

North Northamptonshire Council – Job Description

Assistant Director Legal and Democratic

Service Area: Governance and HR

Reports to: Director of Governance and HR

Salary scale: £84,215 - £94,521

Location: North Northamptonshire Council, Sheerness House, 41 Meadow Road, Kettering NN16 8TL

Role Purpose

- To undertake statutory responsibilities as Deputy Monitoring Officer and support the Director of Governance and HR in developing and delivering a strong governance and ethical framework.
- Responsible for the leadership and performance of the Council's in house legal, democratic and information governance services.
- Responsible for the leadership, development and implementation of relevant strategies and policies that enable the delivery of the Council's target operating model, corporate and directorate priorities.
- Develop and embed a performance culture that delivers results through continual improvement and ensure that resources are targeted on business priorities and meeting customer needs.
- Manage resources efficiently and effectively, ensuring there are sufficient financial, human and other resources available to deliver effective services.
- Take a proactive approach to risk management and business continuity planning on areas of accountability.
- Responsible for contract management of the legal services provided through Pathfinder Ltd.

- Responsible for developing and maintaining key internal and external relationships and partnerships to deliver both the Council's and wider strategic area priorities.
- To review and modernise all functions within the responsibilities of the Assistant Director to reflect best practice.
- To support and deputise for the Director of Governance and Human Resources.

Key Relationships

Externally: Wide network of contacts from within the public and private sectors at national and local level including stakeholders, local partnerships, council owned companies'/enterprises regeneration organisations, government departments and business organisations, including council-owned companies.

Internally: Chief Executive, Elected Members, Directors, Assistant Directors, and senior managers and teams from across the council.

Key Accountabilities

- Responsible for the leadership, performance and development of the Council's legal, democratic and information governance services, including the in-house legal team, contract management of Pathfinder Ltd, requests for information, data protection and democratic services.
- Lead, develop and implement relevant strategies and policies for the council to deliver excellent governance and the Council's Corporate Plans.
- Be a key member of the Governance and HR Directorate Management Team; with responsibility for leading and driving forward the governance agenda for the Council.
- Advising the Corporate Leadership Team and senior managers on legal and governance solutions that support the achievement of the Council's priorities, mitigates risks and maintains good governance.
- To play a key role in cross cutting, organisation wide innovative work streams and organisational design pieces, drawing on technical expertise and professional judgement to inform and shape these.
- Accountable for the management of budgets and delivery of the MTFP within area of responsibility including the effective use of Council resources. This includes a staffing budget of approximately £1.4 million (with direct impact on the overarching Council payroll budget) and a Pathfinder spend of approximately £1.5 million.

- Ensuring leadership of dynamic, highly effective services which meets the changing needs and expectations of councillors, managers and directors and are modelled as centres of excellence.
- Promote cross-organisational team working, and across boundaries with other agencies and partners, to improve services and solve problems in a coherent and integrated manner.
- Role model a value for money culture across the organisation which continually improves the overall use of resources by the Council and its partners. Developing a culture and approach which optimises the use of resources and drives a cost reduction ethic throughout the organisation.
- Accountable for any other corporate duties as reasonably required, including but not limited to: briefing members, attending committee meetings and compliance with all statutory requirements.
- 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 and 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 Executive and Council.
- 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.
- 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 advise Members and Officers on the constitution and on decision making process for councillors and officers across the shared legal service.
- Provide advice on corporate governance responsibilities and ensure all elected members at North Northamptonshire 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 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

Skills and Behaviours

Must be able to:

- Engage with all stakeholders and take responsibility for driving forward and implementing corporate and service improvements.
- Create innovation and empower teams.
- Effectively negotiate and influence to achieve the corporate vision.
- Maximise relationships across team, service, and organisational boundaries to achieve desired results.
- Strong management & staff development skills and the ability to create a strong team ethos.
- Keep up to date with new developments in their area of strategic leadership to enhance personal effectiveness.
- Communicate effectively with both individuals and groups of all sizes at all levels, internal and external to the Authority.
- Promote equal opportunities within all aspects of service delivery and employee relations.

Misc.

Management reserve the right to assign and/or vary operational responsibilities, within your level of responsibility, to meet operational requirements. The grade reflects the requirement to attend meetings outside of normal working hours.

Assistant Director: Person Specification

Education/Training

- * 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 and demonstrable experience as a Deputy Monitoring Officer.
- * 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.
- * Extensive experience of operating as a senior manager in a complex legal service environment which incorporates decision making, strategic and business planning.
- * 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.

Leadership Experience

- * A proven track record of consistent and demonstrable achievement at a senior management level within an organisation of comparable scope and complexity.

- * A demonstrable track record of leading, motivating and managing teams to achieve high performing and significant, sustainable service improvements and outstanding results, through internal and external partnerships.
- * Experience of developing and sustaining a culture that meets the needs of and engages with customers and staff within a safe, open and high-performing working environment.
- * Evidence of establishing a performance management culture to drive continuous improvement, including service planning, target setting, performance appraisal and the management of staff groups.
- * A track record of working in and forging successful partnerships with a wide range of internal and external bodies including governmental and non-governmental organisations, the private and voluntary sectors.
- * A proven track record of working effectively within a political environment, providing clear, balanced advice and guidance on strategic and operational issues that achieve service objectives.
- * A proven track record of applying commercial judgement in making decisions that will deliver cost-effective and efficient results.
- * A proven track record of managing key transformation & change within complex services or areas.
- * In-depth knowledge of public services.
- * Track record of reviewing, improving and modernising legal and democratic approaches and practices.
- * Extensive post qualification experience of advising directors and senior managers on legal and governance issues and can demonstrate the ability to develop practical ideas and innovative solutions that meets business needs.

Skills/Abilities

- * 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.
- * Ability to design democratic processes around increasing democracy within the area
- * 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.
- * Demonstrate a proven ability to motivate, develop teams, individual and self to enhance performance and service standards.
- * Understanding of customer focussed services.
- * Demonstrate leadership skills in managing significant change and improvement in service delivery.
- * Demonstrate ability to work well under pressure, achieving deadlines.
- * Demonstrate commitment to performance management.

Key competencies, behaviours and approach

- Prepared to quickly and flexibly react to the needs of the council, its customers and partners.
- Excellent leadership and management skills, at a strategic and operational level and including the ability to delegate appropriately.

- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to influence and persuade.
- Strong personal commitment to the delivery of first class services.
- High level communication, networking and ambassadorial skills.
- Business acumen.
- Vision and creativity.
- Ambitious, energetic and highly motivated.
- Visible, approachable and accessible; resilient, determined and confident.
- Awareness of own strengths and weaknesses and commitment to addressing areas requiring development.