
Job description

Date: 19 August 2025

Department: Place and Economy

Post number: ZOOM001

Section: Economic Development

Job title: Zoo Development Manager

Grade: Grade 12

Main purpose of job

To be responsible to the Director of Economic Development, this post will be responsible for:-

- the development and implementation of strategic plans for zoo growth and improvement, including long-term proposals for investment and to regularly review zoo strategies and align them with annual business plan objectives and expenditure estimates.
- operational and contractual management of all aspects of the zoological gardens and other facilities and assets. This is to include all management issues relating to animal husbandry; historical buildings and artefacts; horticulture; hospitality and tourism, identifying strategic opportunities for all areas, overseeing catering franchise agreements, procurement and contracts, the upkeep of the surrounding landscapes and the management and supervision of cross-functional teams at the location.
- identifying commercial opportunities within the assets by developing new business opportunities to maximise revenue streams and to ensure that assets make optimum contribution to city's economic growth and regeneration agenda and to monitor the economic impact of the investment.
- overall development, planning, organisation and management of the zoo and its environs, and to act as champion to maximise the commercial opportunities.
- the management of the zoological gardens and other facilities to ensure that facilities and activities comply with regulation and legislation concerning zoo operation and management, health and safety requirements and customer service standards.
- ensuring the highest standards of animal welfare including animal husbandry, enclosure and habitat maintenance.

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- monitor and manage such budgets as are allocated for the discharge of the unit's functions in accordance with the council's policies, financial regulations and standing orders, to ensure that the unit's objectives are met within the budget.
 - develop key relationships and strategic partnerships, internal and external, with a range of private, statutory, voluntary and community organisations to facilitate a co-ordinated approach to the strategic development of the zoo and its environs.
 - ensure that new developments in all fields relevant to the zoo and its environs and to make recommendations to the Director of Economic Development, Senior Managers, Elected Members across Council as appropriate.
 - accurate and timely production of all required management information for council or committee reports, official returns and for performance measurement, and
 - ensuring the highest standards of service delivery, through the effective management of all facilities; the motivation and performance management of staff; ensuring the highest customer services standards, applying all relevant council's policies concerning a total quality approach.

Summary of responsibilities and personal duties

1. Co-ordinate the management of the zoological gardens and other facilities and assets to ensure the delivery of agreed strategic and operational outcomes, having overall responsibility for facility management and development, including provision of excellent customer service to ensure the asset is regarded as a prominent visitor attraction for the city.
2. Ensure that effective business strategies and supporting policies and procedures are developed, implemented and regularly reviewed across all assigned assets to deliver the requirements and the objectives of the Council.
3. Contribute to and ensure the effective delivery of all appropriate council asset and facilities management strategies for the zoological gardens and environs, in line with the Belfast Agenda, Corporate Plan and other applicable council strategies.
4. Act as an intelligent client (client-agent), as required, for the management and improvement of the zoological gardens and environs (including maintenance, systems, services, utilisation, access, charging, planning, cleanliness, décor, usage and functions); designing project briefs/ plans, preparing tender and contract documentation and administering contracts as appropriate.
5. Build and maintain collaborative working relationships with appropriate partners and stakeholders (internal and external), in order to create and enhance the zoological gardens profile and reputation and meet priority objectives as set out in the council's corporate plans.
6. Oversee the procurement of goods and services and tender and selection processes for outsourced service providers for the zoological gardens and environs; working in partnership with external providers/ suppliers, ensuring that contract management policies are adhered to and that monitoring and reporting performance against key targets is in place, and actively address issues of non-compliance/ under performance.
7. Identify potential business opportunities for development for the zoological gardens and environs ensuring any external funding opportunities are maximised; support the development of robust business proposals with a view to securing funding/ sponsorship, new contracts and long-term client relationships; and explore synergies and interdependencies between assets identifying opportunities for efficiencies, cost reduction and value for money.
8. Drive continuous improvement and innovation, leading and co-ordinating business planning and the application of business improvement tools and maximising the use of technology, researching and sharing best practice and supporting effective change management.
9. Investigate and respond to all relevant complaints in accordance with council policies and procedures.
10. Identify and manage risks at an appropriate level across the zoological gardens and environs in conjunction with senior management.

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11. Responsible for the development and management and ongoing review of the zoological gardens and environs risk register and for identifying and managing all risks linked to the implementation annual Business Plan and to be responsible for reviewing and managing audit recommendations as required.
 12. Oversee the planning, implementation of daily activities to ensure the effective delivery operations of the zoological gardens and environs, ensuring alignment with Belfast City Council's mission and values and performance management best practice.
 13. Oversee compliance with any service level agreements on the maintenance and upkeep of the zoological gardens and environs and associated equipment and supplies.
 14. Responsible for the application, maintaining and reviewing of the Zoo Licence ensuring that all relevant conditions are complied with to the highest of standards.
 15. Responsible for providing advice to the Director of Economic Development on the performance or of breakdown in the delivery of a quality service.
 16. Develop and foster relationships with key internal and external stakeholder groups, for example, Friends of Zoo and develop community involvement in the development and management of the zoological gardens and environs.
 17. Motivate and manage all staff, who may be assigned, to the post holder to ensure effective service delivery and to be responsible for reviewing and implementing a proper staff training and development programme.
 18. Responsible for increasing revenue generation in the zoological gardens and environs through new sources of income including venue hire, visitor experience income, the creation of opportunities for sponsorship and income generation from the development of new partnerships with the private sector and for sourcing new funding opportunities in line with council policies.
 19. Liaise with contractors and other agencies to resolve issues arising from contracts so as to ensure good customer service and/or implementation of the council's policy.
 20. Ensure the health and welfare of zoo animals including participating in relevant conservation schemes and following relevant guidance from industry bodies e.g. EAZA and BIAZA.
 21. Oversee the veterinary consultancy service, including selection and contract management.
 22. Responsible for the preparation, management, monitoring and implementation of effective Business Planning processes in accordance with agreed budgets, the preparation, management of operating programme budgets and overseeing the tracking of expenditure and revenues.
 23. Oversee, in line with the Zoo animal collection plan, select and purchase animals for the zoological gardens, also the sale or exchange of surplus stock, following relevant guidance from industry bodies.
 24. Ensure that all necessary systems and procedures are in place to comply with all relevant Health and Safety legislation, council processes and procedures.

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25. Liaise with other statutory bodies, government departments, voluntary bodies and other interested groups and agencies on matters relating to the management and upkeep of facilities including the zoological gardens and environs.
 26. Responsible for the short and long-term planning for capital projects and improvements to enclosures, zoological gardens and environs, making recommendation for new projects liaising with relevant managers on progress of capital projects and for the submission of bids to Property and Projects Department.
 27. Oversee the plans and design work relating to the improvement and development of properties and facilities, including horticultural features, buildings, animal enclosures and other areas.
 28. Produce timely committee, briefings, publications, performance management and financial reports and papers and to attend committees, corporate management teams, boards, conferences etc., as and when required.
 29. Oversee the publicity and advertising and marketing of the zoological gardens, including conducting of press conferences, photo calls and interviews, as required.
 30. Report to Departmental Business Manager on financial and performance matters and provide the Departmental Management Team with accurate and up to date statistics and management information regarding performance of the zoological gardens and environs.
 31. Report to and liaise with the Operations Development Manager in relation to the development and management of high value zoo contracts, the maintenance of the zoo site and assets, and the management of adjoining Council assets and facilities.
 32. Represent the Operations Development Manager and Director of Economic Development at meeting, both within the city council and externally with other groups and agencies if necessary.
 33. Provide advice to other local authorities and other government agencies when required.
 34. Responsible for the business continuity and emergency planning process within the zoological gardens and environs, including running exercises, reviewing and update the plan / risk register etc., on a regular basis.
 35. Oversee the effective management of the Zoo firearms team in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidelines ensuring that robust control systems are in place for the storage and use of equipment and that staff are adequately trained and prepared in the event that animal restraint is required.
 36. Participate in all induction and in-service training provided by Belfast City Council and in the induction and support of all newly appointed staff and other human resource management policies and procedures, as appropriate, including, absence management, disciplinary and grievance procedure.
 37. Participate as directed in the Council's recruitment and selection procedures.
 38. Act in accordance with the council and departmental policies and procedures including customer care, equal opportunities, health and safety, safeguarding and any pertinent legislation.

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39. Undertake the duties in such a way as to enhance and protect the reputation and public profile of the council.
 40. Undertake such other relevant duties as may from time to time be required.

This job description has been written at a time of significant organisational change and it will be subject to review and amendment as the demands of the role and the organisation evolve. Therefore, the post-holder will be required to be flexible, adaptable and aware that they may be asked to perform tasks, duties and responsibilities which are not specifically detailed in the job description, but which are commensurate with the role.

Employee specification

Date: 12 November 2025

Department: Place and Economy

Post number: ZOOM001

Section: Economic Development

Job title: Zoo Development Manager

Grade: Grade 12

Essential criteria

Qualification and experience

Applicants **must**, as at the closing date for receipt of application forms, have a third level qualification in a relevant discipline such as zoology, veterinary medicine, zoo management etc., or an equivalent professional qualification.

Applicants **must**, as at the closing date for receipt of application forms, be able to demonstrate on the application form, by providing personal and specific examples, at least seven years' relevant management experience in a zoological facility in each of the following three areas:

- a) delivering key operational and strategic improvements¹ to ensure the sustainability of a zoological facility;
- b) dealing with animal welfare issues, with direct responsibility for managing a range of Risk Category 1 and 1A animals², and delivering a conservation programme in line with strategic objectives; and
- c) managing a range of frontline and support services such as finance, human resources, animal husbandry, contract delivery, health and safety compliance and facilities management.

Desirable criteria

In addition to the above qualifications and experience, Belfast City Council reserves the right to short-list only those applicants who, as at the closing date for receipt of application forms:

- in the first instance, have an additional third level qualification in a relevant business-related, commercial acumen or facilities management discipline (or an equivalent qualification); and
- in the second instance, have at least ten years' relevant experience in each of the aforementioned areas (a-c).

¹ **Operational and strategic improvements** will be defined as those improvements which include financial, environmental, commercial and conservation sustainability.

² **Risk Category 1 and 1A animals** will be defined as those species included in the Standards for Modern Zoo Practice Great Britain May 2025.

Special skills and attributes

Applicants must be able to demonstrate the following special skills and attributes which may be tested at interview:

Communication skills: the ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of audiences, both verbally and in writing and to deliver effective presentations appropriate to the audience.

Technical knowledge: a detailed knowledge of the highest standards of animal welfare including animal husbandry, enclosure and habitat maintenance and an understanding of the role of conservation schemes, education and scientific research in zoo management.

Analytical and decision-making skills: the ability to analyse complex situations and take appropriate decisive action with an understanding of the possible wider corporate implications of such action.

Work planning and organisational skills: the ability to forward plan and effectively prioritise the work of the zoo.

Business planning skills: the ability to contribute to the formulation and monitoring of business plans for the zoo to meet council objectives.

Budget and resource management skills: a full knowledge of budget preparation and the management and control of financial and other resources.

Staff management and development skills: a strong personal commitment to staff development and encouraging personal development with an understanding of current related practice together with the ability to develop, manage and evaluate effective people management policies, procedures and processes.

Performance management skills: a thorough knowledge of performance management systems and procedures including performance indicators, benchmarking and quality assurance methodologies.

Corporate knowledge: an understanding of how local government and other public bodies operate.

Partnership working skills: the ability to work with a diverse group of other managers and professionals, both internally and externally, to meet common objectives.

Political and corporate sensitivity skills: an experienced, unbiased attitude with the skills to promote good public relations and the ability to maintain sound relationships with elected members, the media, the public and other bodies on a wide range of issues including those which are highly sensitive or confidential.