

Northumberland County Council
JOB DESCRIPTION

Post Title: Lawyer	Director/Service/Sector: Legal Services		Office Use
Band: 9	Workplace: County Hall		JE ref: 560
Responsible to: Principal Lawyer	Date: July 2010	Manager Level:	HRMS ref:
<p>Job Purpose: To provide a high quality legal service to the Council and its officers within identified subject areas.</p> <p>To undertake legal work to which s/he is recruited; within at least one of the following teams by advising and representing the Council and various related bodies in relation to :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Care e.g. work for Children' Services on any issue arising from the care of children and young persons. • Corporate & Governance e.g. a wide range of issues involving Property, Procurement, Employment and Common Land & village greens adult care, education, pensions, employment and other matters. • Governance e.g. all aspects of the ethical standards regime as it affects the County Council, Town and Parish Council. • Property, Environment & Procurement including highways and common land & village greens • Regulation e.g. a range of work in relation to housing, planning, licensing, trading standards and environmental health. 			

Resources Staff	A team of support staff and legal officers.
Finance	Handling cheques and invoices. Accounting for capital receipts and payments and associated legal and other costs in all property transactions as well as certain other contractual arrangements. Advising on procurement issues so that the Council obtains best value for money. Accounting for expenditure on external legal advice and costs awarded or incurred in court proceedings.
Physical	Ongoing responsibility for sensitive data stored in legal files, laptops and dictation equipment both in and out of the office. Careful use of PC, Digital dictation machines and ancillary office equipment.
Clients	Elected Members, Committees and sub-committees, working groups, departments (including officers of all levels) and related bodies.

Duties and key result areas:

1. Provides an expert legal service to the Council and its officers, in relation to the particular subject and specialist areas. Areas of work may be varied from time to time and the post holder may be called upon to support the work of Legal Services outside particular subject areas if the occasion demands.
2. Attends and advises Committees and Sub-Committees and other members and officers working groups.
3. To prepare evidence, witness statements, experts reports and draft Orders in highly complex proceedings
4. To conduct advocacy (often without notice) personally and through Counsel, at all levels of Court and tribunal.
5. The post holder will be required to give critical legal advice and assistance, support the democratic process and protect the integrity of the Council.
6. Supervises the work of a team of legal officers, delegating work appropriately, providing clear guidance and motivating staff to achieve service objectives and quality standards.
7. Responsible for co-ordination and completion of all property transactions of the Council, making and accounting for all outgoing payments and ensuring receipt and accounting for all capital receipts
8. Advising client departments on individual development and redevelopment projects/schemes from conception through to legal completion with subsequent monitoring for the full duration of the project.
9. Preparing complex legal orders and notices and responding to complex or detailed enquiries both verbally and in writing with minimal supervision.
10. The post holder is required to give strategic advice to senior colleagues and management both verbally and in writing.
11. Deals with a wide range of external sources, including members of the public, resolving non-routine or contentious issues with minimal supervision.
12. Contributes to the Legal Services section's continued achievement of quality standards including LEXCEL.
13. To actively promote the equalities and diversity agenda in the workplace and in service delivery.
14. To keep up to date with developments in particular subject areas of law, legal practice and local authority services and relevant changes in practice and procedure affecting the Council and to take responsibility for self development and meeting the Law Society's continuing professional development requirements.
15. The duties and responsibilities highlighted in this Job Description are indicative and may vary over time. Post holders are expected to undertake other duties and responsibilities relevant to the nature, level and scope of the post and the grade has been established on this basis.
16. The post is Politically Restricted within the meaning of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Work Arrangements

Transport requirements:	Regular travel to courts located both within and without Northumberland. Occasional need to travel to other service locations to provide legal advice. Attend training courses at various venues.
Working patterns:	37 hours per week, day work. Flexible working hours apply depending on workload. Evening work required to provide legal advice to planning and other committees. Regular weekend work (often without notice) may be necessary to meet the demands of the service this may include attending emergency hearings before Magistrates.
Working conditions:	Office based with requirement to travel in and out of the county and to visit people in their homes. Regular exposure to material and situations likely to cause distress such as photographs and taking statements from vulnerable or distressed witnesses. Regular potential exposure to highly disagreeable, unpleasant or hazardous situations when dealing with controversial or difficult situations such as removal of children or evictions. The post-holder will also be required to assess and address the risks to personal safety when dealing with certain situations.

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

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Essential	Desirable	Assess By
Knowledge and Qualifications		
Qualified Solicitor or Barrister or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives holding a current practicing certificate.	<p>Knowledge of local government law.</p> <p>Experience in one or more of the areas of law relevant to the team in which the post holder will be working.</p>	
Experience		
<p>Experience of giving advice on a very wide range of legal topics.</p> <p>Experience in using office and on-line applications on a personal computer, including legal reference texts.</p> <p>Experience of providing advice in a sensitive political environment.</p> <p>Experience of advocacy personally and through Counsel, at a wide range of Courts and tribunals.</p> <p>Experience of drafting complex legal documents, contracts and preparing case files for litigation.</p>	<p>Experience of giving advice on local government law.</p> <p>Experience using Microsoft Office and on-line facilities.</p>	
Skills and competencies		
<p>Ability to analyse complex issues and provide clear advice to ensure that the County Council complies with its legal obligations whilst enabling solutions to problems to be found.</p> <p>Knowledge of current legislation and common law as they affect local government.</p> <p>Ability to work with minimal supervision.</p> <p>Excellent interpersonal, communication, persuasive and negotiating skills.</p> <p>Excellent problem solving ability and project management skills to enable achievement of overall Service goals.</p>	<p>Wide knowledge of current English and EU legislation and common law as they affect local government.</p> <p>Ability to design, prepare and deliver training to officers and members of the Council.</p> <p>Ability to produce accurate and accessible reports for consideration and determination by senior management and elected members.</p>	

<p>Able to establish and maintain a high level of personal and professional credibility within the Service and with clients.</p> <p>Able to assist clients and witnesses particularly where required to give evidence at Court.</p> <p>A detailed awareness of the duties and responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer and the ethical framework applying to local government.</p> <p>Experience of working in an in-house local government Legal Service</p> <p>Politically aware</p> <p>Able and willing to adapt to new areas of work, takes the initiative and relishes the challenge of doing so and is able take on tasks/duties outside his/her field of expertise competently recognising when he/she lacks the requisite knowledge and requires professional support and supervision</p> <p>A highly skilled advocate</p> <p>Proven ability to manage a full and substantial and varied workload of complex matters with minimal supervision</p> <p>Awareness of the policies aims and objectives of the Council as a whole and Service Groups</p> <p>Highly skilled draftsman able to produce innovative drafting solutions to issues including in the co-ordination of a number of documents across complex projects</p> <p>Able to devise, prepare and deliver training</p>		
Physical, mental and emotional demands		
<p>Usually works in a seated position. Some standing, walking, stretching, lifting or driving.</p> <p>The role may require heavy lifting of case papers to and from court.</p> <p>Frequent use of a PC</p> <p>Ability to sustain prolonged periods of intense concentration, often for periods in excess of 3 hours when undertaking complex case work.</p>	<p>Ability to drive to various locations around the County.</p>	

<p>Ability to work under intense pressure from deadlines, regular interruptions and conflicting demands. Mental agility is also required as the postholder will be regularly required to meet demands across a varied range of activities.</p> <p>Dealing with persons who lack capacity, child abuse cases, the homeless and other similar cases can result in regular intense emotional demands.</p> <p>The role may involve frequent contact with a wide range of individuals who through their circumstances or behaviour place intense emotional demands on the post-holder or expose them to unpleasant or hazardous conditions. The post-holder must be able to demonstrate that they are able to act in a balanced and professional manner.</p> <p>The role requires the ability to deal with highly emotive and charged situations especially in emergency situations and have an awareness of the desired outcome which can have serious consequences for vulnerable people.</p>		
Motivation		
<p>Willing to be flexible and adopt new ways of working to manage a varied workload.</p> <p>Able to take own initiative to be proactive and work independently to ensure tasks are completed on time and to the required standard.</p> <p>Adapts to change by adopting a flexible and cooperative attitude.</p>		
Other		
<p>Ability to meet the transport requirements of the post.</p>		