

Job description

Job title: Executive Director
Grade: Chief Officer

Purpose and impact

1. Partner with the Chief Executive, Senior Leadership Team, and Elected Members to set a clear vision and strategic direction for Dorset Council. Ensure the organisation is equipped with robust resources and capabilities to deliver on corporate priorities and achieve long-term objectives.
2. Hold and discharge the statutory duties detailed within the context statement, ensuring full compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements while safeguarding the Council's reputation and integrity.
3. Be a leader of strategic change, shaping and evolving the organisation to meet future challenges. Translate the Council's vision into actionable strategies that drive innovation, efficiency, and sustainable growth.
4. Provide strong, collaborative leadership across the directorate and the wider Council. Champion diversity and inclusion, foster high levels of effective employee engagement, and develop future talent to build a resilient and high-performing workforce.
5. Provide clear portfolio accountability with matrix leadership and participatory governance, working through strategic boards and shared leadership arrangements to shape, oversee and deliver outcomes that cut across multiple services and directorates. The council operates a system wide leadership model in which complex, cross cutting priorities, such as housing, climate and nature recovery, community partnerships, economic development, and organisational transformation, are delivered across organisational and wider system boundaries.
6. Ensure a deep understanding of local community needs and lead a coordinated approach across the Council and with partners to deliver effective, responsive, and value-driven services.
7. Play a pivotal role in promoting and modelling collaboration across the directorate and the Council, ensuring alignment of priorities and resources to deliver exceptional outcomes for Dorset's communities.

Key responsibilities

Council leadership responsibilities

8. Operate as a core member of the Executive Leadership Team, driving delivery of corporate priorities and deputising for the Chief Executive when required.



9. Actively contribute to collective leadership as part of the Senior Leadership Team.
10. Lead and champion a council-wide framework that strengthens delivery, benefit realisation and organisational design while aligning workforce capability to future service and place needs.
11. Ensuring strategic objectives and operational plans are aligned across all directorate business units and functions.
12. Guarantee the achievement of the Council's objectives and fulfil all statutory responsibilities associated with this Executive Director role.
13. Champion the growth of senior leaders through mentoring, talent development, and succession planning, building a resilient leadership pipeline.
14. Actively champion transformation initiatives, aligning peers and their functions to change goals and addressing resistance through collaboration and engagement.
15. Promote open, constructive dialogue during strategic decision-making and resolve conflicts in a way that strengthens organisational cohesion.
16. Partner with Strategic and Enabling functions to ensure robust governance, financial management, people strategies, technology adoption, and resource planning, maintaining transparency and accountability.
17. Model and promote the council's values, fostering a culture of openness, inclusivity, accountability and high performance.
18. Advocate for inclusive leadership practices and uphold the values of Dorset Council in all decision-making.
19. Support the delivery of a dynamic, customer-focused, and innovative organisational culture that benefits residents and communities.
20. Model and instil positive leadership behaviours, inspiring direct reports to champion the Council's values and foster a collaborative, high-performance culture.
21. Promote the Council's digital agenda, championing technology adoption and channel shift to deliver cost-effective, efficient services and actionable insights.
22. Serve as a lead ambassador for Dorset Council, representing and promoting the Authority at local, regional, and national levels. Raise the profile of Dorset, share best practice, and influence national policy through thought leadership and collaboration.



23. Influencing high level senior stakeholders, including government departments, public bodies, businesses, and community groups, establishing credibility to realise new opportunities and to transform our local and national reputation.
24. Build credibility and influence with senior stakeholders, including government departments, public bodies, businesses, and community groups. Leverage these relationships to unlock new opportunities and enhance Dorset's reputation locally and nationally.
25. Drive innovative commercial opportunities to strengthen financial resilience, position Dorset Council as a national exemplar, and set standards of excellence for other authorities.
26. Serve as a named member of the Gold Emergency Planning rota, ensuring robust business continuity and emergency response procedures.
27. Strengthen systems of consultation, community involvement, and partnership working to achieve the Council's ambitions and deliver better outcomes.
28. Ensure adherence to risk management and health and safety standards, safeguarding the organisation and its people.

Directorate leadership responsibilities

29. Provide a compelling strategic vision that drives high performance, sets clear direction, and fosters a culture of collaboration, innovation, and excellence across the organisation.
30. Fulfil all statutory obligations and directorate-specific duties with integrity and accountability, ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks while safeguarding the Council's reputation.
31. Take full accountability for the financial leadership of all services within the directorate, ensuring delivery within budget and optimal use of resources to achieve best value for the Council and its communities.
32. Ensure political leaders are well-informed on key priorities, promoting strong governance and supporting Member development—particularly in community leadership—to meet local needs effectively.
33. Build and maintain influential relationships with Council Leaders, political group leaders, elected Members, and senior stakeholders to enable collaborative decision-making and shared success.
34. Translate strategic objectives into clear policies and actionable delivery plans that support sustainable growth and organisational development.



35. Ensure robust systems for governance, procurement, financial management, performance monitoring, risk management, and assurance are in place and operating effectively.
36. Lead and develop the directorate senior leadership team to strengthen organisational capability and build a resilient, future-ready workforce
37. Collaborate with and listen to local communities to ensure services are diverse, responsive, and accessible. Establish rigorous mechanisms to monitor service impact and continuously improve quality of life for residents.
38. Shape new ways of working to:
 - a. Identify opportunities for shared service provision with partners.
 - b. Promote economic regeneration and a culture of being 'open for business'.
 - c. Drive entrepreneurial income generation initiatives.
 - d. Support commercial ventures based on robust business cases.
39. Design and deliver the strategic direction for the directorate, ensuring alignment with the Council Plan and corporate priorities.
40. Lead the development and delivery of shared priorities, governance frameworks, and performance standards with multi-agency partners to achieve integrated outcomes.
41. Champion, embed, and role model Dorset Council's values across the directorate, fostering an inclusive, high-performing organisational culture.

NB: The duties and responsibilities of this post are not restrictive, and the post holder may be required on occasion to undertake other duties. This will not substantially change the nature of the post.

Supervision and management

Reporting to: Chief Executive Officer

Please refer to the Context Statement for role specific responsibilities.

In addition to the responsibilities above, all people managers have the following responsibilities:

- Lead and manage team dynamics and performance by setting clear expectations, providing regular feedback, and ensuring high-quality delivery through effective quality assurance practices
- Create an inclusive and supportive team environment that ensures continuous learning, professional development and good wellbeing, aligning to the council plan priorities, people and culture strategy, and responsibilities set out within our people management policies and requirements



- Lead and champion opportunities for service improvement, innovation and change by taking accountability for its successful implementation, ensuring team members are engaged, motivated, and supported throughout transitions, whilst role modelling new ways of thinking and working.

Other factors

This is a politically restricted post as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

This post requires an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check

The postholder will be expected to work their contractual hours flexibly, which may include weekends or out of hours working or responding to urgent or emergency issues which occur during outside of the standard working week.

Our values

Our values act as guiding principles, defining what we believe is important in the ways we work together. Our values are Respect, Together, Accountability, Openness and Curiosity. You will need to be able to demonstrate these values in action through the way you work, regardless of your role within the organisation. Information about our values can be found on our website.

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.



Person specification

Your application will be assessed based on your demonstration of how you fulfil the following criteria; you should include clear examples of how you meet these criteria within your application form and during the assessment process.

Essential

Essential criteria are the minimum requirement for the above post and will be assessed through a combination of your application form, assessment, interview and references (as specified below). We will require evidence of the qualifications, training or registrations listed below.

Qualifications, training or registrations Required by law or essential to the performance of the role or both	Assessed through:
1. Educated to degree level or equivalent	Application form
2. Evidence of relevant continuing managerial and professional development at a senior level	Application form
Experience	
3. Extensive experience of working successfully in a senior leadership role within a complex organisation, such as a significant Local Authority or other large relevant public sector/private sector organisation	Application form
4. Experience of successfully leading large-scale and complex transformation programmes involving strategic, structural and cultural change and delivering tangible outcomes.	Application form/Interview assessment
5. A record of achievement in leading and making a sustained contribution to strategic leadership, decision making, policy formulation and service delivery	Application
6. A proven ability to establish effective individual and service performance measures, evaluating service quality and individual performance to deliver significant improvements	Application/Interview assessment
7. A proven ability to keep track of and interpret national and other major developments as they impact on the work of the Council, presenting them to Elected Members in a timely and effective manner to maximise our capacity to lead and influence events	Application/Interview assessment
8. Success in developing effective working relationships, building trust and influencing partnerships to deliver services	Interview assessment
9. Demonstrable experience of taking difficult or contentious decisions and the ability to constructively manage conflict	Interview assessment
10. Evidenced commitment to inclusive, ethical, and transparent leadership.	Application form/Interview assessment
Skills, abilities & knowledge	



11. Exceptional ability to operate as a system leader, balancing long-term strategic thinking with effective delivery across complex, interdependent services.	Interview Assessment
12. Knowledge of the range of issues facing individuals, communities and government, both local and central, and their implications for planning and delivering services	Interview Assessment
13. The ability to work corporately and manage resources effectively in a complex environment, including the ability to interpret and understand complex financial and budgetary information, and to negotiate and influence to direct resources	Interview Assessment
14. Contribute to and articulate a vision of how the organisation should operate in future, uniting others to work together to realise that vision	Interview Assessment
15. Think creatively and innovatively in developing, recommending and leading strategic initiatives and policies to assist in the achievement of organisational goals	Interview Assessment
16. Provide inspirational leadership to support, motivate and enable a large and diverse group of people at all levels within the organisation	Interview Assessment
17. Provide effective and resident-focused services to promote collaboration, innovation and flexibility, fostering a positive organisational culture in an ever-changing environment	Interview Assessment
18. Deliver successful outcomes through others using leadership and motivational skills, as well as direct inspiring and developing high performance in direct reports	Interview Assessment
19. Well-developed political sensitivity and an understanding (or ability to gain this understanding) of the political context, including devolved responsibilities and legislative differences	Interview Assessment
20. Lead the digital transformation of the directorate services, being comfortable using technology and digital solutions on a personal level, modelling the modern and impactful leadership.	Interview Assessment
21. A high degree of political awareness, sensitivity and commitment to working closely with all councillors, local organisations and communities	Interview Assessment
22. Exceptional communication skills to be a credible and convincing advocate for the Council, relating to people at all levels both inside and outside the organisation	Interview Assessment
23. Demonstrated ability to lead collaboratively and drive council and community wide outcomes.	Interview Assessment
24. An open, facilitative and persuasive manner with highly developed interpersonal skills	Interview Assessment
25. Highly developed diplomatic skills, particularly in motivating, negotiating and persuading others, including partner organisations	Interview Assessment



26. Professional credibility and self-awareness to build rapport, credibility, trust and confidence	Interview Assessment
27. A proven ability to challenge others respectfully and constructively, driving colleagues' performance through coaching/mentoring skills	Interview Assessment
28. Personal commitment and evidence of achievement in the promotion of equality and diversity, both in service delivery and employment	Interview Assessment
Our values	
28. <i>Respect</i> : We value our differences, we treat everyone with fairness, dignity, and understanding	Application form/interview assessment
29. <i>Openness</i> : We welcome new ideas; we are honest, positive and inclusive	Application form/interview assessment
30. <i>Together</i> : We combine our strengths with others to achieve a shared purpose and common goals	Application form/interview assessment
31. <i>Accountability</i> : We take ownership for our work, our actions and our decisions	Application form/interview assessment
Other	

Desirable

Desirable criteria will be used in the event of multiple applicants meeting the minimum essential requirements, and if applicable, will be assessed through a combination of your application form, assessment, interview and references (as specified below). If you meet the desirable criteria, we will require evidence of the qualifications, training or registrations listed below.

Qualifications, training or registrations	Assessed through:
32. Qualification in a related discipline.	Application form
Experience	
	Application form
	Application form
Skills, abilities and Knowledge	
	Application form Interview Assessment
Other	
	Application form



Approval

Manager's job title: Catherine Howe, Chief Executive

Date: 01/04/2026

