



JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Area Manager – Development Management	
Directorate	Climate and Place	
Reporting to	Head of Planning/Chief Planning Officer	
Grade	8	
Evaluation ref	LGR0130	Job Family ref

Role purpose

Act as the lead officer and manager for two of the four Area Planning Committees leading the two teams of officers focused on delivering high quality development in Somerset. The postholder will report to the Head of Service, will deputise for the Service Manager Development Management and will be required to ensure that the service performs to an excellent level that meets national/legal requirements and responds positively to transformational change and the expectations of a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders.

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Responsibilities

- Act as the lead officer for two development management area teams (consisting of professional planners at principal, senior, planning officer, graduate and apprenticeship grades) providing a high quality, customer focused, development management function, responsible for determining planning and relevant applications.
- Assist the Service Manager Development Management in the management of the Development Management Service and lead two of the area teams in determining planning applications including liaison within the planning service and other internal and external consultees.
- Ensure applications are professionally managed to determination from pre-application stage through to implementation and compliance in accordance with the Council's constitution and agreed scheme of delegation.
- Lead and manage the teams to ensure the Council exceeds Government and local performance targets; maximise income to Development Management specifically through application fees and charges to cover the costs of the Development Management Service; deliver organisational, policy and legislative changes to the service.
- Act as the lead professional officer at the relevant Area Planning Committees to ensure that they are managed effectively and support Members to make sound planning decisions which achieve delivery of the adopted Development Plans, supplementary planning documents and other guidance and to meet corporate objectives around climate change, ecological emergency, delivery of affordable housing and quality placemaking
- Deputise for the Service Manager Development Management and Head of Planning providing them with necessary support and advice across cases and deal with chief officers, senior members and external contacts on the full range of matters relating to management issues and all types of major and complex applications.
- Clear reports and recommendations determined under delegated powers or reported to one of the Area Committees to ensure that consultations take account of legal and corporate procedures, that reports take account of all objections raised, that recommendations weigh all material planning considerations against relevant planning policies, and that decision letters are drafted comprehensively.
- To attend as lead officer and present reports to the Area Planning Committee and to field questions/comments on all issues arising from members, objectors and other interested parties.
- Oversees the day to day functioning of two Area Planning Committees (both meeting monthly) maintaining the confidence of Chair, Vice Chair and Planning Committee Members through briefings and training
- To represent the Council by preparing and presenting professional expert evidence at public inquiries, informal hearings and in court on the full range

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of applications and in dealing with complaints, local ombudsman investigations, FoI and EIR enquiries

- To directly line manage and mentor the Principal Planning Officers and team below to ensure the team is managed effectively and that all issues affecting team performance and individual welfare are identified and acted upon.

Impact

- The Development Management Service is one of the largest if not the largest planning authority in England in terms of applications handled and an efficient service provides the statutory planning function for the Council and facilities development through the granting of permissions thus realising increase in council tax receipts, new homes bonus and increase in income for local businesses and the supply chain.
- The breadth and impact of the work of the Development Management service means there is a need for extensive engagement with statutory and non-statutory stakeholders, all service areas of the Council, elected representatives and the wider community. The planning system is designed to function in the public interest and thus has to deal with many competing demands to determine whether it is acceptable.
- The development management service is a key part of corporate project delivery where planning and other associated consents are required and manages the public conversation about aspects of corporate projects whilst considering planning proposals.
- There are numerous internal accountabilities through the Planning Committee structure and external accountabilities to the Courts, Ombudsman, Department for Levelling Up Homes and Communities (DLUHC), Planning Inspectorate, statutory stakeholders, elected representatives and the community and it is open to challenge through all these routes.
- The service registered 14,300 different types of application in a year (7,200 discharge of condition applications) in 2022/3 and on this measure is the largest local planning authority in England. Approx 130 appeal lodged and defended in a year by Written Representations, Hearings or Public Inquiries.



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Knowledge / Experience / Skills			
	Essential at full competence	Essential at recruitment	Desirable at recruitment
Knowledge			
Knowledge of statutory regulations relating to planning and related functions (including environmental legislation and regulations)	✓	✓	
Knowledge of project management methodologies and tools	✓	✓	
Experience			
Operational and managerial experience of the delivery of local authority planning services, development management functions and team leadership	✓	✓	
Experience of designing and implementing service transformation processes to deliver service change and improvement	✓	✓	
Significant experience of leading, managing and developing a large team and service area	✓	✓	
Significant experience of performance management in corporate context and external accountabilities	✓	✓	
Experience of providing professional advice on complex and controversial applications to planning committees	✓	✓	
Knowledge of providing strategic input to wider place based policy development and strategy	✓		✓
Experience of giving evidence at Public Inquiries/Development Plan Examination	✓	✓	
Significant experience of handling customer complaints and enquiries	✓	✓	
Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications			
Educated to degree level, ideally in planning, geography or a related subject	✓	✓	
Chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (MRTP) or eligible to be a member	✓	✓	
Management qualification ILM 5 or higher			✓
Evidence of continual professional development in accordance with the requirements of the professional institute	✓		
Skills			



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Able to advise/guide senior management and elected members on complex/specialist issues related to the planning service areas, spanning local casework, service performance and long-term strategic planning.	✓	✓	
Resilient by nature and have excellent communications skills, due to the significant portions of their time they spend interacting with the public, statutory consultees, stakeholders and elected representatives.	✓	✓	
Ability to provide professional advice and guidance	✓	✓	
Attention to detail in checking decisions	✓	✓	
Ability to build and maintain relationships with partner organisations	✓	✓	
Good interpersonal skills and a team player	✓	✓	



Corporate Responsibilities

- Provide clear leadership to deliver the Council's strategic priorities and meet the Council's financial targets, as a member of the Directorates Senior Leadership Team.
- Update and advise Elected Members in respect of operational and policy issues in relation to the Service.
- Lead with a clear identity in terms of flexible and responsive ways of working, inclusive and diverse culture, and high level of employee engagement and wellbeing.
- Undertake representational and communication duties on behalf of the Council to promote and protect the Council's interests in matters concerning their specialist areas.

- Create, monitor, and review frameworks of performance measures and quality standards to be applied in the delivery of services.
- Function as an ambassador for the Council promoting, both internally and externally, the Council's vision, strategic aims, and values.
- Value the diversity of Somerset's communities ensuring equality of access and treatment in service delivery and employment.
- Function as a role model for Somerset's vision and values. Promotes a culture of continuous improvement that encourages creativity and innovation to ensure services are efficient and develop the potential and flexibility across the Council and its workforce including the motivation and development of employees within the Service.
- Ensure that the Service places a high value on customer responsiveness by demonstrating a commitment to meeting and involving the broadest range of direct and indirect service users, citizens, customers, communities, and businesses.
- Support the delivery of the Councils' key strategic aims and objectives ensuring understanding and commitment from staff from across the Service.
- Support Corporate and Directorate and service specific transformational change programmes with the aim of maximising efficiency, modernising services, and achieving better outcomes and opportunities for service users and customers.
- Ensure flexibility in reacting to the needs of the Council, its' customers and partners supporting a culture of continuous improvement.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, the Council's standards of conduct, organisational policy, and professional codes of conduct to uphold standards of best practise.
- Accountable for compliance with all relevant health and safety legislation and Somerset Council H&S policies.



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Working arrangements

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Date: 14 June 24