

Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council – The **Recruitment** Journey

- From Interim to Permanent
Case Study





West Midlands Employers gave Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council the edge in a tough recruitment market – filling a crucial role via an interim placement before leading a recruitment process for a permanent appointment

In a highly competitive recruitment market it can be difficult to attract the best candidates – particularly for senior roles in local government.

That's why it's important to go the extra mile to engage potential interviewees and sell your organisation as the ideal place for the next step in their career.

In Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's case the challenge was twofold. It needed to find someone quickly to fulfil its S151 officer responsibilities and plan for a permanent appointment.

A new administration in 2021 ushered in a different management structure that coincided with the current S151 Officer leaving and taking up a post elsewhere.

Brent Davis, became chief executive and the authority created five director roles.

The council had attempted to find a director of finance (S151 officer) through what Brent describes as 'a very traditional, staid, old-fashioned recruitment process'.

While this tactic 'almost worked', ultimately no one was appointed and the council was back to square one and in urgent need of a S151 officer.

He engaged West Midlands Employers (WME) to find an interim replacement and a highly experience finance director, Stephen Fitzgerald, was placed in the role.

In the meantime, the council tried once again to recruit via traditional methods and got no response.

'That really convinced us that it wasn't the way to go and we needed a different approach with help from WME,' Brent explains. 'Most districts and boroughs will only go out for senior posts once every four or five years so we don't really understand what it's like out there. WME understand the region and the sector and have their finger on the pulse of what the market's like and that's so helpful.'

From devising the recruitment process to sitting in on interview panels and creating a shortlist of candidates, WME supported the council at every stage.

This included changing the job title to director of finance and enterprise to reflect the full scope of the role. The post was shaped in part by feedback from an LGA peer challenge review which recommended the council explore opportunities for income generation while improving medium term financial planning.



'WME could see this was an opportunity and selling point – it's not a normal finance role, but one that's about growing the council's income and getting into the delivery of frontline services,' says Brent. 'What WME were really good at was proactively contacting and talking to candidates and having those conversations – sounding them out about the role and putting them in the picture, things they wouldn't get from a job advert.'

When it came to the application process, candidates were asked to provide a covering letter and CV rather than fill out an application form. A seemingly minor point but one which gave candidates greater freedom to sell themselves.

It was one of many areas where WME's approach chimed with that taken by Stephen, who's been involved in numerous recruitment campaigns involving finance roles.

'I'm not a great fan of "post and hope" recruitment,' he admits. 'It doesn't work because there are a lot of roles coming up and not enough good candidates available to fill them.'

'Online application forms put people off. So it's about focusing on the things that add value and myself and Chantelle Woolridge from WME were very much on the same page around that. You need to have those conversations with candidates to convince them why this role could be good for them and that they're offering something the council wants.'

WME and Stephen created a longlist of four candidates and a report explaining their reasoning, something that Brent describes as 'extremely helpful'. They then ran technical

assessments after which three candidates were shortlisted for online interviews with elected members via Teams.

Vicki Summerfield, head of finance at South Derbyshire District Council, emerged as the frontrunner, accepted the job and is due to start soon.

She says the contact from WME during and after the process contributed to a highly positive experience.

"The council and WME were quite flexible in terms of interview times, giving options that worked for me. They were very accessible and quick to come back to me whenever I had any questions. 'Since being recruited for the role I've been in regular contact with Stephen, Chantelle and Brent. That's reassuring and I already feel like I'm part of plans for the future.'
Vicki Summerfield

The verdict



‘Overall, it was a very different approach for us. We hadn’t used executive search before. I felt it really worked well and definitely tapped into conversations with candidates that we would never have had otherwise. It gave them the ability to be a bit more open.

‘WME maintain contact with candidates, including those who haven’t been successful on this occasion, and that hopefully ensures they go away with a positive impression of the council and remain in the loop for future opportunities here. WME bring a lot of added benefits.’

Brent Davis, Chief Executive of Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council

How WME helped

- Placed an experienced interim director into the S151 role
- Created a recruitment campaign and candidate pack
- Conducted an executive search
- Devised a two-stage recruitment process and assisted with the longlisting, technical interviews, shortlisting of candidates and briefed elected members ahead of final panel interviews
- Negotiated terms with the successful candidate
- Liaised with candidates throughout the process, keeping them informed about what was required and providing feedback at the end

About WME

West Midlands Employers is a not-for-profit, public sector organisation collectively owned by 32 councils in the West Midlands. We're one of 9 Regional Employers' Organisations in England. Our vision is to advocate, build and champion a resilient and diverse public sector workforce for an ambitious West Midlands region. Our wide range of services supports this vision.

Visit www.wmemployers.org.uk

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If you'd like your organisation to join West Midlands Coaching and Mentoring Pool, contact info@wmemployers.org.uk

