

**Candidate  
Information  
Booklet**



**CCNI/Fin/002**

**Staff Officer Accountant  
The Consumer Council**

**Completed Application Forms must be returned  
to [recruitment@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@consumercouncil.org.uk)  
no later than 5:00pm (UK time) on  
Friday 26 March 2021**

# **The Consumer Council**

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Consumer Council is the consumer representative body of Northern Ireland.

We are a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established through the General Consumer Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1984, operating under the Department for the Economy (DfE). We are a designated super-complaints body set up under the Enterprise Act 2002 and Financial Services and Market Act 2000 Order 2013.

Our statutory functions cover energy, post, transport, water and sewerage, and food affordability and accessibility. Through non-statutory functions, we educate and empower consumers against unfair or discriminatory practices in any market, including financial services and private car parks, offers free dispute resolution, delivers research and outreach programmes, and campaigns for market reform. Across all areas, we pay particular regard to consumers:

- who are disabled or chronically sick
- who are of pensionable age
- who are on low incomes
- who live in rural areas

## **THE CONSUMER COUNCIL MISSION**

The Consumer Council is committed to promoting and safeguarding the interests of consumers in Northern Ireland by empowering them and providing a strong representative voice to policy-makers, regulators, and service providers.

## **THE CONSUMER COUNCIL VALUES**

1. **Ambition** – We seek to deliver the best possible deal for consumers in NI;
2. **Excellence** – We will ensure our work is robust and considered, and bears comparison with the best;
3. **Commitment** – We will provide consumers in NI with the best possible service;
4. **Fairness** – We will listen to everyone and respect all consumers' concerns;
5. **Teamwork** – We will work in a collegiate manner;
6. **Honesty** – We will operate openly and transparently;
7. **Integrity** – We seek to be trustworthy and trusted; and
8. **Objectivity** – We will base our conclusions in evidence.

For more information, visit our website: [www.consumercouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk)

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

This is a permanent full-time appointment.

### **The Consumer Council**

The Consumer Council is an independent employer. Our staff, while not civil servants, are employed on Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) terms and conditions.

### **Salary**

The salary for the post will be within the range of £34,197 to £35,860 (NICS Staff Officer Accountant scale currently under review).

Pay progression will be in accordance with NICS pay policy. Starting salary will be at the minimum of the scale.

### **Location**

The successful candidate will be based at Seatem House, 28-32 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8EN. Our premises are wheel chair accessible and there is an accessible toilet.

Due to the social distancing and travel restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic, most of our staff are working from home. This arrangement will be reviewed and updated in line with public health guidance and regulations from the Northern Ireland Executive and the UK Government.

### **Annual Leave**

In addition to the 12 standard public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing to 30 days after five year's satisfactory service. The leave year runs from 1 February to 31 January.

### **Working Hours**

The successful candidate will normally be required to work five days each week (Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm), totaling 37 hours.

A flexible working scheme is in operation. The successful candidate may be required on occasion to work outside normal working hours dependent on business need.

### **Travel**

The post may entail some travel within Northern Ireland and for this reason successful applicant will have a full driving license and have access to a form of transport which will permit them to meet the requirements of the post in full, both in a timely and effective manner.

Occasional travel may also be required to attend meetings outside Northern Ireland.

### **Pension**

Staff joining The Consumer Council are eligible to enter the NICS pension scheme. Further information can be obtained under the General Information section in this booklet.

### **Equality Commitments**

The Consumer Council is committed to equality of opportunity in its employment practices and aims to ensure that no actual or potential job applicant or staff member is discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of gender, gender reassignment, marital (or civil partnership) status, disability, race, community background or political persuasion, age, dependents, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity or Trade Union membership.

Staff joining The Consumer Council are expected to support our commitments and responsibilities in relation to our Equality Scheme, and under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

### **Probation**

The post holder will serve 12 months probation period in the new post. This will commence from the date of appointment.

If your performance, conduct or attendance during this period is not satisfactory your appointment may be terminated. Performance will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

### **Further Information**

Further information about the post or the competition process may be obtained from William Warke, Director of Corporate Services:

Email [william.warke@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:william.warke@consumercouncil.org.uk)  
Telephone 028 9025 1600

## JOB SPECIFICATION

Reporting to the Head of Finance & Governance, the successful candidate will support the financial operations of The Consumer Council.

The post-holder will support the Head of Finance to:

- Provide accurate and timely management accounts, performance against budget and statutory accounts, monitoring financial performance against business plans.
- Oversee in-house procurement, manage procurement exercises below £30,000 and delivering value for money, cost savings and quality of service.
- Support the planning and monitoring of financial forecasts and the corporate risk register, ensuring the necessary procedures, controls, systems and measures are in place.
- Preparation of Annual Reports and Accounts in accordance with HM Treasury and Department of Finance guidance.
- Assist in the delivery of the annual external and internal audit programme, working with funders, DfE Internal Audit Service and Northern Ireland Audit Office.
- Provide technical knowledge to ensure financial accountability, budgetary controls and risk management responsibilities are met.
- Provide advice and guidance on the use and interpretation of financial information, accounting requirements and best practice.
- Drafting and implementing financial policies, procedures and controls that deliver compliance with public sector accounting standards and best practice.
- Promotion of good corporate governance across the organisation.
- Management of financial processes overseeing the management of debtors and the collection of creditor and supplier payments.
- Overseeing monthly payroll and associated reporting.
- Management and development of finance staff.
- Deputising for the Head of Finance & Governance as and when required.

**This list is not exhaustive and the successful candidate will be required to carry out other duties as allocated by Senior Management.**

## **Eligibility Criteria**

To meet the requirements of the Staff Officer Accountant role applicants must, by the closing date for applications, have:

1. Successfully passed the final examinations and be a full, current member of at least **one** of the professional bodies:
  - Chartered Accountants Ireland
  - The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland
  - The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
  - The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
  - The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
  - The Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy
  - The Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Ireland

\*Applications will also be considered from applicants with relevant formal qualifications considered by the selection panel to be of an equivalent or higher standard to those stated.

2. Have one year's experience gained in the last five years, in a finance related environment, in two or more areas of:
  - Financial planning and budgeting;
  - Financial accounting/auditing (including forensic accounting);
  - Management accounting and cost analysis;
  - Risk register management
  - Financial procedures, controls and systems
  - Completion of statutory returns and annual accounts

### **\*Relevant or Equivalent Qualifications**

Applicants must demonstrate on their application form how the qualifications they have provided are equivalent, in level, to those qualifications requested above. They should give the details of the awarding body and the date awarded (the date awarded is the date on which you were admitted by the official awarding body). If you believe your qualification is equivalent to the one required, the onus is on you to provide the panel with details of modules studied etc so that a well-informed decision can be made.

## **Shortlisting**

Staff Officer Accountant is analogous to NICS Staff Officer Accountant.

You will be expected to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the eligibility criteria. In addition, you will also be required to demonstrate the skills and competencies set out in the NICS Competency Framework **at Level 3** for the purposes of personal and professional development. The NICS Competency Framework is accessed at: [www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk)

You will be shortlisted for assessment on the basis of the information contained in your application. It is therefore essential that you fully demonstrate through your application how, and to what extent, you satisfy each of the criteria specified.

You should ensure that you provide evidence of your experience in your application form, giving length of experience, examples and dates as required. The panel will not make assumptions from the title of your post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained.

In providing evidence for each of the criteria it will be essential that candidates draw upon specific examples of work they have undertaken to illustrate the extent to which they possess the experience and skills required. It will not be sufficient simply to list the duties and responsibilities of posts held.

It is important that candidates familiarise themselves with the NICS Competency Framework as this forms the basis of the assessment criteria.

Applicants should be aware that after an eligibility sift, should it be necessary to shortlist candidates to go forward to interview, the following shortlisting criteria will be used:

- The requirement at Eligibility Criteria 2 will increase to three or more of the areas listed.

The panel will complete this assessment against the information provided in the application form at question 2 in response to the Eligibility Criteria.

## **Interview Criteria**

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria applicants will also be expected to display the following qualities and skills at interview.

### **Making Effective Decisions**

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective, using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. For all staff, it means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well-reasoned, justifiable decisions.



**Marks available: 20**

**Minimum standard: 12**

### **Changing and Improving**

People who are effective in this area are responsive, innovative and seek out opportunities to create effective change. It is about being open to change, suggesting ideas for improvements to the way things are done, and working in smarter, more focused ways.

**Marks available: 20**

**Minimum standard: 12**

### **Collaborating and Partnering**

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the NICS, to help to achieve business objectives and goals. At all levels, it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions.

**Marks available: 20**

**Minimum standard: 12**

### **Delivering Value for Money**

Delivering value for money involves the efficient, effective and economic use of taxpayers' money in the delivery of public services. For all staff, it means seeking out and implementing solutions which achieve a good mix of quality and effectiveness for the least outlay, thus reducing the risk of fraud and error. People who do this well base their decisions on evidenced information and follow agreed processes and policies, challenging these appropriately where they appear to prevent good value for money.

**Marks available: 20**

**Minimum standard: 12**

### **Delivering at Pace**

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. For all staff, it is about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way. It is also about leaders providing the focus and energy to drive activities forward through others and encourage staff to perform effectively during challenging and changing times.

**Marks Available: 20**

**Minimum standard: 12**

**Total marks available: 100**

**Overall pass mark: 60**

Due to the social distancing and travel restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is anticipated that interviews for this post will take on the week commencing 12 April 2021.

### **Interview Guidance for Applicants**

**If this is your first experience of a competence-based interview, bear in mind that it does not require you to:**

- talk through previous jobs or appointments from start to finish;
- provide generalised information as to your background and experience; or
- provide information that is not specifically relevant to the competence the question is designed to test.

**A competence-based interview does however require you to:**

- focus exclusively, in your responses, on your ability to fulfil the competences required for effective performance in the role; and
- provide specific examples of your experience in relation to the required competence areas.

**In preparation for the interview you may wish to think about having a clear structure for each of your examples, such as:**

Situation	Briefly outline the situation.
Task	What was your objective, what were you trying to achieve.
Action	What did you actually do, what was your unique contribution.
Result	What happened, what was the outcome, what did you learn.

The panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience in relation to each of the competences. You should therefore come to the interview prepared to discuss in detail a range of examples which best illustrate your skills and abilities in each competence area. You may draw examples from any area of your work / life experiences.

## **SELECTION PROCESS**

### **The Merit Principle**

Appointments to The Consumer Council are made under the 'merit principle', where the best person for any given post is selected in fair and open competition.

### **Order of Merit**

The selection panel will assess candidates against the interview criteria. Those candidates who meet the required standard(s) and pass mark will be deemed suitable for appointment.

The selection panel will then list those suitable for appointment in order of merit with the highest scoring applicant ranked first. The Consumer Council will allocate a candidate (or candidates) to a vacancy (or vacancies) in the order listed.

The order of merit is valid for one year.

### **Further appointments from this competition**

Where a further position in The Consumer Council is identified which is considered broadly similar to that outlined in this candidate information booklet, consideration will be given to filling the position from this competition.

The merit list resulting from this competition will be valid for a period of up to one year.

### **Making your application**

The application form is designed to ensure that applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements and the eligibility and shortlisting criteria.

### **Further Guidance for Applicants**

- The application form is the same for all applicants and must not be altered.
- We will not accept CVs, letters, additional pages or any other supplementary material in place of or in addition to completed application forms.
- Applicants must complete the application form in either typescript font size 12, or legible, block capitals using black ink.
- Applicants must not reformat application forms.
- Information in support of your application will not be accepted after the closing date for receipt of applications.

- The Consumer Council will not examine applications until after the closing deadline.
- Do not use acronyms or complex technical detail. Write for the reader who may not know your employer, your branch or your job.
- Write down clearly your personal involvement in any experience you quote. Write “I” statements e.g. I planned meetings, I managed a budget, I prepared a presentation. It is how you actually carried out a piece of work that the panel will be interested in.

The examples you provide should be concise and relevant to the criteria. Examples which you provide may be explored further at interview and you must be prepared to talk about these in detail if you are invited to interview. It is your **unique** role the panel are interested in, not that of your team or division.

### **Application Form Submission**

Please refer to the Candidate Information Booklet before completing an application. All parts of the application form must be completed by the applicant before this application can be considered. Failure to do so may result in disqualification.

All applications must be received by the advertised closing date. Late applications will not be accepted.

It is also the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that sufficient postage has been paid to return the form to The Consumer Council. The Consumer Council will not accept any application where they are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.

Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, all requests for hard copy application packs are welcomed and all applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.

Applicants using Royal Mail should note that 1<sup>st</sup> class mail does not guarantee next day delivery.

Please do not attempt to reformat application forms as this may result in disqualification.

### **Changes in personal circumstances**

Please ensure The Consumer Council is informed immediately of any changes in personal circumstances.

### **Transgender Requirements**

Should you currently be going through a phase of transition in respect of gender and wish this to be taken into consideration in confidence to enable you to attend any

part of the assessment process please contact The Consumer Council. Details of this will only be used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

### **Communication between The Consumer Council and you**

The Consumer Council will issue electronically as many competition communications as possible, you should therefore check your email account to make sure that you don't miss any important communications in relation to this competition. There may, however, still be a necessity to issue some correspondence by hard copy mail.

### **Disability Requirements**

We will ask on the application form if you require any reasonable adjustments, due to disability, to enable you to attend any part of the assessment process. Details of any disability are only used for this purpose and do not form any part of the selection process.

If you have indicated on your application that you have a disability and are successful in the selection process and are being considered for appointment, you may be required to outline any adjustments you consider necessary in order for you to take up an appointment. If you wish to discuss your disability requirements further, please contact The Consumer Council.

### **Equal Opportunity Monitoring Form**

**Please note, this form is regarded as part of your application and failure to complete and return it will result in disqualification.**

For guidance on completing the Monitoring Form and to read the NICS Equal Opportunities Policy Statement please refer to the DoF website:

[Equal Opportunities - Information for Candidates | Department of Finance \(finance-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/equal-opportunities-information-for-candidates)

The Consumer Council is committed to equality of opportunity in employment and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified candidates irrespective of religious belief, gender, disability, age, race, political opinion, marital status, sexual orientation or whether or not they have dependents.

**The Consumer Council is an Equal Opportunities Employer.**

All applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.

### **Assessment Information**

It is The Consumer Council policy that all candidates invited to attend for assessment bring sufficient documentation to satisfy the eligibility and shortlisting criteria and the Nationality and Vetting requirements.

Further details regarding acceptable documentation will be issued with an invitation to attend for assessment. You should ensure that these documents are readily available.

### **Nationality Requirements**

There are no nationality restrictions for this post. However, before an offer of appointment can be made to an overseas candidate, The Consumer Council will need to ensure that all UK visa and immigration requirements are met.

If you are invited to interview we will ask you to provide documentation confirming that you are entitled to work in the UK, under the terms of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. You should check whether there are any restrictions on your stay or your freedom to take or change employment before you apply for a post.

### **Vetting Procedures**

#### 1. Baseline Personnel Security Standard

For this post the level of vetting is a Baseline Standard. For this check you will be required to provide the following:

- Your passport OR
- A document verifying your permanent National Insurance number (e.g. P45, P60 or National Insurance card) AND your birth certificate which includes the names of your parents (long version).
- Other acceptable documents are listed on [www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk).
- A specimen signature at any assessment event and have this validated against passport, driving licence, application form etc.

We will organise a Criminal Record Check on all successful applicants to be carried out by AccessNI. The category of AccessNI check required for this post is;

#### **Basic Disclosure Certificate**

You should not put off applying for a post because you have a conviction. We deal with all criminal record information in a confidential manner, and information relating to convictions is destroyed after a decision is made.

For more information, the address of the AccessNI website is:

<http://www.accessni.gov.uk/>

Those applicants who are being considered for appointment will be contacted by The Consumer Council, normally after interview/test, and will be asked to complete the AccessNI application form. This can be downloaded from the AccessNI website. Guidance notes of the completion of the form are also included on the website.

Please note that a request to complete this form should not be seen as a guarantee of an offer of appointment.

Failure to complete the application form and return it within the specified time will be regarded as 'no longer interested in the position' and your application will be withdrawn.

Criminal Record information is subject to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### Pensions

**New entrants who join The Consumer Council are eligible to join the NICS pension scheme.**

Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at:

[www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni](http://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni)

or

if you are unable to access the website please contact Civil Service Pensions as follows:

Civil Service Pensions  
Waterside House  
75 Duke Street  
Londonderry  
BT47 6FP  
Tel: 02871 319000  
Email: [cspensions.cpg@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:cspensions.cpg@finance-ni.gov.uk)

### **Feedback**

The Consumer Council is committed to ensuring that the processes used to recruit and select staff are fair. We are consequently committed to providing feedback in respect of decisions taken in determining eligibility/shortlisting as well as at interview. Feedback in respect of eligibility/shortlisting will be communicated automatically to those candidates who fail to satisfy any criteria. All requests for feedback are welcome.

**THIS INFORMATION PACK DOES NOT FORM PART OF  
CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**

**Please apply online or post your hardcopy completed application form to:**

**The Consumer Council  
Floor 3  
Seatem House  
28 – 32 Alfred Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8EN**

**Email Applications should be sent to:**

[recruitment@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@consumercouncil.org.uk)

**NOTE:** Late applications will not be accepted.

**Contact details:**

If you have any queries regarding the competition process please contact The Consumer Council at the address above or by;

**Email:** [recruitment@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@consumercouncil.org.uk)

**Tel:** 028 9025 1600