

COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY**DATE: 14 November 2002****VENUE: Committee rooms 3&4****TITLE: APPOINTMENT OF HEAD OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY EQUALITY POLICY UNIT****Purpose**

1. To brief the Committee on the process for recruiting a head of the Equality Policy Unit, as requested at its meeting on 17 October 2002.

Background

2. The report on institutional racism in the National Assembly, "Lifting Every Voice", produced by Roger McKenzie and presented to the Committee in March 2001, proposed that "there should be an upgrading of the Head of [the Equality Policy] Unit to one commensurate with the Senior Civil Service (SCS)" (recommendation 33, page 30). The Permanent Secretary subsequently accepted the report and earlier this year the recruitment of a head of the Unit at Grade 5 (the entry level to the SCS) began. A paper on the wider implementation of the McKenzie report is being presented to the Committee as paper EUR-06-02(P2).
3. Mrs Yasmin Hussein has been appointed and expects to take up post on 3 February 2003. She will be the first substantive member of the Assembly's SCS to be appointed from a minority ethnic background, joining Sanjiv VEDI who was seconded to the SCS from UNISON earlier this year. She will report directly to the Permanent Secretary, rather than to the Director, Personnel and Accommodation Services (PAS) as at present.

Overview

4. Recruitment to the Civil Service is governed by the Recruitment Code produced by the Civil Service Commissioners under the Civil Service Order in Council 1995. To ensure fair and open competition and selection on merit, the Code requires that applicants must be given equal and reasonable access to adequate information about the job, its requirements and the selection process; applicants must be considered equally on merit at each stage of the selection process; selection must be based on relevant criteria applied consistently to all the candidates; and

selection techniques must be reliable and guard against bias.

5. To ensure that the process adopted met these criteria:-

- specialist executive search consultants with a specific brief were employed to run the recruitment;
- the recruitment panel was formed to ensure a good balance of expertise, knowledge and objectivity;
- a process was designed for this specific competition to make sure that the panel had sufficient and appropriate information to make its decision.

Executive Search Consultants

1. Most National Assembly SCS recruitment exercises are run by the Assembly itself and virtually all are conducted by way of open advertisement. Consultants are employed where there is the expectation that a suitably competitive field may not be formed simply by recourse to public advertisement, for instance because of a previous failure to fill the post or, as in this case, the specialist nature of the position and thus the restricted pool from which to draw candidates.
2. On the advice of the Cabinet Office a list of consultants with good experience of recruitment to professional equal opportunities posts at a senior level was drawn up and AT Kearney was selected after competitive tender. One of their senior consultants, Ms Rashpal Kaur Singh, led the recruitment exercise.
3. At the outset, the Permanent Secretary agreed that, in view of the importance of the post and the need to guard against individual biases among panel members, the panel should be chaired by a Civil Service Commissioner rather than by a senior Assembly official. Dr Maggie Semple, Director of the Experience Corps, was invited to take the chair by the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners and agreed.
4. Other panel members were:-
 - Mr Museji Takolia, Cabinet Office Diversity Adviser;
 - Mrs Margaret Foster, Chief Executive, Pontypridd and Rhondda NHS Trust and former Equal Opportunities Commissioner for NHS Wales;
 - Mrs Jacqui James, Vice Chair, British Council of Organisations of Disabled People;
 - Mr David Richards, Principal Finance Officer, National Assembly

1. The panel thus comprised 3 women, 2 men, 2 people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, one person with a disability and 3 people resident in Wales.

The Recruitment Process

2. The process was devised by the consultants after discussion with the Director, PMBS, and was endorsed by the panel chair, who was concerned to ensure that the panel had adequate information available to it to make a properly informed decision. The post was advertised at the end of June/early July in the "Muslim News", "Y Cymro", "The Sunday Times", "The Voice", "Asian Times", "Western Mail" and "Golwg". The consultants made contact with individuals they believed might be interested in/have the relevant skills for the post.
3. By the closing date of 19 July 2002 31 applications had been received. The panel met on 22 August to consider them and the consultants' analysis of applicants' experience against the criteria for the post. The panel identified a long list of 14 applicants who were each then interviewed by the consultants to amplify the information available. A shortlisting meeting was convened on 9 September at which, on the basis of the information on the application and the report of the consultants, the long list was reduced by the panel to a shortlist of 6.
4. Each shortlisted candidate was assessed by a Chartered Occupational Psychologist with considerable experience of working within the Civil Service Commissioners' Code of Practice and with a track record of assessing multi-national candidates for public sector clients. Candidates completed a psychometric questionnaire. This identified the individual's style of relating to others, style of thinking, consistency of performance and emotions and self-attitude. The results of the profile were discussed with the candidates in an in-depth feedback interview to ensure that their meanings and implications were clear and gain the individual's agreement that the profile was reflective of their behaviour. The psychometric profile was not seen by the final interview panel. The psychologist report, which was given to the panel, was compiled from the interpretation of the personality profile data, substantiated by feedback from the candidate and a competency based structured interview. Candidates' performance on a short analysis was also integrated into the report.
5. Of the 6 shortlisted candidates, one did not meet the Civil Service nationality criteria and was asked to withdraw and one other withdrew for personal reasons.
6. Interviews were held in Cardiff on 25 September 2002. Candidates were asked to do a 10 minute presentation on a topic that had been sent in advance to all candidates. This was followed with strategic and function related questions. The panel took its decision after weighing the evidence provided by the applicant, the consultants' briefing, the psychologist's report and individual performances at interview. Its recommendation was made to the Permanent Secretary, whose ultimate decision this was.

7. Unsuccessful candidates were notified of the result and provided with feedback on the board's assessment by telephone by Ms Singh, with the offer of further feedback if they wished it.

Cost

8. The total cost of the exercise was £69,946, including consultants' fees, newspaper advertisements and VAT.

Evaluation

9. The breakdown of candidates by gender, ethnicity and disability at each stage of the process is as follows. 31 candidates applied for the position, of whom 12 returned equal opportunities monitoring forms. Of the 12 there were 5 male applicants and 7 female. Four candidates identified themselves as being British; 2 Indian, of which one was Indian East African; 4 Welsh, of which one was Welsh Asian; one Asian and one Afro-Caribbean.
10. Thirty one candidates for a specialist post at the National Assembly is on the high side. SCS open recruitments have attracted higher numbers than 31, but are usually in the range 15-20. The field of candidates does appear to have been larger than might have been expected without the use of executive search.
11. Members of the panel and interviewed candidates have been asked for their views on the exercise. Some have been promised, but not yet received.

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