

RECRUITMENT UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2022

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That HR Committee acknowledge the content of the report and support the proactive steps aimed to improve recruitment campaigns.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report provides an update on recruitment for the 6 months to 30th September 2022, progress made with recruitment tools, and plans to improve branding and generic tools in the coming months.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Pre-pandemic and inclusive of Leisure Services, we averaged 130 vacancies a year, with very few (average of 5) requiring secondary campaigns to fill posts.
- 3.2 With Leisure Services moving to Freedom Leisure and the reduction of approximately 400 employees and high levels of turnover in the area, it was envisaged that recruitment would reduce accordingly by a third. The resource in the HR Admin team reduced by 1 FTE to 3 FTE's.
- 3.3 In the year to 31st March 2022, there were 248 recruitment campaigns and we received 1,573 applications. 92% of advertised posts were filled first time. With vacancies nearly doubling in the last year, it increased the work of the Team at every stage from discussing advertising through to induction.
- 3.4 With the move of Leisure Services, the number of casual staff reduced significantly from over 200 casual post holders to 40 as at August 2021. This reduction allowed the opportunity to review how we use those casual staff.

4. CURRENT SITUATION

- 4.1 Between 1st April and 30th September 2022, there have been 85 vacancies, 9 of these were new posts, the remainder were filling vacancies. We had 429 applicants for these roles. 73% were filled first time. Recruitment at every banding level has been challenging during this period. Retention has been an additional challenge at lower banded roles, with employees leaving for very little difference in salary, but detailing any amount meant easier to meet growing costs, or a little less travel saving significantly on transport. We averaged 13 new starters each month over this period.
- 4.2 The posts requiring a second round of recruitment varied across the board. To assist we looked at different publications, changing tenure of post, and updating our advert template.
- 4.3 We await agreement on the pay award which will help in part, along with the banding structure changes recently agreed.
- 4.4 To assist with the higher demand and more proactive steps, as well as increased workload to assist the Advisory Team, we are in the process of recruiting an HR Business Administration Apprentice, fixed term for 18 months.

5. PROACTIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS AND PROCESSES

- 5.1 To improve our service delivery, both for recruiting managers and applicants, we have taken several steps in the last six months and have several more planned for the remainder of the year. The team remain on hand for any queries or advice as the need arises.
- 5.2 We've updated our 'Recruitment' forestnet page with the following documents, as well as attaching them at the start of each recruitment campaign for the recruiting manager to refer to.
 - An easy-to-follow full recruitment full process guidance flowchart, this has been tested on new and established recruiting managers.
 - Further to undertaking additional recruitment advert training, our Team have created new advert template guidance. This seems to correlate with many roles receiving at least double the number of applications.
 - With our media agency (onefix) we have created a simple 'Where to advertise' guide detailing current highest hits for different types of roles.
- 5.3 We have provided some standard interview questions as well as suggestions for additional supporting assessment methods (such as presentation/in-tray exercises/personality profiling) for different levels and types of roles to further assist managers and encourage a more standardised approach.
- 5.4 Additionally, we've asked ICT to develop an updated vacancy management e-form, which will automatically flow through the right people and process depending on the circumstances of each vacancy. The aim is to make the process quicker and easier for all involved. This e-form is in progress.
- 5.5 We are looking to develop our branding message and image with the help of the Communications team. We have created an initial design for *'there's more to us than meets the eye'* but will develop this further with Communications expertise to ensure this works effectively. This will then be used on vans and refuse vehicles, on our adverts and our website. We will also have pop up banners and flyers with this theme detailed for use at recruitment and careers events. We will also purchase more of recruitment event stationery takeaways, such as the rulers and post-it's to give out with our website detailed (newforest.gov.uk/jobs). We hope to have this in place later in the autumn.
- 5.6 Leading on from this, and with assistance from Communications, we would like to engage with a videographer to design a short attractive corporate recruitment video.
- 5.7 We are looking to improve our exit interview feedback to better understand any particular retention difficulties. This will be bought as a separate report.
- 5.8 We have updated our induction presentation and ensure wherever possible this is delivered on a new starter's first day and face to face – although there are times when this is carried out over Teams or on their second day to meet service requirements.
- 5.9 As part of learning at work week this year, we encouraged all teams to create Service Videos which we could share on Forestnet. We highlight the Service Videos to new starters at induction, so they can learn about other services of the council.
- 5.10 We are working to update our Meet & Greet presentation. We have canvassed other councils, who have either stopped their Meet & Greets, they carry them out virtually, or they follow a similar format to ourselves. After the next session in November, we will seek feedback from attendees to ask how this could be further improved and what they

would have liked covered. With the assistance of Communications, we hope to add a video to this presentation moving forwards.

6. CASUAL STAFF

- 6.1 To ensure we are using casual staff fairly, we have worked with unions and managers to assess the casual staff. Some had not worked in over six months and were no longer required; this was discussed with them and their record was closed.
- 6.2 Some are truly casual – working very sporadically for cover purposes or a project piece of work. One member of staff had covered long term sickness for a protracted period, which had now come to a close and would revert back to true casual cover hours.
- 6.3 Looking at the patterns of the remaining five staff, their working pattern demonstrated they had been working to those hours for at least a year, and managers confirmed that requirement existed moving forwards, therefore permanent contracts were issued to those staff equivalent to the future requirement for their hours. There are now 14 remaining casual staff. This will be kept under review.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 It is hoped that the improved resources assist managers and attract more applicants moving forwards, and with a more stable team in place we are able to provide a professional HR Administration service to all users.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There will be small costs for the development of the branding campaign, banners, flyers, and branded stationery, as well as the additional cost of the addition of our apprentice, which has already been approved by business case.
- 8.2 All of these measures however are intended to improve first time recruitment rates, and so will negate the need for costly follow up recruitment campaigns.

9. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None

11. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 This should improve our image as an employer of choice, and to have an inclusive appeal.

12. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 We will continue with our current practices which are GDPR compliant, no changes are envisaged.

13. EMT COMMENTS

- 13.1 EMT acknowledge the content of the report and support the proactive steps aimed to improve recruitment campaigns.

14. EMPLOYEE SIDE COMMENTS

14.1 To follow.

For further information contact:

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