

The virtual interview is becoming increasingly utilised by recruiting managers and as such, there are important aspects that managers need to be aware of to ensure that the virtual interview runs smoothly.

### **PREPARATION**

**INVITE** – remember to send the candidate the TEAMS invite (recruitment team do not do this).

The following correspondence should be sent to the candidate(s) 2 – 3 days before the video interview – this can accompany the TEAMS meeting invite that hiring managers send. Note: This does not replace the appropriate invitation email which would have been sent earlier and amended in accordance with the video interview arrangements.

*“Further to your forthcoming video interview. To ensure fairness and equity for all candidates we need to stipulate a few requirements and conditions regarding the interview setting and environment.*

- *We request that candidates remain visible on screen and unmuted throughout the interviews and testing.*
- *We request that no reference material is made available to you, no noise interference, laptops, telephones, TV, radio etc.*
- *You will also need to be in the interview alone and unaccompanied.*

*[This section is required if a test is being used] There will be a 30-minute paper based test that you will be required to undertake before the verbal interview takes place. We will email you the test at the start of the interview and once you have received this we will allocate you 30-minutes to complete it. We request you are visible at all times whilst completing the test. We require you to complete the test in the allocated time and then scan and return via email, within the allocated time.*

*If you have any queries regarding this arrangement please do not hesitate to contact me at the email address below”.*

**NOTE** – Walsall ICT do not support the use of Zoom. Video interviews should be arranged using TEAMS software.

### **TECHNOLOGY & MS TEAMS**

It is important to make sure that your IT/ sound and video are working correctly. Test these several days before hand to make sure that the settings are correct.

Also, the service area needs to ensure that they have contacted the interviewees 2-3 days prior to the interview to check arrangements for the day (e.g. make them, aware that they will need to switch on the video as part of the interview). Make sure to provide all of this information to candidates long before the interview so they can test out the software on their end.

Create a calendar invitation setting up a Microsoft TEAMS meeting link in the body of the invitation (the same as any other meeting) and invite all those on the panel.

You will need an individual meeting for each candidate and it is best practice to avoid the use of candidate names, e.g. use meeting Title ‘Candidate 1’

Ensure that in the meeting options (accessed from underneath the link “Join Microsoft TEAMS Meeting” in the body of the email) you are only allowing people from your organisation to bypass the lobby.

**Note** - at the start of the meeting the organiser will need to admit when ready those callers held “in the lobby”. It is recommended that you wait for all panel members to have joined the call before admitting the candidate.

It is useful to schedule separate meetings for the beginning and end of the interview session for the panel to convene.

Agree with panel members in advance how long a break to have between meetings to allow enough time for writing up notes, time away from the screen and technical checks. Allow sufficient time to manage any delays due to technical difficulties (e.g. 10-15 minutes).

As an added precaution, give them a backup phone number to reach you in case there's a problem or a fault with technology. Ask them to share the same with you.

**PUT YOUR CANDIDATES AT EASE:** By sharing expectations, timelines, names of interviewers etc.

Here are some useful things to share:

- How to access the videoconferencing technology and whether they need to download any software.
- Your team's expectations for their interviews. For example, is there a presentation to prepare for, if so, how will this take place? If the candidate will be moved to a meeting room to prepare, explain this to them and provide the name of any officer who will be overseeing any test held in a separate “Meeting room”.
- A timeline that details when their interviews will start and end and the names and titles of each person they will meet

### **ROOM/ENVIRONMENT:**

Find the best environment and video background. Find a private, quiet location where you won't be interrupted. If you are at home with family members:, make them aware that you need quiet and must not be disturbed for the duration of the interviews/ conversations with panel members

**TIP:** maybe tape a “Do Not Disturb” sign to the door of the room you are occupying?

### **BACKGROUND:**

Your personal background will become the interview background so ensure that this looks as tidy as possible, removing objects that could provide distracting to the interviewee. To reinforce that you're taking this interview as seriously as you want the candidate to take it, make sure you find a spot that is free of anything distracting in the background. One of the benefits of Microsoft TEAMS is that it allows you to 'blur' your background.

Pick a quiet space that will allow you and your candidate to communicate clearly and, as much as possible, without interruption. Find a well-lit room and control for outside light.

Both too much light coming through the windows or too little can make you difficult to see, and that can get in the way of connecting with your candidate.

### ORGANISE YOUR DESK

Remember that the panel members and applicant have a “closer” view through video interviews than they might have during a face to face interview, so be sure to check what papers/ documents are visible. Arrange your desk for a stress- free video interview

### HAVE A “BACK-UP” PLAN

No matter how many times you test your video interview software, problems can still occur. In the event that video or audio functions aren't working, internet access becomes unstable or surroundings are no longer conducive to an interview, have a failsafe in place. This could be defaulting to a phone call but if so, how would all of the interview panel hear the caller? If one of the panel has a conference call “Hub” - then could the caller ring this number and the conversation be placed on loud speaker. Or switch to FaceTime if this is available - the interview panel need to ensure they have an alternative method for conducting the interview.

Talk with the candidate about what is most convenient for them. If internet access is the issue, they may need to switch to a phone call. Alternatively, if background noises become too much of an interruption, you may have to reschedule the interview altogether. Again, remote work poses unique challenges for everyone; being flexible and accommodating will make candidates feel more at ease and improve their impression of the council.

### DRESS SENSE

Even if you're no longer in the office, dress professionally. Dressing as you would in the office gives the candidate a sense of the culture of the organisation and makes a video interview feel more in line with an onsite interview, ensuring a positive candidate experience.

## THE INTERVIEW

Treat a video interview like you would an in-person one. Just because there's a screen between you and the candidate does not mean that common courtesies are off the table. 55 percent of communication is nonverbal, and another 38 percent is conveyed through tone of voice; your words only amount to 7 percent.

In short, the way you present yourself is extremely important, even in a video interview. Make eye contact, sit up straight and nod to show you're following along with what the candidate is saying. Don't forget to smile!

### BE CONSIDERATE

Give your candidate the respect they deserve by minimising background noises and distractions. However, life happens — especially at home — and there may be interruptions. Before diving in, take a moment to acknowledge and appreciate the candidate's flexibility in moving the interview to a video conference and ask them for their patience if things crop up. Additionally, don't fault candidates if the same happens from their end.

While you want to be as professional as you would be in any setting, also be forgiving of your candidate if life interrupts the interview.

If the dog barks or the phone rings, candidates should not be penalised. Another unforeseen occurrence can be the sound of doorbell ringing. Life is sometimes hard to contain, particularly when spouses and partners may be working from home and children may have had school cancelled.

If the video freezes or the audio skips out and you're unable to hear that person's response, ask them to repeat it. It's far better to be upfront and get the information that you need, rather than politely nodding because you're too embarrassed to admit that you missed something.

### **SILENCE YOUR PHONE AND MUTE NOTIFICATIONS**

Give candidates your full attention and turn off the rest of the world when conducting video interviews. Your device's built-in speakers can pick up and magnify notification noises, which makes for a very unpleasant interruption. On top of that, it's rude and disrespectful of your interviewee's time. Remember, this is a time to both assess a candidate's fit for the role and sell the organisation as a potential employer, so treat them with the same respect you expect from them.

### **LOG ON EARLY**

Don't let your candidate wait around wondering if they've got the right time or joined the right meeting. Show up to the video interview five minutes early and switch off your video functionality while you wait. This will ensure you're on time to the meeting, but you can continue to work or organize your space in the meantime. Your candidates will appreciate your punctuality and preparedness.

### **BODY LANGUAGE**

Remember your body language. As mentioned previously, it might be happening virtually, but this is still a job interview—which means you need to behave as **professionally** as you normally would. It's important to signal to every candidate that the video interview they're about to have is every bit as important and serious as an in-person interview would be. Remember, this person can still see you so dress appropriately, and make sure the ringer is turned off on your phone, as are the notifications on your email.

Once the interview starts, remember to smile. Make and sustain eye contact, speak clearly and nod when the candidate talks to show that you're listening to what they are saying.

- Be PROFESSIONAL!
- Speak clearly and keep eye contact
- Remember they can see you too

### USE THE TONE AND PACE OF YOUR VOICE TO CALM NERVOUS CANDIDATES

You don't have the opportunity to use body language to help your candidates relax and create a positive impression, so you'll need to rely on your voice and facial expressions. Speak slower than you would in a face-to-face interview, and, where you can, use a headset rather than surround sound as this will cut down on feedback and prevent you from interrupting each other.

### DURING THE INTERVIEW, SIT STILL

If the candidate sees you moving backwards and forwards and shifting your weight around, it's going to be incredibly distracting. Figure out before the interview if you're going to sit or stand. Equally, make sure you have everything you need. You may want to have their job description, your questions, and their application form on the table in front of you. If you do, try not to look down too much. Conducting interviews through video can be a great change of pace and open up opportunities for all sorts of candidates. As with all interview styles, there are pros and cons, so it's important to get your video interviews set up and running right to ensure you get the most out of the process.

### OFFERS AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT CHECKS:

When conducting a video interview recruiting managers must still consider the appropriate right to work and candidate proof of identity requirements. In order to commence the appointment process for a video interview recruiting managers may ask the candidate to initially scan across the Right to Work and ID verification documents. However, further arrangements must be made for managers to verify by viewing original documents. This could be addressed in a number of ways including:-

- The successful candidate meets the recruiting manager who compares the scanned documents to the originals and verifies
- The candidate posts the documents to the recruiting manager who verifies and returns them to the successful candidate

### Useful Links:

[View Guidance- How to Join Microsoft TEAMS Interview](#)