

The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland



**Procedures for the Recruitment and Selection of
Clerk and Chief Executive
in the 11 New Councils**

**Code of Procedures on
Recruitment and Selection**

November 2013

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Context

1.1 Structure of the Document

The following pages (pages 4 – 13) are extracted from pages D16 – D24 of the Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection, Annex 5, Procedures for the Recruitment and Selection of Clerk and Chief Executive.

Supplementary guidance has been inserted to address the particular circumstances in relation to filling the Chief Executive posts in the 11 new councils. **This guidance is highlighted in boxes.**

1.2 Status of the Procedure

This Procedure is not intended to replace the Commission's existing Procedures for the Recruitment and Selection of Clerk and Chief Executive (pages D16 – D24), but is specifically designed to address the particular circumstances in relation to the filling of Chief Executive posts in the 11 new council structures, created as a result of the reform of local government.

This Procedure is prepared in pursuant of the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland's (the Commission) statutory responsibilities under the Local Government (NI) Act 1972 to establish:

"..... a code of procedure for securing fair and equal consideration of applications to councils by persons seeking to be employed by them as officers, and fair and equal treatment of persons who are so employed".

The Procedure is issued under the authority of the Local Government Staff Commission under Section 40(4) (f) of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972 as a statutory recommendation for adoption by the Statutory Transition Committees with effect from the date of advertising the posts.

1.3 Scope and Purpose of the Procedure and Equality

Scope

This Procedure applies to the filling of Chief Executive posts in the 11 new council structures arising out of the reform of local government.

It should be noted that this Procedure applies only to Chief Executive posts in the 11 new council structures. For all other posts, refer to Circular (LGRJF01 'Vacancy Control System – Detailed Procedure') which applies to existing organisations.

Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to give effect to the Local Government (Statutory Transition Committees) Regulations (NI) 2013 (the Regulations) which states that (para 18 (1))

“The selection and appointment of a person to the office of clerk for a new council:

- (a) must be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition; and
- (b) must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the membership of the statutory transition committee”

Equality Obligations

The Statutory Transition Committees have certain obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and are required "to have due regard" to the need to promote equality of opportunity and "to have regard" to the desirability of promoting good relations.

1.4 Compliance with the Procedure

Responsibility for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Procedure rests with the individual Statutory Transition Committee.

The Regulations specifically extend the Commission’s statutory duties to cover the appointment of staff by the Statutory Transition Committees.

The Commission will monitor compliance with the Code and provide composite reports on its implementation.

Procedures for the Recruitment and Selection of Clerk and Chief Executive

1. Introduction

All general provisions of the Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection are applicable to Chief Executive posts. The following points are specific to the recruitment and selection of Chief Executives and will also apply.

2. Administration

To demonstrate impartiality in the recruitment and selection process, the administration of the recruitment exercise will be carried out by the Local Government Staff Commission.

3. Recruitment

Applications for the post of Clerk and Chief Executive will be sought only from those persons qualified in accordance with the District Councils (Clerks Qualifications) Determination 1997 as detailed in Appendix 1 of this guidance note, or such further or amended Determination issued by the Department of the Environment.

Advertising the Chief Executive Posts

One advert, agreed by the Commission, will be placed for all the Chief Executive posts in the 11 new council structures. The advert will be placed by the DOE and potential applicants will be directed to the Commission's website to view the individual application pack for each cluster and complete a generic application form online.

4. Training of Panel Members

All panel members must receive training to familiarise them with the recruitment and selection process, with particular reference to non-discriminatory recruitment and selection techniques, including awareness of the Equality Commission's statutory Codes of Practice and Guidance documents.

In addition, the Chairperson should receive guidance on the role and responsibilities of chairing a selection panel.

Members of the Statutory Transition Committees must receive training in respect of their obligations throughout the recruitment and selection process and their approval role.

5. Composition of the Shortlisting Panel

The existing Code provision in this respect is as follows:

The council will consult with the Commission regarding the compilation of the shortlisting panel, which will comprise:

- the Mayor/Chairperson of the council, or the Chairperson of an appropriate appointment committee of the council
- another two members of the council, appointed by the council
- the Chairperson of the Local Government Staff Commission
- the Chief Executive of the Local Government Staff Commission.

Following nomination, should any panel member be unable to attend a meeting of the shortlisting panel, the council may designate a substitute.

The shortlisting panel will have the status of the ‘Advisory Appointment Panel’ referred to in Sections 40(4)(a) and 41(4) & (5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972.

Shortlisting panel(s) for the Chief Executive posts in the 11 new council structures should consist of women and men, and be representative of both main communities in Northern Ireland.

Eleven shortlisting panels, comprising:

- the Chair of the Statutory Transition Committee
- not less than 2 and not more than 4 members of the Statutory Transition Committee, appointed by the Statutory Transition Committee
- the Chairperson of the Local Government Staff Commission
- the Chief Executive of the Local Government Staff Commission

6. Chairing of Shortlisting Panel

The shortlisting panel will be chaired by the Chairperson of the Local Government Staff Commission.

7. Shortlisting Criteria

As the Commission has responsibility for “establishing...bodies (to be known as ‘advisory appointment panels’) for the purpose of giving advice to councils on the suitability of applicants for appointment to the office of clerk”, the Commission should be consulted in the agreement of the shortlisting criteria.

The criteria should be agreed at an early stage and should be included in the information pack issued to potential applicants.

8. Consideration of Applications

The shortlisting panel will consider all applications received and will prepare a shortlist of candidates who meet the criteria. The panel will seek to be unanimous in their choice, but in the event of this not being achieved the Commission will make a recommendation accordingly.

9. Assessment Arrangements

Following the initial shortlisting of candidates, an assessment centre should be held for all Chief Executive appointments in order to provide the shortlisting panel with additional information on the candidates. The panel should agree how the information will be used, normally in a second stage of shortlisting to determine a final shortlist of candidates to be invited for interview.

All candidates who participate in the assessment arrangement should be offered feedback on their performance.

One assessment centre will be held for all the Chief Executive posts in the 11 new council structures. The assessment centre will comprise a number of exercises, designed to test the candidates' ability to meet the challenge of the transformation process of the reform of local government, and will be based on the agreed competencies for the new posts.

The information from the assessment centre report will be used in **a second stage of shortlisting by the same panel** to determine a final list of candidates who will be invited for interview by the Statutory Transition Committees.

10. Composition of the Interviewing Panel

The existing Code provision in this respect is as follows:

The council will consult with the Staff Commission regarding the composition of the interview panel, which will comprise:

- The Mayor/Chairperson of the council, or the Chairperson of an appropriate appointment committee of the council
- not less than 4 and not more than 7 members of the council, appointed by the council
- the Chairperson of the Local Government Staff Commission
- the Chief Executive of the Local Government Staff Commission
- two independent Professional Assessors approved by the Local Government Staff Commission.

Only the Mayor/Chairperson and the elected members of the council on the interviewing panel will have voting rights.

Interviewing panel(s) for the Chief Executive posts in the 11 new council structures should consist of women and men, and be representative of both main communities in Northern Ireland.

The Statutory Transition Committee will consult with the Commission regarding the composition of the interview panel, which will comprise:

- the Chairperson of the Statutory Transition Committee
- not less than 4 and not more than 7 members of the Statutory Transition Committee, appointed by the Statutory Transition Committee
- the Chairperson of the Local Government Staff Commission
- the Chief Executive of the Local Government Staff Commission
- independent Professional Assessor(s), approved by the Local Government Staff Commission.

Only the Chairperson and the elected members on the interview panel will have voting rights.

Following nomination, should any panel member be unable to attend the interview panel, the Statutory Transition Committee may designate a substitute.

The council will delegate full appointment authority to the interview panel to allow it to proceed to make an appointment.

In order to implement Section 18 (1)(b) of the Regulations, after the interview panel have selected a candidate, a report should be prepared on the recruitment and selection process for scrutiny and approval by a two-thirds majority of the membership of the Statutory Transition Committee.

Following nomination, should any panel member be unable to attend the interview panel, the council may designate a substitute.

11. Chairing of Interview Panel

The interview panel will be chaired by the Mayor/Chairperson of the council or the Chairperson of an appropriate appointment committee of the council.

In accordance the Local Government (Statutory Transition Committees) Regulations (NI) 2013 which state at:

- paragraph 18(2) “In determining the two-thirds majority in accordance with paragraph (1)(b), the chairperson of the committee shall not have a casting vote
- paragraph 23(4) “In the case of an equality of votes on a question, the person presiding at the meeting shall have a second or ‘casting’ vote, subject to regulation 18 (Appointment of staff to a new council)”

the Chair of the Interview Panel shall **not** have a casting vote.

12. Commission Role at the Interview Panel

The Chairperson and Chief Executive of the Staff Commission will undertake the role of Commission Observers at the interview stage.

13. Professional Assessors

The Commission will consult with the council to agree the appointment of two professional assessors who normally should have experience of the role of Chief Executive in local government in Northern Ireland and Great Britain respectively. They have three key roles at the final selection stage:

- approving a number of core questions based on the competencies for the job and from which the interviewing panel will select those which will be put to the candidates
- assisting the panel members by asking follow-up and supplementary questions to elicit further information from the candidates after each presentation and interview
- advising the panel members on the competence of the candidates in relation to the requirements of the job.

The Commission will appoint a panel of Professional Assessors to give guidance and assistance to recruitment panels on the professional and technical suitability of applicants to the post of Chief Executive in the 11 new councils.

14. Pre-Interview Meeting

Immediately prior to the first interview, the panel members, professional assessors and Staff Commission observers should meet to agree the procedures, select the core questions and review the assessment form and other documentation that will be used during the selection process.

In agreeing a method of eliminating candidates and voting on an appointment, it should be noted that the holding of a secret ballot is not permitted.

The Chairperson should also seek assurances from panel members that they have not been canvassed in respect of any candidate.

15. Interview

The role of Chief Executive involves a considerable amount of public relations work, representing the council at many different events. To test the candidates' abilities in this important facet of the job at the interview stage, they should be asked to make a formal presentation on a relevant topic which is given to them in advance.

After giving the presentation, candidates should be required to take follow-up questions from panel members and the Professional Assessors in order to provide clarification or further information.

The interview itself should be based around a number of core questions designed to test how candidates can apply their knowledge and experience in key areas of the job.

Part D – Recruitment and Selection in Practice

Candidates should be given a copy of the core questions to follow while the Professional Assessors, Chairperson or panel members ask each question in turn. They should not be given the core questions for a specified time in advance of the interview in order to allow them to prepare their answers, nor should they be given a copy of the questions and invited to answer them in their own time and in the order they choose.

The Professional Assessors, Chairperson and panel members should be given the opportunity to ask supplementary questions to clarify or expand on the candidates' answers to the core questions and to facilitate interaction with the candidates.

16. Decision

All candidates should be informed of the council's decision as soon as possible after the interviews, although it is recognised that in some cases an appointment may not be confirmed until references have been taken up and a medical report received.

All candidates should be informed of their recommendation for appointment immediately following the approval of the Statutory Transition Committee. It is recommended that the Statutory Transition Committee should meet within 24 hours of the decision of the selection panel or, following consultation with the Commission, as soon as reasonably practicable.

Timeline and Implementation

Recruitment Timeline

The recruitment timeline is outlined below:

Advertise	Nov 13
Closing Date	Dec 13
Panel nominated and agreed	Sept/Oct13
Panel Training	Nov/Dec 13
First Shortlisting	end Dec 13
Assessment Centre	Jan 14
Second Shortlisting	Jan 14
Interviews	Feb/Mar 14

Schedule of Recruitment and Selection Activities

Key To Abbreviations

LGSC:	Local Government Staff Commission
STC:	Statutory Transition Committee
DOE:	Department of the Environment
LGRJF:	Local Government Reform Joint Forum

Stage 1 Drafting the Recruitment Documentation

Preliminary Contacts	LGSC, DOE, STCs
Agree job description and person specification	LGRJF
Agree shortlisting criteria	LGSC, STCs
Agree format for assessment and interviews	LGSC, STCs
Agree recruitment and selection timeline	LGSC, DOE, STCs
Agree when/where advertisement will be placed	LGSC, DOE

Stage 2 Establishing the Panels and the Preliminary Meeting

Meeting between STCs and Commission	LGSC, STC
Composition of Shortlisting Panel	LGSC, STC/RTC
Composition of the Interview Panel	LGSC, STC
Training of Panel Members	LGSC

Stage 3 Starting the Recruitment Process

Prepare information pack for applicants	LGSC, DOE
Place advertisement in agreed publications	DOE
Deliver panel training session(s)	LGSC, Consultancy support as required

Stage 4 Shortlisting

Prepare shortlisting documentation	LGSC
First shortlisting meeting	SL Panel
Notification of shortlisting decisions	LGSC

Stage 5 Assessment Arrangements

Administer assessment arrangements	Consultancy support
Prepare second shortlisting documentation	LGSC
Second shortlisting meeting	SL Panel
Notification of shortlisting decisions	LGSC
Appoint Professional Assessors	LGSC

Stage 6 Interview

Prepare interview questions	LGSC, Assessors
Prepare interview documentation	LGSC
Pre-interview meeting	LGSC, STC, Assessors
Interviews	LGSC, STC, Assessors

Stage 7 Post Interview

Notification of final decisions	LGSC, STC
Issue contract of employment	STC
Feedback to candidates	Assessors