

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Assistant Lawyer
Grade: 10
Business Unit or Division: Legal Services
Department: Finance and Governance

Purpose of the job

1. Responsible for the delivery of highest quality outcomes and effective legal advice to clients – including the Cabinet, Committees, other council bodies and elected Members
2. To ensure the legal services provided are cost effective and meet the principles of good governance in decision making.
3. Support the development and delivery of relevant strategies, policies and departmental projects that secure the achievement of key council and service objectives.

Principal accountabilities

4. To deliver a high quality, sustainable legal service that complies with the statutory framework and meets the council's statutory and contractual obligations.
5. To support the working practices and procedures for the services provided.
6. To work with Senior Lawyers and Lawyers to ensure a consistent and holistic approach to the delivery of services.
7. To be responsible for a caseload of legal cases and ensure work is conducted in accordance with professional standards, the Office procedure manual and other established processes.
8. To draft documents and prepare pleadings for courts and tribunals.
9. Presentation of cases before courts and tribunals or Public Inquiries where the post holder has a right of audience on all matters relating to the work of the council and its departments.
10. Prepare and process all legal documents, including agreements, deeds, notices, orders, consents, byelaws relevant to the work of the council.
11. To be responsible for the preparation of cases to Courts, Tribunals etc.
12. To carry out the initial review of cases for Lawyers and assist in investigation, research and case reviews when required.
13. To undertake the review of files under the guidance of the Senior Lawyer, organise meetings and take notes of meetings.
14. To support and advise at meetings, working parties and officer groups as required.

15. To maintain good governance in managing own caseload of less complex work under minimal supervision.
16. Co-ordinate research upon legal questions arising from the work of team including, where necessary, briefing Lawyers and/or Counsel.
17. Assist on negotiating and concluding contractual arrangements with Solicitors, Barristers, Valuers and Land Agents, and external agencies.
18. To ensure continuous improvements within the area of expertise, and that the service is responsive to the changing environment.
19. To maintain the improvement in equal opportunities in employment and service delivery.
20. To undertake other duties commensurate with the general level of responsibility of the post.

Job context

21. The vision for Legal Services is:
“To be the council’s first choice provider of legal services, offering a sustainable, high-quality, responsive & efficient value for money service to the council and to the communities of Southwark.”
22. All solicitors are regulated by the principles and code of conduct governed by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. The principles and outcomes are mandatory and apply to all aspects of practice.

Contacts

23. Occasionally attending and advising at meetings of the Committees and Sub-Committee on behalf of the council.
24. The post holder supports the effective client liaison across Legal Services.
25. Service managers and front line staff across the Council.

Financial and Self Management

26. To keep up to date records of chargeable hours targets for the area of service.
27. To record the number of chargeable hours required for the post.
28. To maintain files in accordance with Lexcel requirements and the Office Procedure Manual.
29. To comply with the Law Society and Solicitors Regulatory Rules.
30. To undertake the post in accordance with the ‘Key Competencies for Lawyers in Southwark Legal Services’.

Staff Management

31. The post reports to the Senior Lawyer.
32. Occasionally provide support and guidance to Legal Assistants/Assistant Lawyers and Legal Team Clerks.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

KNOWLEDGE, INCLUDING EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:	Essential (E) or Desirable (D)	How assessed (S/ I/ T)
Education:		
1. An admitted Solicitor of England and Wales, with a current practising certificate or eligible to apply for a practising certificate or a Barrister called to the bar of England and Wales or a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives with a current practising certificate or eligible to apply for a practising certificate or a qualified lawyer possessing an equivalent qualification gained in another jurisdiction.	E	S
2. Evidence of continuing professional development.	E	I
Knowledge:		
3. A thorough practical understanding of local government law and the impact of human rights and equalities legislation.	E	I
4. Knowledge of the law in relation to one or more of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration, property and planning • Litigation related law and strategic advice (including housing, licensing, prosecutions, property, commercial and debt recovery) • The Law in relation to vulnerable children and adults, including mental health, child protection and families with no recourse to public funds • Corporate Law, including, Local Government Law, Data Protection and Freedom of Information, Governance and Constitutional issues, education advice and policy, employment advice and policy and contracts and procurement. 	E	I and T
5. Knowledge of the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act as it applies to local government.	D	I
6. Knowledge of local government and its services.	E	I
KEY:	D Desirable	I Evaluated at interview
E Essential	S Short listing criteria	T Subject to test

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|------------------------|---|---|---------|
| 7. | Understanding in good governance arrangements, to maintain democratic legitimacy of the council's work to support effective decision making. | E | I |
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Experience: | | | |
| 8. | At least 2 years experience of working in the field of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration, property and planning • Litigation related law and strategic advice (including housing, licensing, prosecutions, property, commercial and debt recovery) • The Law in relation to vulnerable children and adults, including mental health, child protection and families with no recourse to public funds • Corporate Law, including, Local Government Law, Data Protection and Freedom of Information, Governance and Constitutional issues, education advice and policy, employment advice and policy and contracts and procurement. | E | S and I |
| 9. | Experience of undertaking advocacy in the courts and Tribunals. | D | I |
| 10. | Experience of working in a legal service or law practice office environment. | E | S and I |
| 11. | Experience of managing own caseload without supervision. | E | I |
| 12. | Success in building and sustaining effective relationships with stakeholders. | E | S and I |
| 13. | Experience of case managements system. | D | I |
| 14. | Experience of working within a performance management framework and achieving agreed targets and outcomes | E | I |

Aptitudes, Skills & Competencies:

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| 15. | To debate legal points in a logical, pragmatic and impartial way. | E | I |
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KEY:

E Essential	D Desirable	I Evaluated at interview
	S Short listing criteria	T Subject to test

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| 16. Ability to use a range of information and communication technology effectively | D | I |
| 17. Ability to communicate clearly, orally and in writing, including the ability to produce non-standard reports/letters. | E | S, I and T |
| 18. Ability to use initiative to achieve set deadlines and manage conflicting priorities. | E | I |
| 19. Ability to maintain a high degree of confidentiality and to use discretion in dealing with sensitive information. | E | I |
| 20. Ability to deal with clients professionally and diplomatically | E | I |
| 21. Ability to analyse complex information and provide successful resolution. | E | I and T |
| “Can do” positive attitude | | |
| 22. Demonstrates a commitment to changing work practices and processes, and a willingness to try new ways of working or thinking. | E | I |
| Takes responsibility and delivers results | | |
| 23. Adapts to changing demands to ensure that objectives are met, overcoming problems and making well considered decisions. | E | I |
| Team working | | |
| 24. Acts as a role model to others in the team, sharing knowledge and experience when necessary, whilst respecting and valuing the contribution other team members’ experiences can bring. | E | I |
| Communication | | |
| 25. Demonstrates well developed written and verbal communication skills and the confidence to present reports and verbal accounts credibly to a variety of different audiences. | E | I and T |
| Customer Care | | |
| 26. Develops contacts and relationships with customer/client groups, regularly reviewing service delivery and taking responsibility to ensure quality service provision. | E | S and I |

KEY: **D** Desirable **I** Evaluated at interview
E Essential **S** Short listing criteria **T** Subject to test

Special Conditions of Recruitment:

- 27. Must be willing to work outside office hours during the week and at weekends, as dictated by the requirements of the service. E
- 28. As part of the selection process candidates will be required to undertake assessment tests designed to demonstrate their competencies in key areas detailed above. E
- 29. This post is politically restricted under the terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

KEY:
E Essential D Desirable I Evaluated at interview
S Short listing criteria T Subject to test