

Job description

Head of Legal – Planning, Property and Contracts

- Grade: PO11
- Reports to: Deputy Director of Law and Governance
- Direct reports: Up to 7 Reports
- Your team: Legal Services
- Service area: Resources
- Directorate: Law and Governance

Special requirements of the post

Workstyle: Desk-based worker (Lower presence, one day a week minimum)

- Colleagues who are not usually client or customer-facing and can mostly work anywhere with the right technology. Regular on-site activities are required such as team events and collaboration that are more productive face to face

This is a safety critical post and will be subject to the council's drug and alcohol policy

This post is subject to the council's declaration of interest procedure

This post is designated as politically restricted

Our mission

Islington is a place rich with diversity and culture. As a council our sense of purpose couldn't be clearer: we serve. It's in the logo. We are committed to challenging inequality in the borough and as one of the largest employers we know that to look after the place and the planet, we have to look after our people. **Together we can change the future.**

To do this, everyone who works at Islington Council lives by a set of values which guide us in everything that we do: collaborative, ambitious, resourceful, and empowering. They spell out 'CARE', which is what we think public service is all about.

Overview of the role

The **Head of Legal – Planning, Property and Contracts** leads legal services related to planning law, property transactions, and contractual matters, typically within a local government or public sector context. You will be responsible for advising senior stakeholders, ensuring compliance with legal frameworks, and guiding strategic development projects. The responsibilities include managing legal teams, overseeing complex planning applications, negotiating development and property agreements, and aligning legal advice with corporate goals. You will also be required staying ahead of legislative changes, creating a high-performance culture, and promoting equality and inclusion in legal services delivery.

Key responsibilities

- Lead the delivery of all services within the area of responsibility of the post and manage, influence and direct employees and budgets allocated for that purpose, in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures and performance management framework to achieve service and corporate objectives.
- Manage and monitor all aspects of the Planning, Property and Contracts Team's performance against agreed targets, ensuring the achievement of appropriate standards. Report to the Deputy Director as required on levels of performance and action plans for improvement.
- Ensure provision of appropriate, intelligent, relevant and timely advice, guidance and information to senior officers and elected members, in accordance with designated service responsibilities.
- Contribute to the review of the Council's Constitution to assist with keeping it up to date to reflect changes in the law and best practice and ensure the provision of high-quality advice on constitutional matters.
- To support the Monitoring Officer and Deputy in all governance matters to ensure the efficient and effective administration of Council meetings and the Council's decision-making processes and ensure that elected members are appropriately supported in fulfilling their responsibilities.
- Work collaboratively with client departments ensuring that client liaison meetings are carried out regularly and any service delivery issues are dealt with in a timely manner. Evaluate information from client departments, forward plans, and legislative changes to design service delivery appropriately.
- Contribute to budget and target setting, ensure effective financial performance in the areas of responsibility within the remit of the role and support the effective financial management of the Council.

- Actively consider and implement new and innovative ways of delivering services that provide high quality and good value for money, support and contribute to delivery of the Council's wider corporate plan.
- Provide positive leadership to the Legal Services Management Team, leading by example, acting with the highest levels of integrity and instilling a clear sense of purpose, priority and direction whilst motivating, empowering and training employees to optimise their skills and performance.
- Deputise for the Monitoring Officer as Deputy Monitoring officer as required, including dealing with member code of conduct and standards issues.
- To act as an advocate on behalf of the Council where appropriate, in relevant Courts, tribunals and inquiries and instruct Counsel to represent the Council as necessary.
- To scrutinise, comment on and prepare legal implications for reports to the Council and its committees and sub committees.
- To attend relevant committees, sub committees and other meetings to provide legal advice as required as the Director of Law and Governance' representative.
- To work in a corporate, collaborative and co-operative way both within Resources and with Senior Council Managers and Members.
- To carry out duties elsewhere in Law and Governance commensurate with the grading of the post as may be directed.

Budget responsibilities

Responsible for adhering to the need for compliance remaining within the allocated budget

Compliance

Ensure adherence to legal, regulatory, and policy requirements under GDPR, Health and Safety, Employee Code of Conduct and in your area of expertise by identifying opportunities and risks, and escalating issues as necessary.

Person specification

Your application form needs to demonstrate how you fulfil the role's requirements. It is essential to address the criteria, as this will be used to evaluate your suitability for the position.

Essential and desirable criteria

Essential: the basic requirements that must be met for someone to be considered for a particular job. These criteria are mandatory and cannot be negotiated. Essential criteria directly impact the core qualifications or skills necessary to perform the job effectively.

Desirable: the additional qualities, skills, or qualifications that would be advantageous for a candidate to possess but are not mandatory. Not meeting them does not automatically disqualify someone from consideration for the job. This also allows candidates who do not possess certain desirable criteria the opportunity to explain how their other knowledge, experience and skills relate to these and what they may be in the process of doing or willing to do to achieve these.

Knowledge, experience, and skills

Point	Criteria description	Essential/desirable
1	A qualified solicitor or barrister and member of a specified legal body, and substantial post qualification experience at senior level in local government or other similar public sector organisation.	Essential
2	A substantial track record of success at managing high performing multi-disciplinary legal teams using performance measures to create a performance culture that drives improvement, including implementing new strategies, systems, policies and procedure.	Essential
3	Significant experience of undertaking and advising on complex cases and dealing with proceedings in courts, tribunals, or mediation in at least one of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commercial and/or residential property• Regeneration• Planning• Contracts	Desirable
4	Knowledge of dealing with governance and constitutional issues	Desirable
5	Budget management experience, which demonstrates competency in setting priorities and managing within allocated budgets.	Desirable

Point	Criteria description	Essential/desirable
6	Proven success in building, and sustaining effective relationships with senior officers, Members, External Partners and Stakeholders.	Essential
7	Drafting complex legal documents including, pleadings, consent orders and detailed instructions to counsel.	Essential
8	Excellent written, oral and presentational skills with the ability to present point of view in a confident, articulate and persuasive manner at a senior level	Essential
9	Ability to analyse complex information, solve difficult problems and present solutions	Essential
10	Ability to assist the Deputy Director of Legal Services with the development and implementation of procedures, practices and systems for the provision of an effective Legal Services service and to comply with good practice management standards	Desirable
11	Ability to promote good governance by seeking opportunities for governance improvements	Desirable
12	Ability to identify and promote new and innovative opportunities to develop the Legal service for the future including alternative methods of income generation.	Desirable
13	Ability to advise in a political setting using tact and diplomacy as required	Desirable
14	This post is subject to the council's policy on pecuniary and personal interest	Essential
15	This post is designated as politically restricted	Essential
16	This post may require working out of hours, including attendance at Council committee meetings in the evenings.	Essential

Our accreditations



Our accreditations include Disability Confident Leader, The Mayor's Good Work Standard, London Living Wage Employer, Stonewall Diversity Champion, and Employer with Heart.