

## JOB DESCRIPTION

<b>Job Title</b>	Governance Specialist		
<b>Directorate</b>	Democratic and Governance		
<b>Reporting to</b>	Head of Democratic and Governance		
<b>Grade</b>	9		
<b>Evaluation ref:</b>	AG0881	<b>Job ref:</b>	<b>Family</b>
<b>Role purpose</b>			
As one of the senior officers in Democratic & Governance Services, the postholder will report either to the Head of Democratic & Governance Services. The postholder will have responsibilities supporting the delivery of one or more of the following functions and services as detailed in the Accountability section below.			
<b>Responsibilities</b>			
<p>Manage the support and co-ordination of School Admission and Transport Appeal hearings and Exclusion Hearings, including:</p> <p>Convening appeals hearings and ensuring these are administered and supported by Democratic &amp; Governance Services including the provision of advice to the Panel on procedural and governance matters;</p> <p>Recruiting, training and supporting independent appeal panel members and obtaining and providing impartial advice;</p> <p>Providing training to Panel members and governance staff supporting appeals hearings;</p> <p>Ensuring good quality communication with panel members and appellants;</p> <p>Ensuring compliance with statutory guidance relating to appeal hearings;</p> <p>Oversee effective processes to receive, record, manage and administer and report on appeals;</p> <p>Ensuring all follow-up actions from Panel hearings including advising of the panel's decisions and maintaining records of these;</p> <p>Overseeing the development, implementation and management of systems and processes for dealing with appeals including the preparation of reports in line with statutory, corporate and service requirements;</p> <p>Leading on or contributing to service performance management and reviews, ensuring that robust monitoring and reporting systems are established, reviewed and maintained;</p>			

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Working with a range of partners as required on all aspects of service delivery, including legal services, senior managers, other local authorities, schools, Local Government Ombudsman, Education Funding Agency, the Council's insurers and independent social care providers;

Managing and dealing with enquiries about the appeals hearings from parents, panel members and other stakeholders. This includes dealing with issues arising from the hearings (including complaints) and liaison with staff in the School Admissions Service; and

Managing the expenditure and checking of invoices for panel members/charges for schools in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedures.

Lead Officer in key areas of governance (as assigned by the Head of Service) and directly responsible for their successful delivery. This includes undertaking some management functions and management responsibilities for specific bodies, i.e., a function (such as decision-making systems and guidance), a Scrutiny Committee and/or a decision-making Committee such as the Executive, Audit Committee, Planning Committees, etc (as allocated by the Head of Democratic & Governance Services).

Provide professional expertise and guidance to elected Members, Directors and other senior managers on the interpretation of legal democratic requirements, statutory guidance and/or the Council's Constitution where this is vital to the resolution of issues/complex problems, e.g., public meetings, private meetings and on a one-to-one basis.

Critically appraise and evaluate compliance with Somerset Council's governance policies and procedures including identifying key issues through analysis and using discretion to report these and recommend innovative solutions to the Head of Democratic & Governance Services and the Monitoring Officer (as appropriate).

Review and propose changes to corporate procedures and policies, etc to meet statutory requirements, organisational or policy direction following analysis of requirements and discussions with stakeholders.

Provide support in relation to the maintenance, review and development of the Council's Constitution and the Schemes of Delegation for decision-making.

Manage forward work programmes for specific committees and decision-making systems, administered in consultation with members/officers to ensure the efficient and effective conduct of that bodies' business.

Manage committee pre-meeting preparatory work in consultation with relevant officers/chairmen including the organisation and management of briefings and all arrangements to enable the meeting to take place including the preparation and despatch of agenda and reports.

Prepare and where appropriate present reports relevant to conduct of business or

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legal/procedural matters to Full Council, committees, Executive Lead Members, Senior Officers, etc.

Lead Officer for specific committees and at those advise on procedural and legal matters and ensure compliance with legal procedures, i.e., summary of decisions, minutes, reports, actions and outcomes from meetings.

Manage supporting governance procedures and systems, provides training across the council, including the preparation of guidance notes, report templates, training material, providing advice and maintaining databases/record systems to ensure compliance with legal and Somerset Council's policy requirements.

Promote the role and understanding of the Council's scrutiny, regulatory and decision-making arrangements to members and officers and outside of the Council to partners and the public.

Manage the Member Support and Development programme, including the development of the Member Development Strategy. Manage the provision and necessary IT and communications support for elected members to undertake their role. This includes responsibility for project management, commissioning and procurement of members IT solutions to support flexible and mobile working as well as provision within the Council's offices. Report as necessary to Senior Managers, the Executive, Member Development Panel and Scrutiny and secures resources as appropriate.

Manage personal development plans for individual members as required.

Lead Officer for the Member Development Panel and other relevant developmental meetings including setting dates, agreeing agendas with the chairman 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.

Manage expenditure on member development and training and ensure that expenditure remains within budget.

Manage the travel and subsistence claims as part of member allowances.

Manage the gifts and hospitality register for elected members and the Register of Members' Interests.

Manage the gifts and hospitality register for officers and the Register of Officer's Interests.

Co-ordinate decision making and other reports to facilitate the effective business of the Council, including guidance to members and officers.

Recommend appropriate operational delivery plans identifying key objectives and methods of achieving them and ensure implementation of the plan within the specified timeframe.

Lead and/or make a significant contribution to the team's aims and priorities which are in support of the Council Plan.

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Supervise / manage staff within Governance & Democratic Services, their performance, development and deployment and allocate areas of work.

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, give and receive information, consult and secure co-operation.

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, give and receive information, consult and secure co-operation.

Joint democratic arrangements, i.e., Avon & Somerset Police and Crime Panel, Somerset Rivers Authority, with partners such as other councils. This requires presentational and negotiation skills to represent the Council in public and private meetings and contribute to the design and implementation of those arrangements as necessary and facilitate external organisation's participation in the democratic processes of the Council.

Regular contact with the Head of Service and/or Monitoring Officer to influence, persuade, exchange advice and information, secure co-operation and be held accountable for performance.

Regular contact with the Head of Service and members of the Democratic & Governance Services to manage (significant line management responsibilities), influence, persuade, exchange advice and information, secure co-operation.

Deliver training sessions or presentations to members and staff to raise the profile of the relevant function or as the technical lead specialist.

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

The Head of Legal Services, Deputy Monitoring Officers, other solicitors in Legal Services, or occasionally in private practice, to consult/seek advice or respond on

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particular constitutional issues and issues arising at committee meetings.

Engage with other councils and other organisations at a senior professional level in the development and delivery of effective and efficient governance and democratic services, partnership governance arrangements and corporate initiatives.

### Resources

Democratic & Governance Services collectively: -

Administers in excess of 300 committee meetings per year in a variety of locations and times across Somerset, including full Council, the Executive, the Scrutiny Committees, the Planning Committees, the Standards Committee, other committees, other member/officer meetings and informal briefings.

Administers approximately 900 education appeal requests per annum resulting in a requirement to administer approximately 450 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.

	Essential	Desirable	
<b>Knowledge</b>			
Knowledge and experience of at least two of the following areas : 1. local government governance arrangements. 2. school admission, transport and exclusion appeal hearings 3. elected member development and training	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	

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Knowledge of training and development techniques / able to apply innovative ways of working.		X	
<b>Experience</b>			
Experience of interpreting and presenting material in a variety of media for a range of audiences and stakeholders.	X		
Supervisory / management experience of working with and supporting the development of elected members.		X	
Supervisory / management experience of delivering school admission, transport and exclusion appeal hearings.		X	
Supervisory / management experience of supporting the delivery of local government governance arrangements e.g. decision making and scrutiny committees.		X	
Experience of corporate and partnership working.		X	
Supervisory experience of staff.		X	
Appropriate experience in a local authority.		X	
<b>Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications</b>			
Relevant higher level education qualifications such as A Levels.	X		
Relevant degree and/or equivalent professional or management qualification.		X	
Continuing managerial and professional development.		X	
<b>Skills</b>			
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		
Able to conduct research without support.	X		

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Ability to speak fluent English as stated in Part 7 of the Immigration Act (2016).	X		
<b>Working Conditions</b>			
<b>Working Arrangements</b>			
Somerset Council's dynamic Working Strategy will be applied to this position.			
<b>Corporate Responsibilities</b>			
<p>Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, organisational policy, and professional codes of conduct to uphold standards of best practice.</p> <p>Deliver the aims of the council's equality, diversity and inclusion policies; health, safety and wellbeing of self and others; and Organisational values in everything you do, ensuring team members are also aware of their responsibilities and maintaining their understanding that Equality and Diversity practice covers both interaction with staff, service users and communities and includes challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all.</p>			

Date: June 2025