointment letter should invite all candidates to advise if they require a reasonable adjustment in the workplace'*.

Response:

The Council already requests this information as part of the application process, via its Equal Opportunities Monitoring form, which states "If you are aware of any adjustments that you will require, should you be successful in obtaining the job, please outline them."

APPENDIX 1: KEY DOMESTIC LEGISLATION

Do you have any comments on this appendix?

Response:

No comment.

APPENDIX 2: PROCEDURES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF CLERK AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Do you have any comments on this appendix?

Response:

See response in section 5 re panel members.

APPENDIX 3: LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION'S OBSERVER STRATEGY

Do you have any comments on this appendix?

Response:

No comment.

APPENDIX 4: THE ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL ASSESSOR

Do you have any comments on this appendix?

Response:

No comment.

APPENDIX 5: SCHEME OF PROFESSIONAL ASSESSOR

Do you have any comments on this appendix?

Response:

No comment.

APPENDIX 6: GUIDANCE NOTES FOR PROFESSIONAL ASSESSORS ATTENDING SELECTION PANELS IN COUNCILS AND THE NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE

Do you have any comments on this appendix?

Response:

No comment.