

Job Description

This form is used to provide a complete description of the specific job (or role) and defines the skills, knowledge and abilities required to undertake the job.

Job Title:	Head of Governance, Legal and Communications		
Job Family:	Governance	Salary Grade:	8
Service:	Democratic & Corporate		
Political Restriction:	Politically Restricted		
Primary work location(s):	Isles of Scilly - Hybrid		
Working hours:	37	Standby duties:	Yes
Working pattern	As required		
Managed by:	Chief Executive		
Line manager for:	• Officer: Policy & Scrutiny • Officer: Corporate Services and Communications • Officer: Superintendent Registrar • Officer: Elections & Corporate Services • Officer: Democratic Services & Member Liaison • Assistant: Democratic and Corporate		
Financial accountability	Yes – departmental budget holder		
Date last reviewed:	07/01/2026		
Approved by (Director):			

Role Purpose:
Head of Governance, Legal and Communications will provide support in the delivery and strategic development of the Council of the Isles of Scilly's corporate performance and governance arrangements to deliver the Council's democratic, corporate and legal functions. Provide constructive challenge to the Senior Leadership Team and Members to support business improvement through the development and implementation of a corporate plan, ensuring that effective controls are in place to monitor the performance of the Authority against that plan. Plan, direct, organise and administer the operations and staffing of the Councils Corporate scrutiny and performance (and governance) team. To undertake and oversee all duties, including statutory returns and any inspection requirements for registration services for the Council. This is a front-line role, with a high degree of contact and influence with external and internal stakeholders. Relationships will need to be built in order to enhance the reputation of the Council.

Actions/recommendations will directly affect the achievement of operational targets and objectives and have a potential financial and reputational risk to the Council.

Accountabilities:

Key areas of responsibility for the role include:

HEAD OF LEGAL

- Strategic Legal Advice: To triage all legal advice requests from the Council and either directly provide legal advice to elected members, the Chief Executive, and senior officers on complex issues across areas like property, litigation, planning, employment, and child protection law or provide a professional brief for external legal support and commission the advice.
- Ensuring the Council complies with statutory requirements and to work with the Chief Executive to ensure timely, governance, internal audit and anti-fraud advice is given to Members and Officers as appropriate.
- Governance & Compliance: Ensure the council complies with statutory duties, regulations, and internal policies.
- Support the Monitoring Officer with the development of policy and procedure to ensure the effective and timely governance of the Authority.

COMMUNICATIONS, COMPLAINTS AND PRESS

- Corporate communications (internal and external)
- Develop, deliver and manage corporate communications, including press, PR, consultation, engagement and digital activity;
- Manage, maintain and develop the Council's website and social media accounts;
- Manage the Council's Corporate complaints and Freedom of Information request management
- Dealing with high level casework within a challenging and fluid environment where precedents are limited. To work closely alongside the Council's Chief Executive and senior leadership team escalating issues/matters of risk, or where no case precedent exists.
- Represent the Council at a high level, including to:
 - National and local media
 - Members of the community
 - Local politicians
 - Staff across the local authority
 - Senior executives of partner organisations
- Clearly communicate with internal and external stakeholders, including complex or unpopular decisions in accordance with Council communication lines based on credible and defensible rationale.

GOVERNANCE

- Corporate Governance including the provision of a register of all Constitutional documents and Council Policies that is maintained and monitored ensuring all documents are reviewed and kept up to date
- Corporate plan development and monitoring
- Ensure Business continuity is in place across the Council

- Production of high quality, timely briefing and reports for committees, Senior Leadership Team and Councillors, assimilating intelligence and data from a range of sources to produce clear, concise information with clear recommendations where appropriate.
- Ensure committee reports are of a consistent and sufficient standard in relation to accuracy, style, intelligibility and evidence and are referred to appropriate and relevant officers for final sign off
- Ensure consistent and regularly updated departmental service plans are in place and reported annually to members
- Member support including supporting Committee meetings and reporting
- Act as the corporate client for IT services delivered by Cornwall Council under the collaboration agreement
- Assimilating and analysing information/intelligence from a range of sources. This may involve seeking advice from internal/external specialists and the presentation of a reasoned case to the Chief Executive and senior leadership team.
- The post holder will be required to attend committee and meetings as required during normal and outside operating hours.

COUNCIL POLICY

- Provide expert knowledge/intelligence to inform the development of Council level policies and procedures, management briefings and policy development.
- Ensure that the Council has a register of all policies and monitor that register to ensure that all policies are reviewed regularly and kept up to date and relevant

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

- The post holder will be the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner.
- Information governance including the maintenance of the authority's information asset register.
- Support the Data Protection Officer in securing an effective and compliant data management that meets the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act
- Manage submissions to the Information Commissioner's Office and Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office in collaboration with the Data Protection Officer.
- Ensure the proper handling of subject access requests in consultation with the Data Protection Officer.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- Set and reinforce clear standards for managing performance.
- Non-financial performance management & Risk Management
- Ensure that reports and performance information including financial information is presented to Senior Leadership Team.

LEADERSHIP AND DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT

- Lead and Manage the Corporate and Democratic Service, including Registration, Elections.
- Engender effective relationships within the team in order to maximise individual contributions towards the effective delivery of business functions, through the provision of clear directions, mentoring, supporting and motivating staff.

- Monitoring of the budget allocated to the democratic and corporate service area, including the management of external contracts/service level agreements.
- Recommendations and, within agreed delegated authorities, decisions are required which are not bound by formal procedures and may include those relating to project performance and risk management.
- Responsible for decision making on a broad variety of matters, ensuring that in making decisions a range of options are explored and that risks and resource implications are taken full account of. Providing evidence to back up decisions.
- Balancing of competing priorities arising from the delivery of a diverse and sensitive work area. This will include:
 - The resolution of project specific issues which enable the service to meet its performance objectives.
 - Identifying and mitigating risk at project or portfolio level arising from performance, compliance, finance or capacity.
 - Identifying the appropriate mechanism to translate the corporate communication strategy, committee processes, performance management and information governance across the Authority.
 - To monitor and handle in the most appropriate manner corporate and other complaints, and to task the Senior Leadership Team, Senior Officers, and other Officers with the resolution of complaints.
- Commissioning support to ensure services and functions are maintained during periods of staff absence or to manage change.
- Work extended hours during periods of high demand, particularly during elections.
- Seeking out creative and practical options to resolve issues, within the regulatory constraints of public service and brokering solutions to cross unit working, to ensure balance of workloads.

This role requires a high degree of autonomy and accountability.

Working Conditions

The working conditions relate to those non-contractual elements of the job that may impact on the holder of the position, as well as those workplace-based responsibilities that are part of this job. These are not contractual but provide a guide to the working conditions and the potential hazards and risks that may be faced.

Health & Safety at Work	
To take responsibility for your own health, safety and wellbeing, and undertake health and safety duties and responsibilities for your role as specified within the Council's Health and Safety Policy, and all other relevant health and safety policies, arrangements, procedures, systems of work as specified for the post/ role.	

Potential Hazards & Risks	
The potential significant hazard(s) and risk(s) for this job are identified below (those ticked). The purpose of recording this information on the job description is so that the health status of the potential and actual post-holders can be assessed with regard to the significant hazards and risks. These hazards and risks should be based on the appropriate activity, process and/or operation risk assessment whereby all of the significant risks are identified, recorded and appropriately controlled. The list below is therefore not an exhaustive list because it is the risk assessment that details all significant risks that could arise out of or in connection with the work activity, but any others will be identified in the 'other' section.	
☒ Significant use of computers (display screen equipment)	☐ Driving HGV or LGV for work
☐ Regular manual handling (which includes assisting, manoeuvring, pushing and pulling) of people or objects	☐ Any other frequent driving or prolonged driving at work activities (e.g. driving own private vehicle or CIOS vehicle)
☐ Working at height/ using ladders on a regular/ repetitive basis	☒ Restricted postural change – prolonged sitting
☐ Lone working on a regular basis	☐ Restricted postural change – prolonged standing
☐ Night work	☐ Regular/ repetitive bending / squatting / kneeling / crouching
☐ Rotating shift work	☐ Working on/ or near a road
☐ Manual cleaning/ domestic duties	☐ Regular work outdoors
☐ Undertaking repetitive tasks	☐ Continual telephone use
☐ Work with children or vulnerable adults	☐ Provision of personal care on a regular basis
☐ Working with challenging behaviours	☐ Potential exposure to blood or bodily fluids
☐ Work involving food handling	☐ Face-to-face contact with the general public
☐ Regular work with skin irritants/ allergens	☐ Regular work with respiratory irritants/ allergens (exposure to dust, fumes, chemicals, fibres)
☐ Work requiring respirators or masks	☐ Work requiring hearing protection (exposure to high noise levels)
☐ Work with waste, refuse	☐ Work with vibrating tools/ machinery
☐ Other (please specify):	

Person Specification

The person specification provides a list of essential and desirable criteria (skills and competencies) that a candidate should have in order to perform the job. Each of the criteria listed below will be measured through; the application form (A), a test / exercise (T), an interview (I), a presentation (P) or documentation (D).

Knowledge, skills and experience	Essential /desirable	Assessment Method
Degree level or equivalent experience.	Essential	A/D
A strong legal background with significant local authority legal and governance experience	Essential	A/I/P/D
Proven track record in providing legal services within a public sector setting.	Essential	A
Ability to navigate sensitive political environments and advise on governance.	Essential	A/T/I
Strong negotiation, influencing, and interpersonal skills.	Essential	A/I
Proven experience in the development and implementation of a corporate strategy.	Essential	A/T/I/P
Capable of shaping legal strategy aligned with corporate objectives.	Essential	A/I/P
Upholds the Nolan Principles of public life: integrity, accountability, openness, and leadership.	Essential	I
Proven success in managing external client/partner relationships and negotiating projects and strategies to successful conclusion.	Essential	A/T/P
Excellent verbal and written communications skills.	Essential	A/I/P
Experience of policy review and development.	Essential	A/I
A good understanding and experience of applying data protection principles.	Essential	A/T/I/P
Experience in dealing with commercially, personally and politically sensitive information.	Essential	A/I/P
Qualified solicitor with local Government experience	Desired	A/D
A broad understanding of elections, registration and local government law with experience of managing an election.	Desired	A/I
A broad understanding of local government finances.	Desired	T/I/P
Experience at a management level within a democratic services team.	Desired	A

An understanding of scrutiny processes and developing an effective scrutiny work programme.	Desired	I
Experience of report approvals, assessment of evidence and quality control	Desired	A/I

Behaviours/values	Essential /desirable	Assessment Method
Community First - Prioritises the needs and well-being of our residents, visitors and island-based businesses in every decision. - Adapts to challenges and remain committed to serving our community in changing circumstances. - Works to ensure a resilient Council and services for our community - Makes decisions that protect and enhance the environment for future generations.	Essential	I/P
Collaboration - Works together across teams and with the community to achieve shared goals - Supports all team members Recognises that working together benefits the CIOS as a whole	Essential	I/P
Respect and Kindness - Treats everyone with dignity, empathy, and compassion – including colleagues, service users and others - Listens actively and value diverse perspectives, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued, - Communicates with courtesy and understanding, even when opinions differ. - Supports each other's well-being, to achieve a positive and caring environment.	Essential	I/P
Integrity - Exhibits and role model professional and personal integrity at all times - Does the 'right' thing, and does not shy away from tasks because they are difficult - Acts in an ethical way through your actions, words, decisions and outcomes - Trustworthy - Has the ability to make reasoned choices with the information available in a non-judgmental manner	Essential	I/P

Other requirements	Essential /desirable	Assessment Method
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Ability to attend committee and meetings as required during normal and outside operating hours.	Essential	I