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Guidance notes for applicants

Please read this information before you complete the application form

This document provides information about the policies of both councils and our procedures on recruitment and selection. It also provides advice on the completion of the application form and other useful information.

Making an application

Thank you for expressing an interest in this vacancy. In order to apply you will need to complete the application form in entirety. Please note, incomplete forms will not be considered.

• Completion of the application form is essential. If you wish, you can also submit a copy of your CV in support.

• Our preferred method of application is online. If you need to print and return your application by post, please ensure the information you provide is printed clearly and in black ink only.

• Each vacancy is based upon a job description and person specification. The job description lists the key responsibilities of the post. The person specification outlines the qualifications, experience, knowledge skills, behaviours and any other required aptitudes; which are either essential or desirable. Please read the job description and person specification very carefully so that you know what the job involves and match your skills, abilities and knowledge to it.

• When providing evidence of your skills and abilities in order to complete the role, please use the STAR method. The STAR Method requires you to outline the following in order to provide evidence for the requirements within the person specification:

  Situation – Outline a situation, background, set the scene.
  Task – What was required? When? Where? Who?
  Action – What you did, what skills; behaviours; characteristics did you use?
  Result – What was the outcome of what you did?

Please read the job description and person specification carefully so that you know what the job involves and how you can match your skills, abilities and knowledge to it.

The completed application form must demonstrate that you meet all the essential criteria.

To make sure we treat all applicants fairly, we make no assumptions about you, we only consider the information you provide about yourself on the application form.

• You should complete all parts of the application form (including the equal opportunities monitoring form) and ensure that the information you supply is clear, precise and is aimed at the job you are applying for.

• Always ensure that any additional sheets are securely attached to your application form.

• Both councils, as disability symbol users, are committed to ensuring candidates who consider they have a disability, and who meets the essential criteria used within the selection process, as set out in the person specification, will be guaranteed an interview.

• If you consider yourself to have a disability, please ensure that this is stated on the equal opportunities monitoring form.

• If you are applying under the Veterans guaranteed interview scheme please ensure you stated this on the equal opportunities monitoring form, and the information you provide is clear, precise and is aimed at the job you are applying for.

• Both Cherwell and South Northamptonshire Council’s encourage applications from all sections of the community and from all age groups.

• The application closing date is clearly stated on the advert. No applications will be accepted once the closing date has passed.

• Where English is not your first language it may be possible for the council to provide assistance with the completion of your application form. Should you require this support please contact the Human Resources department.

  Email: humanresources@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk
  Phone: 01295 221767.

Procedures after an application is submitted

Due to the volume of responses we received, we have a policy of only notifying those candidates who have been invited for interview. Candidates who have heard nothing within 21 days after the closing date should assume that, whilst their application has been welcomed, they have been unsuccessful.
Guidance notes for applicants

The procedure after the closing date for applications has passed is as follows:

a) Human Resources ensure that all application forms (without the equal opportunities monitoring forms) are sent to the recruiting line manager.

b) A panel of at least two people will select the shortlist for interview. The shortlisting will be based on the information provided in the application form and any supplementary documentation provided. Each applicant is assessed against the criteria for appointment.

c) The shortlisted candidates will be contacted and asked to attend for interview. They will be advised of any special arrangements such as tests or presentations for the interview day. Candidates will be advised of the result as soon as is practicable after the interview.

Email contact: Wherever possible we will use email correspondence as part of the recruitment process. This may include letters of invitation to interview, reference request and formal offers. Please therefore only provide an email address that you are happy for us to use to contact you, if needed, during the recruitment process. If an email address is not available, correspondence will be sent in the post. Where an interview is specified within the recruitment advert, candidates should keep this date free as it is not normally possible to re-arrange to an alternative date.

d) If you are successful following interview your appointment will be conditional upon receipt of satisfactory references, medical clearance, asylum and immigration checks and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance (as appropriate).

e) A contract of employment will be sent to the successful candidate as soon as is practicable.

Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act 1998 places responsibilities on us to process personal data that we hold in a fair and proper way.

The Act came into force on 1 March 2000 and regulates the use of personal data, including any data you supply on this application form.

The information you give us will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purpose of personnel management.

Cherwell District and / or South Northamptonshire Council may contact other organisations (such as the Criminal Records Bureau, previous employer(s), education establishments, etc) to check the factual information you have given on the application form.

The information will be stored securely, both manually and electronically and destroyed after six months (maximum) if your application is unsuccessful.

If we offer you a job we will use some of the information you give us on the application form in your contract of employment. The information you give on the equal opportunities monitoring form will only be used to monitor the application of our equal opportunities policy and the effectiveness of our recruitment and advertising strategies.

Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils share a commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Our commitment is underpinned by robust processes and procedures that seek to maximise opportunity, minimise risk and continuously promote a culture that embraces the ethos of safeguarding amongst our workforce.
Equal opportunities in employment

Both Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Council are fully committed to equal opportunities in employment and opposes any form of unfair discrimination on grounds of gender, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, transgender status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, criminal record, age, sexuality, religious or political belief, membership or non-membership of a trade union, or HIV status.

The council will:

• take all possible steps to
  • treat employees and potential employees fairly
  • ensure that decisions on recruitment, selection, promotion, and training are made solely on merit and ability to carry out the job
• work within the framework of the law and published Codes of Practice on equal opportunities in employment
• make any necessary and reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of disabled employees and applicants such as
  • accepting applications from disabled candidates in alternative formats including tape, computer disc, Braille, or by telephone
  • interviewing all disabled applicants who meet the selection criteria for a job vacancy
  • making adjustments to premises
• make a positive contribution to help ex-Armed Forces personnel (veterans) make the transition to civilian life. Interview all veterans of the armed forces who meet the selection criteria for a job vacancy, provided that:
  • the armed forces were the veteran’s last long-term employer and where no more than three years has elapsed since they have left
  • the veteran meets the essential criteria
  • the veteran is in a position to take up employment within a maximum of 12 weeks of the offer being made
• seek to give all employees equal access to training and development opportunities
• have clear, fair and sensitive procedures for dealing with unfair discrimination and harassment
• monitor all areas of the Policy to
  • check that unfair discrimination is not taking place
  • actively develop its employment policies, procedures and practices
  • decide what actions to take for equal opportunities.
• communicate the Policy to all employees and potential employees and give training and guidance to all who put it into action

The council positively welcomes applicants for jobs from all sections of the community
Training and development opportunities

Both Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Council are committed to:

- Ensuring that all employees have the knowledge, skills and competence to do their jobs effectively and
- Providing training and development opportunities for employees to develop their abilities and potential.

Employees have Personal Development Plans (PDPs) which are reviewed on a regular basis and the council’s aims to provide appropriate and relevant training and development activities for each employee.

The council’s offer a varied programme of training and development:

- Comprehensive induction and essential training for every new employee
- A corporate training programme run in-house, covering areas such as Management and Supervisory Development, Information Technology, Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities and Interpersonal Skills
- Attendance at appropriate courses, seminars or workshop
- Training to meet Continuous Professional Development requirements
- Assistance, where possible, for employees to obtain qualifications relevant to their work and future development.
Pre-employment clearances

Eligibility to work in the UK
It is a requirement of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 that all employers in the UK take steps to ensure that new employees are eligible to work. Under section 8 of the Act an employer is guilty of a criminal offence if it employs a person subject to immigration control unless that person has been given leave to remain and work in the UK.

The Act provides the employer with a statutory defence if the employer can prove that before the employment began, it checked and recorded certain documents.

Both Cherwell District Council (CDC) and South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) are equal opportunities employers and in order to comply with our employment policy and the Equalities Act, our policy is to treat all applicants equally in complying with the Asylum and Immigration Act. Consequently all external applicants who are invited to interview are asked to bring appropriate documentation.

An employment offer cannot be confirmed until satisfactory evidence has been provided by the applicant.

References
References for successful candidates are normally requested after the interviews. Occasionally it may be necessary to request references before the interviews. All applicants are asked if CDC/SNC is able to request references without further authority from them.

- If the applicant ticks YES, references may be requested prior to interview
- If the applicant ticks NO, references will not be contacted until further authorisation has been obtained. This will not have any detrimental effect.

An employment offer cannot be confirmed until two satisfactory references have been received.

Medical clearance
All medical questionnaires are strictly private and confidential and will only be seen by the CDC/SNC Occupational Health advisor who will confirm if medical clearance can be given.

The Occupational Health advisor may require further medical information from the applicants GP before a decision can be made, in which case the applicant will be kept informed.

An employment offer cannot be confirmed until the applicant is confirmed as fit for employment.

Rehabilitation of offenders
The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act was introduced to ensure that applicants are not discriminated against when applying for jobs if they have been convicted of a criminal offence and have not re-offended for a period of time.

The Act allows certain types of conviction to be treated as “spent” after a certain (variable) period of time. Applicants are no longer legally required to disclose convictions that have been “spent”, unless the role they are applying for is except from the Act. In the case of more serious crime, such as where the sentence is more than 30 months imprisonment, the convictions can never become “spent” and must always be taken into account.

Certain roles may be exempt from the Act to protect vulnerable client groups such as children, young people, the elderly, sick or disabled. In such cases an employer is legally entitled to ask applicants for details of all convictions.

Cautions, reprimands and final warnings are not criminal convictions and are not covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. They become “spent” immediately and employers may only consider them when appointing to an exempt role.

CDC/SNC is fully committed to equal opportunities in employment and will take all possible steps to ensure that applicants who have criminal records are treated fairly. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar an applicant from employment but this will depend on the circumstances and background of the offence(s).

All applicants who are offered employment to an exempt post will be subject to a criminal record check from Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) before the appointment is confirmed. This will include details of cautions, reprimands or final warnings as well as convictions. The Information for Applicants will confirm whether a DBS check is required for the role.

An offer of employment may be withdrawn upon receipt of unsatisfactory clearances. Should this happen the applicant will be given the right to discuss the matter with the recruitment manager and / or a member of Human Resources.

Employees in exempt roles will be subject to a DBS check every three years. CDC/SNC will meet the cost of the check for all successful applicants and any required thereafter.
District information about Cherwell and South Northamptonshire

The Cherwell district in North Oxfordshire is a predominantly rural area providing an excellent environment in which to live and work. There are three urban centres - Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington - which together contain 64.5 per cent of the population. Cherwell continues to change, with a population of approximately 141,868 projected to increase to around 155,650 by 2021.

Cherwell council is working to implement its four main priorities in order to benefit the residents and business of the district:

• Sound budgets and a customer focused council;
• Thriving communities;
• District of opportunity;
• Safe clean and green;

Banbury
A pleasant and historic town of approximately 46,853 inhabitants, Banbury is famous for its Cross and Cakes. Banbury provides the main market and shopping centre for a wide area, and continues to expand rapidly to meet these growing demands. A major town centre redevelopment scheme has recently been completed. Partly pedestrianised, the town centre combines the best of old and new, retaining its historic atmosphere in an attractive shopping environment. With direct access to the M40 motorway and considerable investment in new housing and commercial property, Banbury’s future as a centre of importance is assured.

Bicester
The ancient market town of Bicester has witnessed rapid growth in recent years and now boasts a population of approximately 30,853. Centred around the Market Place, the shopping area retains the historic character of the town, and its pedestrianisation scheme has ensured that Bicester’s role as a commercial and industrial centre continues to flourish. With easy access to the M40 motorway, Bicester continues to attract development and now offers a wide range of business and industrial properties, complemented by extensive new housing and the Bicester Retail Village. The planned eco development of 5,000 homes was designated a national eco town in 2009 and has attracted significant central government funding.

Kidlington
Situated just north of Oxford, Kidlington is now home to around 13,723 residents. A 1930's Garden City built around an old greystone village, Kidlington offers a thriving community with a village atmosphere. Most of the residential development has occurred since the prestigious Oxford Spires Business Park. With the added attraction of the Oxford Airport on the parish boundary, boasting facilities for executive travel and helicopter services, the sometime ‘largest village in England’ looks set for continued growth and prosperity.

Further Reading
About Cherwell District Council
www.cherwell.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1501

South Northamptonshire is a mainly rural district, covering an area of approximately 634 km2 (26.8 per cent of the area of the county), and with a growing population of approximately 85,189 people, projected to increase to 94,304 by 2021.

The council has three strategic priorities:

• Serve the Residents and Business;
• Protect the district;
• Grow the district;

The district consists of two historic market towns – Brackley and Towcester, 96 villages and 78 parishes. Brackley, with a population of approximately 13,018 and Towcester with a population of approximately 9,252 are home to 26.1 per cent of the population of the district.

With its central location, halfway between London and Birmingham, easy access to the M1 and M40 motorways and a number of rail stations, South Northamptonshire is a great location for commuters and businesses.

The Silverstone Circuit, as well as attracting many thousands of visitors through the year, is also a significant employer, home to a number of internationally recognised, high-technology motorsport industries. Building on its current success there are ambitious plans to develop the circuit further with new facilities including a University Technology College and plans for 4500 new technology jobs.
District information about Cherwell and South Northamptonshire

Rolling countryside, the canal network, stately homes and other natural and cultural attractions have helped the district’s tourism industry to grow. The heritage of our historic towns and villages is nurtured and protected with 55 conservation areas in place.

Development and growth are centred on the market towns of Brackley and Towcester. Masterplans have been approved for Brackley, Towcester and Roade to guide growth and to ensure that the communities secures new facilities, regenerated town centres and become great places to live, work and visit.

The employment rate in South Northamptonshire is high, compared to the regional and national average, at 80.4 per cent of 16-64 year olds in occupation. Figures have consistently shown that South Northamptonshire has a lower percentage of younger people in the Job Seekers Allowance claimant numbers than the regional and national average.

Further reading
South Northamptonshire Council
www.southnorthants.gov.uk/Council.htm