

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Democratic Services Officer		
Directorate	Democratic & Governance Services		
Reporting to	Democratic Services Manager		
Grade	12		
Evaluation ref:	AU0123	Job ref:	Family
Role Purpose			
<p>The Democratic Services Officer will play a crucial role in supporting the governance and democratic functions of Somerset Council. Reporting to the Head of Democratic & Governance, the postholder will be responsible for arranging and administering various member, officer, and partnership meetings, including high-profile and sensitive meetings. Their duties will include planning forward work programmes, drafting and agreeing agendas, circulating papers, attending meetings, providing procedural advice, and drafting minutes. Additionally, they will support officer decision-making processes, maintain filing, and record systems, and provide administrative support to elected members. They will also involve administering school admission appeal hearings, supporting the Head of Service and Service Managers, and maintaining the Elected Members SharePoint site. They will ensure the smooth operation of the council's democratic processes, uphold equality and diversity policies, and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the council's governance framework.</p>			
Accountabilities			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange and administer member, officer, and partnership meetings, including high-profile and sensitive meetings. • Plan forward work programmes in consultation with members and officers. • Draft and agree agendas, collate agenda items, and circulate papers and reports. • Attend meetings, provide procedural advice, and draft minutes. • Support officer decision-making processes by collecting information, coordinating processes, and drafting reports. • Provide cover for absent colleagues in the administration of member bodies and other meetings. • Organise and plan meetings, events, and the council meetings calendar. • Deal with enquiries from the public and council members, providing advice and information on democratic functions. • Maintain and update filing and record systems in both paper and electronic formats. • Provide advice and support services to members and officers on democratic arrangements and procedural requirements. • Administer school admission appeal panel hearings and other types of appeal hearings. 			

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Provide support to the Head of Service and Service Managers, including diary management and correspondence.
- Maintain the Elected Members SharePoint site and a master diary of meetings, briefings, training, and events.
- Support the administration of the Members' and Officers' Registers of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality.

Knowledge / Experience / Skills

	Essential	Desirable
Knowledge		
Understanding of democratic structures and processes.	x	
Familiarity with IT systems and software used in governance.	x	
Knowledge of the legal background to democratic structures and processes.		x
Awareness of current social and political issues affecting the public sector.		x
Knowledge of training and development techniques.		x
Understanding of the politically sensitive environment in which members and officers operate.		x
Experience		
Experience in arranging and administering meetings.	x	
Experience in preparing reports and documents.	x	
Experience in providing procedural advice and support.	x	
Experience in working with elected members.		x
Experience in a local authority or public sector environment.		x
Experience in corporate and partnership working.		x
Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications		
Relevant secondary level education qualifications such as 5 GCSEs including English and Mathematics.	x	

JOB DESCRIPTION

Relevant higher-level qualifications such as A Levels or a degree.		x
Continuing managerial and professional development.		x
Professional or management qualification.		x
Training in governance or democratic services.		x
Certification in IT skills relevant to the role.		x
Skills		
Strong organisational and planning skills.	x	
Excellent written and verbal communication skills.	x	
Ability to provide clear and concise procedural advice.	x	
Proficiency in using IT systems and software.	x	
Ability to conduct research and analyse information.	x	
Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to work with a range of stakeholders.	x	
Working Conditions		
<p>This role involves working within a dynamic and supportive local authority environment. Candidates should be prepared for the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Hours: Standard working hours are 37, with occasional requirements for evening or weekend work to meet project deadlines or attend community events. • Location: The primary work location is County Hall, with opportunities for remote work as per organisational policies. • Travel: Some travel within the local area may be required for meetings, site visits, and community engagement activities. • Work Environment: The role involves working both independently and as part of a team, with access to modern office facilities and resources. • Health and Safety: Adherence to all health and safety regulations is mandatory, ensuring a safe working environment for all employees. 		
Dimensions of the role		
<p>Contacts & Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 		

JOB DESCRIPTION

- 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 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 more than 350 formal member level 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 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.

Working Arrangements

Somerset Council's Dynamic Working Strategy will be applied to this position.

Corporate Accountabilities

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.

Date: April 2025