



Northumberland

County Council

HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Management of Organisational Change

Version	1.0
Policy Sub-Group approval date	1 April 2021
Date ratified by Joint Consultative Committee	6 July 2021
Name of policy author	Ranjna Cutforth
Date issued	July 2021
Review Date	March 2024
Target audience	All employees including Chief Officers, with the exception of those employed by schools where individual arrangements may apply.

History of previous versions of this document:

Approved Where	Approved When	Version	Issue Date	Review Date	Contact Person
N/A					

Statement of changes made in most recent version:

Version	Date	Description
1.0	February 2021	New policy in revised format

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL – MANAGEMENT OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

HRP-06-V1

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HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Title: Management of Organisation Change

Reference Number: HRP-06-V1

1 Introduction and Context

- 1.1 Northumberland County Council needs to remain responsive and flexible in how it operates to ensure it continues to deliver services at the highest levels of excellence and quality. This will involve a process of continuous service improvement and innovation which will often result in the need for organisational change. External factors may also necessitate the need for organisational change, such as change in government policy, legislation and funding arrangements.
- 1.2 The types of change that could be necessary may include (this list is not exhaustive):
- Service reviews leading to reorganisation and restructuring
 - The need to expand or reduce the size of a team
 - The need to manage and work more effectively and efficiently
 - The need to respond to technological developments
 - Transferring employees to a new employer
 - The development of new and existing roles as part of workforce modernisation
 - Changes in the skill mix of employees
 - The need to make financial savings
- 1.3 When a change is proposed it could result in any of the following:
- A situation where there is unlikely to be any impact on an employee's terms and conditions of employment
 - A situation where there is likely to be an impact on terms and conditions, in which case this may involve a change in location, hours of work, job descriptions/roles and responsibilities which may or may not alter pay bands, working patterns
 - Redundancy may apply where there is a proposed cessation of services, and/or a need for a reduction in overall staff levels
 - TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment Regulations) is likely to apply when the work an employee undertakes is being transferred to another organisation resulting in a change of employer
- 1.4 The overarching Management of Organisational Change Policy provides an adaptable framework and process for managing organisational change, supported by a suite of policies and procedures to ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to identify the need for change and to manage change effectively. The supporting policies and procedures are as follows:
- Redundancy
 - Redeployment
 - Pay Protection and Detriment Scheme
 - Voluntary Redundancy/Severance Scheme
 - Relocation Policy
 - Fixed term contracts guidance
- 1.5 The suite of policies and procedures are not contractual and may be amended from time to time, in line with standard procedure, in line with normal procedure.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the Council's approach to the management of organisational change and the procedures that should be followed when implementing change. Management, HR

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Created: March 2021 – Disposal Date: March 2024

and trade unions are committed, through this policy, to handling change in a collective, sensitive and constructive manner. In particular, the Council will take all reasonable steps to:

- Avoid unnecessary reorganisations and displacement of staff
- Avoid or minimise redundancies
- Minimise anxiety and disruption to staff during change
- Manage change through early engagement and consultation with staff and trade unions

3 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all employees including Chief Officers, with the exception of those employed by schools where individual arrangements may apply.

3.2 This policy does not apply to:

- Employees on fixed term contracts where the reason for the expiry of the contract would not be redundancy, ie when the fixed term contract is terminated earlier, or not renewed at the end of their natural expiry (refer to the Fixed Term Contracts Guidance)
- External agency workers, contractors/ consultants and persons engaged by the Council who are “self-employed”
- Casual staff where there is no mutual obligation to accept/offer work

4 Roles and Responsibilities

Managers	Responsible for ensuring adequate dissemination and implementation of policies
Employees	Responsible for ensuring they consult and are familiar with the policies and procedures relating to organisational change
Human Resources	Responsible for advising and supporting managers through the change process and the application of the policies and procedures

5 Trade Unions

5.1 The Council works in partnership with the recognised trade unions who should be consulted on all proposed organisational changes at the earliest opportunity, noting also the principles set out in this policy.

6 Key Principles

6.1 The Council is committed to managing organisational change in a fair, consistent and legally compliant manner, and in accordance with best practice and the principles set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

6.2 The Council is committed to communicating openly and transparently and will undertake meaningful consultation with affected employees and the recognised trade unions regarding proposals for organisational change.

6.3 Managers should liaise with HR in the implementation of all aspects of this policy

6.4 Employees will receive, at the earliest opportunity, notice of any organisational change which may affect their futures and, along with the trade unions, should be consulted at the earliest possible opportunity

- 6.5 The Council will provide reasonable information about the proposed organisational change in accordance with best practice
- 6.6 Employees will have the opportunity to be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague at meetings to discuss the organisational change
- 6.7 Consultation meetings may be organised and undertaken virtually
- 6.8 The Council will, where feasible, try to avoid redundancies through careful planning including vacancy control measures, natural wastage, redeployment (where applicable), and retraining where possible. The aim is to ensure that the valuable skills, experience and knowledge of employees are retained wherever possible
- 6.9 Requests by the employee for additional support at any individual meetings and at any stage of the change process should be considered e.g. where reasonable adjustments may need to be considered to enable an individual to fully participate in the process.
- 6.10 Staff are expected to play an active role during the pre-consultation and consultation stages, in the further processes of implementation and in identifying new career opportunities
- 6.11 Failure to engage in any management of change processes (including suitable alternative employment) may affect an employee's eligibility for redundancy pay.
- 6.12 Managers must ensure that employees who are absent during all or part of a consultation period (for reasons such as long-term sickness or maternity leave) are provided with the relevant consultation documents and have the opportunity to provide feedback on them.

7 Key definitions

- 7.1 **Ring-fencing** means the process by which staff at risk will be considered for a post in a new staffing or management structure which is broadly similar to their current post and where there is more than one eligible person for that post.
- 7.2 **Slotting In** means the process by which staff at risk are confirmed into a post in a new staffing or management structure which is broadly similar to their current post and where that individual is the only eligible person for that post.
- 7.3 **Job matching** is the method that is used to determine if an individual can be slotted into a post. Job matching will determine where the job remains substantially the same (usually defined as 80% the same) with regard to job content, responsibility, and requirements for skills, knowledge and experience. Where skill level may fall short, if attainment of an acceptable level of skill is achievable within a reasonable time frame (within 6 months) then the role may be considered appropriate
- 7.4 **Staff at Risk** means staff whose posts may potentially be redundant as a result of organisational change if suitable alternative employment cannot be found.
- 7.5 **TUPE** means the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, which may apply when an employee transfers in or out of the organisation in the same role.

8 The Process

Approval to change the workforce

- 8.1 When a need for change is identified a business case should be completed and approval should be sought from the Executive Director prior to implementing the change. In the case of any changes which will relate to additional cost, e.g. an increase in staffing establishment, the change will also need to be approved by Finance. The business case should include:

- The need for the change
- The impact of the change on employees
- Financial impact
- If it is a reorganisation/restructure, the reasons for the reorganisation, the objectives and the rationale for the proposed structure
- An organisational diagram of the current structure and proposed structure, including the number and type of posts with proposed grades (names excluded).
- The date when the proposed structure will come into effect.
- Details of any additional costs/savings (for approval by senior management)
- Name of Manager (the Proposer) and HR representative
- Signed approval by the appropriate Council's Executive Director

8.2 In order to ensure consistency of approach and adherence to Council policy, all proposals for organisational change must be consulted with the HR team before final approval.

9 The Consultation Process

Consultation Process for minor change

9.1 In circumstances where the proposed change is minor and there is no impact to an employee's terms and conditions, formal consultation is not required. However, managers should engage and discuss the change with the individual(s) reflecting the principles of the formal consultation process below. Where an employee requires one to one consultation, then this can be provided on a case by case basis.

9.2 Consultation Process for major changes

Initial consultation with staff

- 9.3 Where major change is identified, an initial consultation meeting for all staff affected and their representatives will be organised. Consultation meetings may be undertaken virtually. Where an employee requires one to one consultation, then this can be provided on a case by case basis.
- 9.4 As each change situation is likely to vary, the HR Adviser will guide managers in terms of timescales and consultation requirements. The HR Adviser will agree with the manager a timetable to manage the process.
- 9.5 Staff and their representatives will be invited to this meeting the manager proposing the change. The proposed change, along with the consultation process and draft timetable (where appropriate) will be shared at the initial meeting.
- 9.6 During the meeting, the manager should share the future vision and goals for the service, explain the change proposed, the reasons/drivers for change, how it is proposed to be undertaken and by when. The benefits of such change should be clearly presented. In the case of a reorganisation, a draft structure if available at this stage, and methods of filling the posts in the revised structure should also be outlined.
- 9.7 This information will be shared with staff during the initial meeting and include additional helpful information where relevant, for example protection of earnings, travel reimbursement, seeking alternative employment and pension information.
- 9.8 Staff will be given the opportunity to send their comments/questions in writing or attend an individual consultation meeting if they request to do so.

- 9.9 Any members of affected staff unable to attend the initial consultation meeting, including those on long term sick leave, maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave, secondment and career breaks, will be sent copies of the written documentation and given an opportunity to send their comments/questions in writing, or attend an individual consultation meeting if they wish/prefer to do so.
- 9.10 In potential redundancy situations and consultation requirements, managers should refer to the Redundancy Policy and seek guidance from HR.

Individual Consultation

- 9.11 If appropriate, individual employees affected by the change will be offered an opportunity to attend individual consultation meetings (1:1's) with the manager and HR representative to discuss how the change may affect them individually. Employees will have the opportunity to be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague at this meeting. Managers need to take into consideration those employees who are recognised under the Equality Act as having a disability and may require additional support and/or communication.
- 9.12 Notes of the discussion will be taken and shared with the individual as an aid memoir and to record any actions that need following up by either the manager/HR representative or the individual.
- 9.13 The employee may request a further individual consultation meeting if they require any additional information, advice or guidance which relates to them personally.

Other Mechanisms of Consultation

- 9.14 Other mechanisms of consultation should be considered and, where possible, shared during the initial consultation meeting. Consideration can also be given to:
- Managers making themselves available to the team/staff during organisational change
 - Providing staff with an opportunity to talk things over and express their feelings with one another constructively to influence improvements in any proposals. Staff may want to talk in a group setting and nominate a spokesperson from this group to give feedback
 - The use of electronic FAQs which can be regularly updated and circulated to staff
 - Regular discussions in pre-arranged team meetings
 - Written management briefings to staff, newsletters and other meeting notes

Concluding Consultation

- 9.15 When the agreed period of consultation and final responses have been received the manager implementing the change will write to all affected staff (including the recognised trade unions), informing them of the conclusion of the consultation and the next steps.

10 Implementing the Change

Restructuring and Reorganisation

- 10.1 Where a new organisational structure is being implemented following a staff formal consultation process, the confirmed structure along with the new job roles/positions will be available to all affected staff. A job description and person specification will be available for each post in the new structure.
- 10.2 The process for filling the posts is outlined in Appendix 1 Restructuring and Reorganisation Process

11 Slotting-In process

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Author – Ranjna Cutforth

Created: March 2021 – Disposal Date: March 2024

- 11.1 Employees affected by any proposals will normally be slotted into a post in the revised structure without the need for an interview or any other selection mechanism, provided that all the following criteria are met:
- There are the same number of employees as posts or there are more posts available than the number of employees
 - The duties and responsibilities of the role remain the same or are broadly similar, ie with at least an 80% match

11.2 The job matching process (as in section 12 below) will determine the employee to be slotted into a post.

11.1 Employees affected may be ring fenced to certain posts in the new structure, where only they will be able to apply for the post. For example, where there are more employees in the same job role than the number of posts available in the new structure.

12 Job Matching Process

12.1 Job Matching takes place following conclusion of consultation, and to determine slotting in.

12.2 The job matching process will normally consider the following factors:

- Comparable level of responsibilities as outlined in the existing (old) job description against accountabilities in the new job description
- Essential skills, experience and qualifications in the new Job Description

12.3 An alternative role is broadly similar if:

- It is similar in nature to an existing role
- Tasks and activities that are broadly similar - 80% match (NB the alternative role may not be deemed to be broadly similar where, as a result of reasonable adjustments, the tasks of a job role undertaken by an employee are not fully reflective of the job description).
- It is within the existing post holder's knowledge and skills (without the need for significant training)
- It carries substantially similar terms and conditions of service
- It is on the same salary/band as the current post held, or where the salary of the new role causes no more than a 15% reduction in pay

12.4 In order to properly determine the basis on which two job descriptions match, an objective assessment of the current role and the new role is required. The key elements of the roles must be compared to determine if they are sufficiently similar to justify the match. Personal qualities, capabilities and potential of the employee must not be considered as part of the job matching process.

12.5 The manager leading the change, with the support of HR should carry out this process. Discussion and decisions should be documented in order to objectively justify the outcomes.

12.6 The manager and HR representative will conduct a job matching process on a pre-determined date and time. The outcomes of any job matching process will be confirmed in writing.

12.7 Staff will be excluded from the process if:

- They have already formally given notice of their intention to resign/retire at any time before the slotting in/ring fencing selection interview date
- They have already secured employment within another service or employer at any time before the process has concluded

- They have been notified of the date of the termination of their contract of employment for any other reason

13 Employees on temporary acting up /secondment arrangements

- 13.1 An employee acting up/on secondment whose substantive role is affected by an organisational change programme must be included in the consultation process for their substantive post.
- 13.2 Employees who are temporarily on a higher band at the time of the change process will normally be considered for change purposes in relation to their substantive post and grade.
- 13.3 Where a secondment or acting up arrangement has been in place for 6 months or more, it may be considered appropriate for the employee to be considered in the ring-fence for posts and/or grades at their current seconded or acting up level. Managers need to be mindful of the duration of the secondment and acting up arrangements.

14 Redeployment

- 14.1 Where an employee has not been placed within a post in the new structure or where posts are being reduced without the creation of new posts and the employee is placed at risk, the Council will support the employee to seek redeployment opportunities. The Redeployment Policy provides an outline of this process in further detail.

15 Pay Protection

- 15.1 The Council defines a post that is not more than a 15% reduction in pay as a suitable alternative post. Where acceptance of a post represents more than 15% reduction in pay, the Council will not deem this as suitable alternative employment and an employee will therefore not be required to accept the post and will retain the right to a redundancy payment. If the employee wishes to accept a post that is not deemed suitable due to the difference in pay, pay protection will be limited to 15%.
- 15.2 No pay award or incremental progression will be awarded during the period of protection until the level of salary for the new job is reached.
- 15.3 Further details in terms of pay protection can be found in the Pay Protection and Detriment Scheme

16 Redundancy

- 16.1 The Council has a responsibility, before making a member of staff redundant, to seek suitable alternative employment for that person. It is the aim of the Council to avoid redundancies as far as possible and therefore views redundancy as a measure of last resort. Where a potential redundancy situation is identified, the Council will, in consultation with trade union representatives, give the fullest consideration to all reasonable alternative courses of action prior to any redundancy.
- 16.2 Such action may include:
- Achieving the necessary reductions through natural wastage
 - Freezing recruitment, or only appointing temporary employees, or filling vacancies from existing employees
 - Where there are justifiable and objective reasons, bringing temporary contracts to an end (following a proper procedure and having due regard to the Fixed Term Workers Regulations)
 - Reviewing overtime working
 - Reviewing contracted-out work
 - Reducing hours of work of employees on variable hours contracts; or
 - Seeking voluntary reductions in working hours
 - The redeployment or relocation or retraining of employees for suitable alternative employment
 - Invitation and consideration of any applications for voluntary severance

16.3 If a proposal is considered to be a potential Redundancy and it is anticipated that there is a significant risk in the organisation's ability to offer suitable alternative employment (due to the number of staff affected or specific skills, qualification and/or experience held within a particular group), the Redundancy Procedure will be followed.

17 Selection for redundancy – related to restructuring (change in service need)

17.1 Where an individual does not secure a role in the new structure following the restructuring process, they will be placed at risk of redundancy. This situation will be managed following the Redeployment and Redundancy Policy and Procedure.

18 Selection for redundancy - not related to restructuring (reduction in service need)

18.1 A criteria-based selection process for redundancy will be required where:

- Recruitment is not the appropriate selection criteria as is in the case of a restructure, for example when there are no changes to the Service structure but there is a need for fewer staff with a particular skill set, or where a service area ceases to operate, or an individual(s) role has diminished and is no longer needed on a full-time basis

18.2 An initial selection of staff will take place using a set of specified objective selection criteria, undertaken through a paper-based selection exercise as outlined in the Redundancy procedure.

18.3 The pool for selection will be the group of staff affected by the change as identified in the formal consultation process, for example the reduction in posts at a specific band.

18.4 The criteria must be consistently applied and therefore essential that all staff employment records are accurate and up to date.

18.5 In circumstances of a redundancy in this situation, the minimum consultation periods required to be given to trade unions and staff in advance of proposed redundancies will apply as outlined below:

- At least 30 days before the first dismissal takes effect if 20 to 99 employees are to be made redundant at one establishment over a period of 90 days or less
- At least 45 days before the first dismissal takes effect if 100 or more employees are to be made redundant at one establishment over a period of 90 days or less. (The Council has a statutory duty to notify the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills via a Section 188 Notice HR1 form, if there is a proposal to make 20 or more workers redundant at one establishment over a period of 90 days or less. HR will do this wherever necessary)
- The Council will, where possible, adhere to the minimum notice periods for consultation where less than 20 employees are involved.

18.6 The process for managing redundancies and applying selection criteria should be followed as outlined in the Council's Redundancy Policy.

19 Voluntary Redundancy

19.1 From time to time, the Council may launch a Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for a time limited period. All applications will be considered, but the Council reserves the right not to accept applications and to determine eligibility in the light of operational requirements and budgetary constraints.

20 Redundancy and pension benefits

20.1 Employees aged 55 or over who are made redundant and have at least three months membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme, will receive immediate payment of an unreduced pension and lump sum based on their accrued contributory service at the date their employment is terminated.

21 Employees on Maternity Leave, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave

21.1 Special Considerations apply to workers on maternity, adoption and shared parental leave (Regulation 10 of the Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999) in redundancy situations. The law requires the Council to protect an employee who is absent on maternity, adoption or shared parental leave, who may otherwise be dismissed by reason of redundancy, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged. Any staff affected by restructure proposals and who are on maternity, adoption or shared parental leave may be entitled to be offered a position, if one exists, in the new structure. If there is a post available that is clearly suitable alternative employment, then there will normally be no need for a selection process to take place.

22 Practical Support for Staff

22.1 Support will be available to staff affected by organisational change and will be based on the needs of the individual. Support will be identified during the consultation process such as interview technique skills, career coaching, health and wellbeing support and up-skilling.

22.2 The Council will make every effort to assist staff to be provided with retraining, where appropriate, within reason and within the limits of available resources. In addition, staff are encouraged to take the initiative themselves to look out for suitable retraining opportunities appropriate to their skills and abilities. Affected individuals will be supported, as far as practical, to adapt to the new way of working.

23 Maintaining Services during periods of change

23.1 In circumstances where a service is to be closed or is planning a restructure, any vacancies which occur that need to be filled in order to maintain the services in the affected departments, will be filled on a temporary basis.

24 Service Provision Change (TUPE)

24.1 Where a business transfer or service provision change is proposed, those staff employed within that service may transfer. Such a transfer is likely to be conducted on the basis that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) will apply. The Human Resources Department must be informed immediately of any potential business transfer/ service provision change and their advice and support gained.

25 Review

25.1 These policy guidelines will be reviewed regularly and are to be used as management guidance. They are not incorporated into employment terms and conditions.

26 Monitoring, Training and Support

26.1 Further advice and guidance is available from the HR/OD team in relation to the implementation of this policy and the associated procedures.

27 Associated Documentation and References

Reference	Title
HRP-32-V2.2	Redundancy and Severance Policy
HRP-05-V2	Redeployment Policy
HRP-30-V2	Pay Protection and Detriment Scheme
	Voluntary Redundancy Scheme

HRP-51-V1.1	Relocation Policy
	Fixed Term Contracts Guidance

Appendix 1

Restructuring and Reorganisation Process

1 Job Matching

Job matching to a new structure can be achieved first through a matching process, based on the degree to which roles in the existing structure match to roles in the new structure.

The matching process will normally take into account the following factors:

- Comparable level of responsibilities
- Accountabilities defined in existing (old) Job Description against accountabilities, essential skills, experience and qualifications in the new Job Description

Job Matching will take place usually starting at the top of the organisation structure chart (e.g. Management and Supervisory roles) and worked through the different hierarchical order. An alternative role is substantially similar if it is similar in nature to an existing role, is within the existing post holder's capability (without the need for training), it requires the performance or knowledge, tasks and activities that are broadly similar, and it carries substantially similar terms and conditions of service, as outlined in section 12 of the Management of Organisational Change Policy.

In order to properly determine the basis on which two job descriptions match, an objective assessment of the current role and the new role is required. The key elements of the roles must be compared to determine if they are sufficiently similar to justify the match.

Personal qualities, capabilities and potential of the employee must not be considered as part of the job matching process.

The manager leading the change, with the support of HR should carry out this assessment. Discussion and decisions should be documented in order to objectively justify the outcomes.

The post holder/s of the existing job description may be given the opportunity to demonstrate through discussion with the manager leading the restructure where they consider the substantially similar aspects of their job description apply. The manager may seek advice from HR where necessary.

The discussion is fact finding and will not be a selection interview; the employee must not be seen to compete for what they perceive to be their post. Managers need to be mindful of any existing reasonable adjustments that might be in place and the tasks undertaken may not be fully reflective of the job description. The discussion should be documented.

2 Slotting-In process

Where a job role is seen to be a match following the job matching process, the employee will normally be slotted into a post in the revised structure without the need for an interview or any other selection mechanism, provided that all the following criteria are met:

- There are the same number of employees as posts or there are more posts available than the number of employees
- The duties and responsibilities of the role remain the same or are broadly similar, ie with at least an 80% match

3 Ring-fencing

Where slotting in is not possible because there are more eligible staff than the post available, the post will be ring fenced to those employees and selection will be by interview. Staff will be asked to express their interests in the post(s) that have been ring-fenced.

Following a fair and objective competitive selection, unsuccessful employees will be put at risk of redundancy and the redeployment status will apply. An employee who is unsuccessful in securing a post in the new structure at their existing job grade (job pool) will not be eligible to be matched, slotted in, or compete for jobs at a lower level, thereby putting someone else at risk of redundancy. Redeployment to roles at a lower level will be explored as part of the Redeployment Procedure and will be made available when they have reached "vacant" status.

Whilst the redeployment process will apply to employees placed at risk, affected employees can apply for advertised jobs anywhere else in the Council that they are not eligible to under the redeployment process. This will be at the discretion of the affected employee and the redeployment process and pay protection policy will not apply.

Roles at a higher grade will be considered as a promotion and therefore will not be part of the redeployment process or ring fencing.

If an employee is offered a post as a result of the job-matching/slotting in process, there will be no entitlement to redundancy if the offer of new employment is rejected. Further details are outlined in the Redundancy policy.

4 Temporary arrangements – secondments and acting up

Members of staff who are temporarily moved to a higher band at the time of the change process will normally be considered for change purposes in relation to their substantive post and grade. Where a secondment or acting up arrangement has been in place for 6 months or more, it may be considered appropriate for the employee to be considered in the ring-fence for posts and/or grades at their current seconded or acting up level. Managers need to be mindful of the duration of the secondment and acting up arrangements.

For the purposes of restructuring, an employee's substantive post is the one which is their permanent, contractual appointment, i.e. one that is not a temporary arrangement such as acting up or secondment.

5 Appeals – Job matching/slotting in

An employee will be able to appeal against a decision not to match/slot them to a new post in the new structure.

The matching process is based upon an assessment of the role as opposed to an individual's ability, therefore applications for appeal will only be considered in relation to process. The appeal cannot be based on the merits of an individual or skills comparison with other employees.

There is no right of appeal once a competitive interview process takes place as the decision to appoint at this stage is based on merit.

Arrangements for an appeal will be as follows:

- Notification from an employee of an intention to appeal must be submitted within 5 working days of receiving confirmation that they have not been matched to a post under the matching and slotting process.
- An employee will have a further 5 working days from the date of their notification of appeal to prepare and submit their evidence in support of the appeal.

- The appeal should be made to the Executive Director of Human Resources/Deputy Chief Executive.
- The employee will be informed of the date of the appeal which will be considered by an appropriate senior manager as designated by the Executive Director of Human Resources/Deputy Chief Executive.
- The appeal will normally be undertaken as a desk top exercise where all the paperwork and evidence of the process followed will be considered by the panel.
- The decision of the panel will be confirmed wherever possible in writing within 2 working days of the date when the appeal was considered.

There will be no further right of appeal under the matching and slotting process.