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Role title	Senior Elections Officer
Corporate directorate	Chief Executives Office
Service	Electoral Services
Grade	9
Reports to (role title)	Head of Electoral Services
Assignment number	SCG1377

Role purpose

The electoral service is one of the largest direct customer contact functions of any service within the Council and is the fourth largest electoral service area in the UK.

The Council's Electoral Services Team is structured into three areas to reflect Parliamentary Constituencies which are:

- Bridgwater, Wells and Mendip Hills
- Frome and East Somerset, Glastonbury and Somerton, Yeovil
- Taunton and Wellington, Tiverton and Minehead

The Senior Elections Officer is responsible and accountable oversight of electoral disciplines – electoral registration or elections/other polls in support of the Head of Electoral Services – having regard to and in accordance with the statutory framework and guidance issued by the Electoral Commission.

They are required to ensure the delivery of electoral functions within statutory criteria which include strict deadlines, processes, records management and financial controls. This is in conjunction with the Head of Electoral Services and the other Senior Elections Officers.

The role holder will contribute to driving continuous improvement, performance management and efficiency, placing the electorate at the heart of everything the service does, directly or in partnership, whilst operating within budgets and providing best value.

To support the Head of Electoral Services in providing advice on electoral issues at Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings and representing the Council at stakeholder or other bodies in a professional, independent and impartial manner.

To carry out duties for and on behalf of the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer.

To be responsible for the administration of a number of the seven parliamentary constituencies as required by the Acting Returning Officer

The role holder will require detailed technical knowledge of electoral matters and significant experience in the successful delivery of electoral registration, major elections,

by-elections and other polls, including the combination of polls. The ability to work with external stakeholders in the delivery of polls is essential.

The role holder will act as Deputy Electoral Registration Officer and Deputy Returning Officer as delegated through the Head of Electoral Services, and in such other capacities as may be required by the Returning Officer, according to the nature of polls being undertaken.

At peak times, usually during major election events, it will be necessary for the role holder to work additional and unsociable hours to ensure legal deadlines are met and to avoid legal challenge.

Dimensions

Annual financial accountability

The core annual budget for the electoral service is circa £900k. The budget for major polls (unitary elections, Parliamentary elections, etc.) is circa £1.5m. The cumulative budget for minor polls (by-elections, neighbourhood planning referenda, etc.) is in excess of £200k each year.

The Senior Elections Officer will assist the Head of Electoral Services with management of the core annual budget and the overall budgets for major polls. However, they will be directly responsible for budgets for minor polls.

Management accountability

Nature of management

Full line management of Elections Officers.

Number of staff managed

- Three direct permanent members of staff. Periodically and collectively with the other Senior Elections Officers, indirect management responsibility for up to 6 staff, up to 150 canvassing staff for the annual canvass of electors and casual staff for elections and other polls (up to circa 1,500 for a major election/poll).

Other key statistics and factors

- Circa 430,000 electors with circa 80,000 postal voters
- 100 unitary Council Members,
- 279 parish councils, and circa 2,363 parish councillors.
- The electoral timetable dictates that the unitary and parish elections are held in the same year, resulting in a significantly increased workload and risk
- 7 Parliamentary constituencies
- A Parliamentary election timetable that can be as little as 23 working days from the call of an election to polling day
- High volumes of elections and other polls:
- Major polls scheduled for 2024 (Police and Crime Commissioner), 2027 (unitary and parish full term) and 2024/5 (UK Parliamentary) and then at the usual intervals
- A high profile externally facing service with very high levels of external scrutiny, including the Electoral Commission, Cabinet Office, media and public

Accountabilities

For Senior Elections Officers

- Deputise for the Head of Electoral Services on electoral matters and provide cover for the other Senior Elections Officers when required
- For major polls (e.g. Parliamentary, Police and Crime Commissioner and full term unitary elections with the possibility of a future Mayoral), to take responsibility for the oversight, in support of the Head of Electoral Services, resourcing and delivery of all aspects of the elections for an allocated area of Somerset, whether based on the Parliamentary constituencies or otherwise, including the recruitment of casual staff, booking polling stations, arranging printing, detailed management of the count(s) for that area, the declaration of the result(s) and post count requirements, including the processing of all election payments
- Take such steps and implement such systems as might be required to prevent and detect electoral malpractice or fraud
- Support the Head of Electoral Services in liaising as appropriate with the Police SPOC in relation to allegations of electoral offences
- Independently liaise with political parties to provide advice and information on electoral procedures and timetables including nomination papers and deal with areas of conflict whilst remaining politically neutral, in conjunction with the Head of Electoral Services when appropriate
- Manage allocated staff and, in conjunction with the other Senior Elections Officers, assist the Head of Electoral Services in the development and management of the core service budget for the Electoral Service
- Provide advice to others having an interest in electoral matters including other staff, electors, political parties, candidates, agents, parish councils and their clerks
- Keep abreast of electoral innovation and best practice and procedures, attending relevant training events, seminars, conferences, stakeholder events, etc. and disseminate appropriately to the team, other members staff within the Council including the Electoral Registration Office and Returning Officer
- Ensure effective processes, systems and practices are developed and delivered to drive improved performance, ensuring compliance with The Electoral Commission's performance standards and those Key Performance Indicators of our own and that service delivery is monitored against those standards
- Organise the production of all types of electoral documentation, ensuring legal deadlines are met and that the statutory obligations of the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer are complied with
- Give effect to such policies or actions as may be required corporately or by the Head of Electoral Services to ensure equality of opportunity and participation in the electoral franchise and to contribute to the embedding of equality in service planning and delivery
- Assist the Head of Electoral Services in ensuring that all electoral functions are delivered and performed in a nonpartisan and neutral way with transparency in all actions and decisions taken
- Ensure the requirements of the Electoral Commission, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and other external stakeholders are met in the delivery of the electoral function
- Support the Head of Electoral Services in following the requirements of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for procurement and the recovery of electoral expenditure

- Oversee any necessary procurements in conjunction with the Head of Electoral Services and ensure the Council's procurement rules are complied with
- Manage contractors/suppliers following appropriate procurement exercises and ensure performance against contracts and arranging payments
- Support the Head of Electoral Services in promoting electoral activities and increasing public participation and awareness, including through putting appropriate communication plans in place, working with other services as appropriate, including the communications and engagement team, web and design teams
- In conjunction with the Head of Electoral Services, undertake lessons learned exercises after major electoral events and take appropriate steps to implement improvements and reduce risks
- Put in place all necessary project plans, risk assessments and other control measures required to successfully deliver the electoral function
- With the Head of Electoral Services oversee the implementation of any IT systems required for the electoral function as well as ensuring upgrades and user acceptance testing are appropriately addressed and system support is in place
- Ensure all necessary data files are produced and provided to the appropriate persons or bodies at the correct times, including for printing, postal votes, proxies, registers, etc.
- Ensure the production of such statistics and returns as may be required and their submission to the appropriate bodies
- Attendance at meetings with Members and/or senior officers when required
- Seek out opportunities for income generation
- Provide such support and information as may be required in relation to electoral reviews and community governance reviews
- Undertake other duties appropriate to the grading of the post as required

Specific for Electoral Registration in support of the Head of Electoral Services

- Plan and manage all matters associated with the preparation and publication of the electoral register through the annual canvass and rolling registration, including the appointment and training of casual staff, printing, system requirements for interactive voter registration, etc.
- In conjunction with the service accountant and the Head of Electoral Services, take advantage of the opportunities provided by the canvass reform to make budget savings
- Oversee responses to freedom of information requests, ensuring compliance with the corresponding legal requirements
- Lead on the review of polling districts and polling places and ensuring appropriate input from the remainder of the team
- Lead on the absent voter refresh
- Undertake such election/poll functions as may be required by the Returning Officer or the Head of Electoral Services

Specific for Elections in support of the Head of Electoral Services

- To support the Head of Electoral Services, in consultation with the Returning Officer, in the management, planning, coordination and oversight of all elections, by-elections and other polls to ensure effective delivery of the election/poll process and to facilitate the exercise of electors' votes

- Ensure all elections and other polls are properly resourced, including the appointment of staff, and conducted in accordance with the law and guidance so that candidates are able to stand, those eligible are able to vote and accurate and robust results are declared that accord with the will of the electorate
- Take such steps as are necessary to maximise the recovery of election, referendum or other poll expenditure from external bodies or the elections reserve as appropriate, including complying with relevant internal and external accounting requirements (e.g., Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) and communicating applicable charges for forthcoming elections to parishes
- Recovery of election recharges from Parish and Town Councils for by elections, Neighbourhood Planning Referendums, BID Ballots and full-term elections to balance the budget
- Assist the Head of Electoral Services in ensuring an effective full-term unitary, town and parish elections media strategy is in place and implemented, engaging with other relevant teams as necessary
- Prepare project and count plans, risk registers for major polls
- Preparation of nomination packs, taking nominations and overseeing the taking of nominations by others
- Preparation of election notices, ballot papers and nomination packs
- Prepare all count arrangements, including booking premises, booking supplies, contractors, transport, staff, catering, audio systems, etc.
- Support the Head of Electoral Services with project boards for major polls, including attendance when required
- Undertake such elections and electoral registration functions as may be required by the Returning Officer, Electoral Registration Officer or the Head of Electoral Services providing cover for the other Senior Elections Officers as necessary

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 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.

Key objectives

- Ensuring the robust, accurate and effective delivery of all aspects of the electoral function, with a particular emphasis on either the election or electoral registration aspects of the service according to the role appointed to
- Ensuring arrangements are in place for the proper conduct of elections for national and regional polls
- Ensuring arrangements are in place for the proper conduct of full-term elections and by-elections for Somerset Council and town and parish councils and for other polls and referenda
- Ensuring arrangements are in place for the proper conduct of BID Ballots
- Ensuring arrangements are in place for the registration of electors, both through the annual canvass and rolling registration, publication of the register, maintenance of the register and related matters

- Assisting the Head of Electoral Services in the management of the core service budget and the achievement of agreed savings/efficiency targets for the service
- Reviewing polling districts and polling places and generally reviewing poll arrangements, with a view to ensuring the exercise of the electoral franchise by as many electors as possible
- Taking steps to minimise electoral fraud
- Managing the electoral team in conjunction with the Head of Electoral Services and the other Senior Elections Officers
- Defining the practices and procedures for the electoral function and ensure they are commonly applied across the service
- Ensuring that lessons learnt are acted upon
- Ensuring that risk management processes are in place and effective
- Promoting public awareness of electoral matters with a view to increasing registration and participation to include engagement workshops with schools and other groups
- Develop project plans and strategies to engage with the under registered groups i.e., students and those with accessibility issues

Competencies and other requirements

We use the following criteria below to assess your suitability for the role; please refer to the recruitment & selection column to establish at which stage the criteria are assessed. Requirements assessed at the 'Application' stage represent the minimum essential requirement for shortlisting purposes.

Behaviours	Recruitment and selection
<p>Working together</p> <p>You understand and focus on customer satisfaction and work well with colleagues and partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You deliver exceptional customer service – you understand and are attentive to the needs of your customers.• You listen to the views of others and seek them out.• You support and show consideration for others.• You work well with colleagues and partners and acknowledge the different ideas, perspectives and backgrounds of others.• You are committed to the protection and safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults.• You share information and expertise with others.• You are honest, you respect, and you build relationships of trust.• You share your achievements and acknowledge the achievements of others.	
<p>Resourceful</p> <p>You apply expertise, solve problems and make improvements to deliver the best possible customer outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You plan and organise your work and manage your time effectively.• You gather relevant information, analyse it and make timely informed decisions in the course of your work.• You are flexible and adaptable.• You respond constructively to change.• You demonstrate financial awareness relevant to the job you do.• You use your initiative and are creative in problem solving.• You deliver results and demonstrate commitment to serving customers	
<p>Personal responsibility</p> <p>You take responsibility for your work, your environment and your development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are trustworthy and reliable.• You pay attention to your own health, safety and wellbeing and that of others.	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You acknowledge errors, report them as appropriate and play your part in addressing them. • You appropriately challenge unhelpful behaviour. • You seek feedback and review your own contribution. • You are open to change and improvement. • You take responsibility for your development. • You are enthusiastic about and take pride in your work. • You act as an ambassador for the Council to our customers 	
<p>Engaging leadership</p> <p>You create a healthy and engaging working environment by building trusting and supportive relationships, encouraging development, recognising achievement and tackling underperformance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You give clear direction, you delegate appropriately, and you provide a supportive environment in which team members can learn, grow and take responsibility. • You take opportunities to influence and contribute to strategic planning and development. • You help your team to understand how their work contributes to delivering the Customer Service Promise and what the Council is trying to achieve. • You create opportunities to interact personally with all members of your team, you actively encourage team members to share their views and concerns and you give feedback on the outcome. • You take time to understand the strengths of your team and you encourage and support their development. • You coach your team to fulfil their potential and recognise individual and team achievements. • You identify and effectively address your responsibilities for customers, people, finance, performance and change management 	

Knowledge, skills & experience	Recruitment and selection
Extensive up to date knowledge of electoral law and procedures	
Extensive and in-depth experience in both electoral registration and elections/other polls	
Extensive knowledge of processes and procedures used to promote electoral registration and engagement in the electoral process	
Detailed understanding of the risks associated with delivering major electoral events, the management of those risks and a sound understanding of the benefits of effective project management	
Extensive and in-depth experience of delivering electoral functions using electoral management software	
Well-developed knowledge and experience of financial management and fiscal controls	

Ability to effectively manage, motivate and develop staff, both within the core team and the temporary workforce employed from time to time, with relevant experience	
Ability to work to deadlines and under pressure	
Ability to apply the relevant law and guidance to practical situations and to provide advice and support to others	
Ability to make operational decisions based on own judgment, in accordance with relevant legislation, rules and procedures	
Attention to detail and ability to work to a very high level of accuracy	
Ability to deal with people at all levels, including in high pressured situations	

Other requirements	Recruitment and selection
Recognised qualification in electoral administration, working towards such qualification or sufficient experience that can be considered to be equivalent to holding a qualification	
Ability and willingness to work flexibly and to work additional hours at particular times of the year, including during the annual canvass and the period leading up to, during and immediately after any elections	
The normal duties of the role may involve travel on a regular or occasional basis. It is a condition of employment that the role holder can exercise satisfactory travel mobility in order to fulfil the obligations of the role. A full driving licence is essential together with access to a suitable vehicle	
This position is subject to a criminal records disclosure check	NO
This is a politically restricted position	YES - Sensitive