

Job Description

JOB TITLE: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

REPORTS TO: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE

Job Purpose

Responsible for safeguarding the interests of the Council by providing strategic legal advice and support to the Council, Chief Officers and Elected Members on sensitive and highly complex legal matters through the provision of high quality, timely and appropriate legal advice and the establishment of effective legal frameworks and procedures to regulate decision making.

To act as the Deputy Monitoring Officer for both Peterborough and Rutland Councils, to be responsible for ensuring that the Councils fulfil their lawful obligations and statutory duties in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

To provide legal services to external partners and advice and assistance to the Council's wholly owned companies.

To lead the Legal and Democratic service teams, ensuring each specialist area achieves the relevant statutory duties and legislative obligations.

To be a full participating member of the Governance Departmental Management Team (DMT) driving strategy and performance and identifying and championing the delivery of the Governance directorate's vision and strategy.

Organisation

The Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services reports directly to the Director of Governance. The post holder will be responsible for approx. 47 employees split across:

- Legal Services teams including Children's Safeguarding, Adult Social Care, Education, Health and Litigation, Procurement and Contracts, and Growth and Regeneration
- Democratic Services including Members Services, Scrutiny Services, Civic Office and Mayoral Support
- Elections

It is anticipated there will be up to 4 direct reports.

The Assistant Director is also required to hold a number of statutory roles including Statutory Scrutiny Officer, Deputy Electoral Registration Officer and Deputy Returning Officer.

Peterborough City Council operates a shared legal service with Rutland County Council. The Assistant Director is required to lead on the shared legal service, acting as the Deputy Monitoring Officer and Head of Services for Rutland County Council, as well as delivering on the full range of county and district functions in accordance with constitutional delegations.

Principal Accountabilities / Responsibilities

- Provide high quality legal advice to the Council, Chief Officers and Elected Members to underpin effective decision making, meet statutory requirements and ensure good general practice. This involves interpretation of the law and best practice for all of the Council's service delivery functions.
- To establish and be accountable for the legal and governance frameworks.
- Advise on the legal framework within which the Council operates ensuring that all member and officer decision making is within the Council's legal powers.
- Deliver a wide range of sensitive and high profile cases including new initiatives, policy development, major projects, constitutional issues, standards, ethics, corporate governance, corporate legal issues and other complex administrative areas of public law.
- Provide legal advice to Regulatory Committees, Scrutiny Committees, Audit Committee and in the absence of the Director of Governance to Cabinet and Council.
- Interpretation of the legal powers of the Committee, provide advice on its decision making powers and the process and limitations applied to the remit of the Committee.
- To contribute to corporate programme boards which develop strategy and policy, implement programmes and projects and monitor performance.
- To advise the Council on new legislative requirements and implement changes where required.
- To lead, develop and improve the delivery of legal services for Peterborough City Council, Rutland County Council and Legal Services to external clients.
- To actively pursue opportunities for shared legal services or other non-profit income opportunities.
- Develop and deliver strategies for the delivery of legal services so as to increase efficiencies and increase external income, as well as strengthen the resilience of the legal advice provided.
- To ensure that the Council's corporate governance framework is robust and effective and that there are effective and efficient systems and processes in place to ensure that the Council operates high ethical standards and governance.
- To advise Members and Officers on the constitution and on decision making process for councillors and officers across the shared legal service.
- To lead the democratic and mayoral services team to support the councillors in effective policy development and decision making.
- Provide advice on corporate governance responsibilities and ensure all elected members at Peterborough City Council are supported in the democratic process and that there is effective member engagement through adherence to ethical and legal principles.
- To lead the delivery of support to the Council's elected members ensuring they are developed, remunerated, engaged with and provided with IT solutions in order to carry out their role as elected Councillors.
- To provide training to elected Members and senior officers on all aspects of the service and also on emerging legal issues.
- To assist in the investigation of complaints against members including acting as a legal advisor to the Hearings Panel.
- To oversee the service complaints process to ensure final decisions on complaints are robust before sign off by Director of Governance.
- To oversee the electoral process to ensure it is delivered lawfully to allow the citizens of Peterborough to tender their vote and retain confidence in the integrity of the system.
- To lead the Civic Office to ensure that the Mayoral function is enabled and is constitutionally robust, contributing positively to the city's image and reputation.
- To ensure that a system of continuous review and improvement is embedded within the service so that "traditional thinking" is challenged and innovation pursued.
- To contribute to the management of the council at a senior level and actively participate in the departmental management team and other corporate groups by contributing to the achievement of the Authority's strategic aims and continuously improving its performance, understanding the council's priorities and ambitions and driving continual improvements within the service.
- To participate or lead on corporate projects and contribute to the development of corporate policies and strategic decision making as required.
- To promote innovation, efficiency and customer focus in service delivery.

- Deliver Mayor's public events –such as Remembrance Sunday, conferring Freedom of the City and Holocaust Memorial Day

Leadership

- To support and deputise for the Director of Governance.
- To lead and direct the Legal and Democratic service teams to ensure that the Council's core values and strategic aims are achieved by providing a clear sense of purpose and direction in order to motivate and develop employees to achieve high performance.
- To develop and maintain a positive working environment encouraging active involvement of staff in shaping the development and delivery of capable and timely services and promotion of equal opportunities.
- Actively encourage innovation and creativity across the team, pushing boundaries to improve efficiency, provide value for money and achieve new ways of working.
- To act as an ambassador for the Council, promoting and developing the authority's image, forming strategic alliances and developing effective working relationships on a local, regional and national basis.

Performance and Risk Management

- Evaluate, review and report performance of Members, Stakeholders and Auditors (internal and external) to the Monitoring Officer.
- Report compliance with the relevant legal, financial and procurement requirements and frameworks across the Council to the Monitoring Officer.

Financial Management

- Indirectly responsible for the lawful expenditure of the Council's entire budget.
- To continually review and reshape service delivery to achieve financial efficiencies and maximise opportunities for income generation, whilst maintaining the highest standards of service delivery.
- During the election period, additional budgetary responsibility for up to 600 additional staff.

Job Knowledge

- Qualified Solicitor or Barrister with full practising certificate and extensive and substantial evidence of up to date continuous professional development.
- Advanced knowledge of constitutional and democratic process matters, including electoral practice and governance procedures.
- Understanding of all aspects of local government law: in particular the structural frameworks of local authorities, the limitations of powers, understanding the scope of judicial review and general compliance powers and the corporate governance frameworks which underpins all decision making across the Council.
- Substantial practical and procedural knowledge of public sector practice, the political environment and statutory obligations across the organisation as a whole.
- A strong understanding of the financial framework governing local authority activities.
- Advanced knowledge of information governance including protection of data, sensitive and confidential information, and access to records with the ability to apply public interest arguments to the use of sensitive information.
- A strong understanding of local government reporting procedures.
- An understanding of the contemporary public change agenda.

Experience

- Extensive experience of operating as a senior manager in a complex legal service environment which incorporates decision making, strategic and business planning.
- Proven experience of influencing strategic policy direction within a large complex organisation such as local authorities.

- Proven track record of leading strategic policy formulation, decision making and resources allocation and of problem solving and meeting objectives at a senior level. A demonstrated ability to advise members of policy options, determine priorities and to communicate a clearly recommended way forward.
- Experience of working effectively in a political environment, demonstrating high levels of political awareness, sensitivity, confidentiality and understanding with the ability to translate that into delivering the agendas of the administration and winning the confidence of elected members.
- Evidence of developing and encouraging innovative ideas to drive improvement in the delivery of services.
- Extensive experience of managing a diverse team at a senior level and providing leadership and direction across a range of service. Evidence of high level leadership with ability to impact, motivate, influence and develop others.
- Demonstrated evidence of significant service improvement through managing change including staff engagement, capacity building, workforce modernisation and organisational reform.
- Significant experience of the preparation, management and control and targeting of budgets, ensuring priorities and targeting of resources to achieve maximum value for money and income generation.
- Experience of identifying ways in which services can be delivered more efficiently by ensuring that the processes used and the resources needed to apply those processes, provide the optimum route to achieve cost-effective solutions.
- Evidence of personal commitment to diversity in the workplace and in the shaping of service outcomes.

Skills

- Ability to negotiate complex matters of high value, translating those matters into action that best represents and protects the interests, desires and good governance of the authority.
- Ability to relate to and win the confidence, trust and respect of Members, Colleagues, Partners and the wider community.
- Ability to think strategically and to work with Elected Members to translate political vision into operational programmes.
- Ability to operate in a complex, political, environment and act decisively within the context of accurately analysing risk and benefits of different courses of action.
- Excellent communication skills and the ability to communicate complex information both orally and in writing in a clear articulate and balanced way to a variety of audiences.
- Ability to devise innovative solutions to significant and complex legal problems.
- Excellent negotiation skills and an ability to influence outcomes through reasoning, persuasion and tact.
- Strategic and logical thinker and decision-maker able to provide practical and creative solutions to the management of corporate and directorate issues.
- High intellectual and analytical abilities; able to assimilate and analyse information quickly, identifying issues, priorities and solutions and using effective models, techniques and resources to resolve issues.
- Ability to use information technology to improve service delivery and reduce costs.
- Demonstrable continuous development and improvement of own leadership and professional practise.

Political Restriction

This post is politically restricted under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and the post holder may not have any active political role either in or outside work.