

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Senior Democratic Services Officer		
Directorate	Democratic & Governance		
Reporting to	Democratic Services Manager		
Grade	11		
Evaluation ref:	AG0122	Job ref:	Family
Role purpose			
As one of the senior administrative officers in the Governance & Democratic Services Team, reporting either to a Service Manager or Governance Specialist in Governance & Democratic Services. Responsibilities supporting the delivery of one or more of the following service functions, as detailed in the Accountability section below.			
Responsibilities			
<p>Advises elected members, officers, representatives of other agencies and the public on conduct of business at and legal/procedural requirements of member level and other meetings.</p> <p>Plans forward work programmes for each body and decision-making systems, administered in consultation with members/officers to ensure the efficient and effective conduct of that bodies' business.</p> <p>Undertakes pre-meeting preparatory work in consultation with relevant officers/chairpersons including the administration of briefings and all arrangements to enable the meeting to take place including the preparation and despatch of agenda and reports.</p> <p>Prepares and where appropriate presents reports relevant to conduct of business or legal/procedural matters to Full Council, committees, Executive Lead Members / Senior Officers, etc.</p> <p>Attends meetings, advises on procedural and legal matters, takes notes and prepares all necessary follow-up paperwork following the meeting, i.e., summary of decisions, minutes, reports.</p> <p>Actions outcomes resulting from meetings including investigating/researching material, organising and facilitating informal working/witness sessions/site visits and maintaining databases.</p> <p>Maintains and supports governance procedures and systems, including preparing guidance notes, report templates, training material, providing advice and maintaining databases/record systems.</p> <p>Administers school admission appeal panel hearings, including attending meetings, giving procedural and legal advice and undertaking follow-up action</p>			

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including confirming decisions to the parents, the school admissions team and schools accordingly.

Arranges the induction of new members of Council following Somerset Council elections and by-elections. Prepares briefing and induction material for members, assesses members support and development needs, and ensures new members receive relevant documentation.

Gathers necessary documentation from members following elections within the statutory deadlines to enable them to undertake their role as a councillor.

Arranges equipment (including IT equipment) to enable newly elected members to undertake their role.

Prepares and maintains personal development plans for individual members as required.

Prepares an annual forward programme of member development and training activity based on identified needs.

Delivers the forward programme of member development and training activity through the selection of appropriate external / internal training providers and organisation of development and training sessions for members.

Provides advice to members on appropriate development and training opportunities to meet their identified needs.

Secures and records feedback from members participating in development and training activity to inform their personal development and improve the quality of the service provided.

Ensures that full development and training records are maintained for each individual member.

Administers meetings of the Member Development Panel and other relevant meetings including setting dates, agreeing agendas with the chair and officers, preparing reports, where appropriate presenting reports and attending the meetings to take a note of the business, preparing minutes of the meeting and implementing any actions resulting.

Records expenditure on member development and training and ensures that expenditure remains within budget.

Administration of travel and subsistence claims as part of member allowances.

Maintains the Gifts and Hospitality Register for elected members and the Register of Members' Interests.

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Maintains the Gifts and Hospitality Register for officers and the Register of Officer's Interests.

Supports delivery of a project or specific activities on behalf of the service.

Line manage or supervise some of the work of the team's Administrative Officers.

Certify invoices in respect of venues and other expenses such as elected members' travel and subsistence claims.

Impact

Contacts & Relationships

The 110 elected members of Council, including group leaders, Lead Members, committee chairs both within this Council and other authorities and non-elected members/co-opted members of committees, in private, public meetings and on a one-to-one basis and on both policy and operational matters to direct, persuade, influence, innovate, provide advice and guidance, consult, give and receive information.

Directors, Senior Officers, professional and administrative staff across the Council, other local authorities and organisations, in private, public meetings and on a one-to-one basis on both policy and operational matters to direct, persuade, influence, provide advice and guidance, consult, give and receive information.

Regular contact with the Head of Governance & Democratic Services, Service Managers and Governance Specialists and all members of the team, to exchange advice and information.

Regular contact with the public, in particular parents (education admission appeals, the general public (at meetings or those making general enquiries), to give advice and guidance and exchange information.

Solicitors in Legal Services, or occasionally in private practice, to consult/seek advice or respond on particular issues arising at committee meetings or appeal hearings.

School admission appeal panel members, who may be drawn from school governors, ex-headteachers, Justices of the Peace and parents who may have been governors.

Training providers, both internal and external, to exchange communication and arrange training events.

Resources

The Governance & Democratic Services Team collectively: -

Administers in excess of 350 formal member level meetings per year in a variety of locations and times across Somerset, including full Council, the Executive, the

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Scrutiny Committees, the Planning Committees, the Standards Committee, other committees, other member/officer meetings and informal briefings.

Administers approximately 800 education appeals per annum resulting in a requirement to administer approximately 500 school admission appeal hearings. This involves 90/100 days of hearings per year. Hearings are held on almost all weekdays during the summer term and thereafter on average one day a week.

Provides Civic Office support to the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, the High Sheriff and the Chair of Council. This includes the co-ordination and organisation of events on behalf of those roles.

Knowledge / Experience / Skills

	Essential	Desirable	
Knowledge			
Demonstrable knowledge and understanding of the statutory, policy and strategic commissioning framework within which specialist services operate and their context within local government as a whole.	X		
Knowledge and understanding of implementing equality and diversity in commissioning and reviewing service delivery.	X		
An understanding and commitment to effective customer and community engagement leading to service redesign and change management.	X		
Ability to speak fluent English as stated in Part 7 of the Immigration Act (2016)	X		
Knowledge of current social and political issues relating to the work of the public sector and their impact on the democratic process.		X	
Knowledge of the politically sensitive environment in which members/officers are required to work.		X	
Knowledge of the legal background to the democratic structures and processes including joint working with other agencies.		X	
Knowledge of training and development techniques / able to apply innovative ways of working.		X	
Experience			
Significant experience of working successfully with Members and Directors on complex issues and the development of strategic direction.	X		

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Track record of operating corporate projects and providing clear advice on policy options and policy development.	X		
Experience of developing and delivering representational and communication activities that successfully deliver key messages to the public and internally.	X		
Demonstrable experience of partnership working, including the ability to influence and, where required, lead multi-agency projects and initiatives with particular reference to standard setting and whole service commissioning.	X		
Good understanding and ability to develop and implement effective performance management and quality assurance frameworks.	X		
Knowledge/experience of operating democratic structures and processes.		X	
Experience of corporate and partnership working.		X	
Appropriate experience in a local authority.		X	
Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications			
Relevant degree or Professional Qualification.	X		
Evidence of work related continuing managerial and professional development in their specialist field.		X	
Skills			
Ability to prepare reports, documents, sometimes of a complex nature, involving research, analysis and report writing skills as well as detailed knowledge of the subject matter.	X		
Must have a range of IT skills ranging from basic word-processing including text/letter creation through to knowledge of / ability to use corporate software and systems e.g., Outlook.	X		
Working Conditions			
Working Arrangements			
Somerset Council's dynamic Working Strategy will be applied to this position			
Corporate Responsibilities			
Understand, uphold, and promote the aims of the council's equality, diversity, and inclusion policies; health, safety and wellbeing of self and others; and Organisational values in			

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everything you do. Equality and Diversity practice covers both interaction with staff, service users and communities and includes challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all.

Date: July 2025