

Context statement

To accompany job description and person specification when required

Job title: Lead Project Officer

Generic job description: ES 603 (Senior Technical Officer – Level 4), Dorset Council Grade 12.

Directorate/Service/Team: This role is within the Development Management and Enforcement Service, part of the Planning service within the Place directorate.

Organisation structure

Reporting to: Development Management Area Manager or Service Manager for Development Management and Enforcement

Responsibility for:

The Lead Project Officer will be responsible for managing the most significant major and complex planning applications and planning appeals, adding value to development proposals and maximising benefits for local communities. One of the roles will focus specifically on corporate projects, whilst the other three roles will each focus on the most significant development proposals in one of the Council's three planning committee areas. The Lead Project Officer role will be amongst the most senior roles within the Development Management service, and the post holder will be expected to lead on complex areas of work, to advise and mentor other members of staff, and to work with a minimum of supervision.

The post holder will be required to act proactively to bring forward suitable development for consideration through the planning process through developing working relationships with internal and external partners in the planning process. This will include working with developers, communities, internal colleagues such as planning policy and highways teams, and external bodies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency to bring forward appropriate new development. The role will include providing day to day leadership and provision of supervision and support to other staff, to achieve positive planning outcomes for Dorset.

The Lead Project Officer will work with the Area Manager and Service Manager to maximise opportunities for income generation, including through agreeing and delivering on Planning Performance Agreements.

The post holder will manage a caseload of planning applications and appeals, particularly major applications and those of a complex or contentious nature, including provision of pre-application advice, negotiating any necessary planning obligations and dealing with any subsequent amendments associated with applications for planning and other proposals.

The role will include developing and maintaining approaches to community engagement at all stages in the planning process, and presenting applications to Town and Parish Councils when necessary. The post will also need to identify issues to be addressed via Section 106 Agreements, and to negotiate for social and physical infrastructure contributions, including providing instructions to the Council's legal officers.

The post holder will act as the main point of contact to provide expert advice and guidance on the most significant development proposals for the Council's elected members and officers and statutory consultees. The role includes making decisions under delegated powers, in accordance with the agreed process and the Council's scheme of delegation.



A key requirement of the role will be to ensure reports and recommendations on planning proposals are prepared in a timely manner, to agreed deadlines, for consideration by committee or sign off by senior officers in accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation. The role will include presenting applications to the relevant planning committee and representing the Council at Hearings and Public Inquiries.

The post holder will also work in conjunction with the Council's enforcement officers on enforcement matters, including liaison with Legal and other departments and external bodies, working with senior managers where necessary.

The post has no formal line management responsibilities though they will be expected to: lead on projects or particular areas of work; supervise contractors; and provide support and supervision to other staff. The post holder may also be expected to allocate work and sign off reports under the Council's scheme of delegation.

Context of work

The Lead Project Officer will make a positive and professional contribution to the provision of a comprehensive and efficient planning service. The post will lead on a varied caseload of the most significant and complex applications, and will have a key role in ensuring that the Council achieves positive planning outcomes. Your expert knowledge and experience of the planning system, and relevant policies and principles, will enable you to play an essential part in securing appropriate development for Dorset.

Dorset Council is a recently established unitary authority. It is anticipated that the Council will deal with around 5,000 planning applications each year, and the planning service offers a varied and fast-paced working environment. Planning applications are determined in the context of current adopted local plans prepared by the predecessor district councils and the Council has an ambitious programme for the preparation of the first Dorset Council-wide plan. There are also a significant number of neighbourhood plans, both completed and in preparation.

The Dorset Council area has an outstanding natural and historic environment, with national and international designations including internationally protected heathland habitats, two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the 'Jurassic Coast' World Heritage Site. Within this challenging context we also need to plan for the future of the local economy, and for meeting significant housing demand. This post offers the opportunity to be involved in a wide range of interesting and challenging planning issues.

Travel requirement

This position has a significant travel requirement. This means that there is a requirement for a vehicle (or transport deemed to be suitable by the council) to be available on most working days in order to carry out normal duties. Employees in positions with a significant travel requirement are required to provide a replacement vehicle if their usual vehicle is not available over an extended period. Travel expenses will be paid at the Council's standard rate.

Other information

Applicants must be a Chartered Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute or equivalent.

Applicants must have extensive knowledge and experience in development management, or extensive experience in another planning role and considerable knowledge of development management processes, with demonstrably transferable skills. A commitment to undertaking continuous professional development in order to keep up with changes in national policy and case law is essential.

Applicants must have good knowledge and understanding of the relevant planning law and policies, have excellent written and oral communication skills, and good negotiation and time management skills.

Applicants will need to be capable of managing a significant caseload of complex applications whilst meeting deadlines and securing positive planning outcomes. Specialist technical knowledge in one or more of the following areas will be an advantage: development viability; urban design; landscape; and / or habitats regulations.

The post holder must have good presentation skills and will be expected to present reports to planning committees and, when necessary, to present evidence at appeals, inquiries and related legal proceedings and represent the Council at meetings with Town and Parish Councils, local liaison committees and similar fora.

It is essential that the post holder has the ability to converse at ease with customers and provide advice in accurate spoken English.

Context statement prepared by:			
Manager	Anna Lee	Date	12 March 2020