

CANDIDATE BRIEFING PACK

Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Prepared for Somerset Council

January 2026



Penna

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Welcome Letter

Welcome from Alyn Jones

Executive Director – Resources, Strategy and Transformation & Monitoring Officer

Thank you for your interest in the role of Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer at Somerset Council. This is a pivotal appointment for us, and a role I care deeply about getting right.

Somerset is a council with scale, ambition and momentum. We are navigating ongoing transformation, financial challenge and increasing complexity, while remaining firmly focused on delivering for our communities. In that context, strong, confident and enabling legal leadership is essential - not just to keep us safe, but to help us move forward with clarity and confidence.

This role will be our legal expert at the heart of the organisation, acting as the council's principal legal adviser and bringing deep professional expertise, judgement and assurance to our most complex and sensitive matters. You will be supported by fellow Deputy Monitoring Officers with distinct areas of expertise, creating a balanced and effective arrangement that allows you to focus on your legal strengths.

You will have the autonomy, space and freedom to shape a modern, forward-looking legal service - one that is solutions-focused, confident in its advice and closely aligned to the council's wider transformation agenda. My commitment is to support you, champion the value of legal insight at the top table, and ensure your voice is heard where it matters most.

Above all, we want this to be a role where excellent legal thinking can flourish - where governance is seen as an enabler, creativity is encouraged, and professional judgement is valued.

If you are looking for the opportunity to make a real impact, lead with confidence and help shape the future of a complex and ambitious council, I would encourage you to apply and start a conversation with us.

Alyn Jones

Executive Director – Resources, Strategy and Transformation (Monitoring Officer)
Somerset Council

Advertisement

Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer - Somerset Council

Salary: Up to £100k (includes a market supplement)

Somerset Council is a place with real momentum. There's a distinctive sense of possibility here. We are a young council still shaping its future, ambitious for its communities and committed to building a fairer, greener, more resilient Somerset. While we face the same financial and demand pressures seen across local government, we also benefit from a developing culture of improvement, strong partnerships and the combined strength and expertise of our predecessor councils. It's a promise to our residents that we are determined to keep.

As Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer, you will sit at the heart of the organisation, helping to enable good decisions, strong governance and confident leadership at a time of continued transformation. This is a senior leadership role with real influence. You'll be leading the modernisation of our legal service, shaping culture and ways of working, and providing trusted, pragmatic advice to members and senior officers across a complex and evolving council.

We are looking for a high-calibre legal professional who combines technical excellence with leadership credibility and emotional intelligence. You will be someone who can operate comfortably in a political environment, translate complex legal risk into clear and constructive advice, and bring a solutions-focused mindset to everything you do. Just as important, you will be a people-centred leader with an ability to inspire, develop and modernise a legal service that is proactive, collaborative and enabling, not risk-averse or siloed.

This is a rare opportunity for a brilliant legal brain with that extra spark – the ability to blend governance, commercial awareness and leadership into a compelling narrative that supports transformation and helps Somerset Council move forward with confidence.

For more information and to apply, visit: <https://penna.com/jobs>

To arrange a confidential discussion, please contact our consultants at Penna:

- Kelly Ridley on 07709 512415 or email: kelly.ridley@penna.com
- James Miller on 07701 233159 or email: james.miller@penna.com
- Rachael Morris on 07840 711217 or email: rachael.morris@penna.com

Closing date: 23:59 Sunday 1st February 2026

Preliminary Interviews: W/C 9th February 2026

Assessment and Final Panel: W/C 23rd February 2026



Somerset
Council

Job Description

Role title	Head of Legal
Directorate	Strategy, Workforce and Localities.
Reporting to	Service Director – Governance, Democratic and Legal
Grade	4
Evaluation ref	LGR0054
Role Purpose	
<p>Provide leadership, management, and direction to the Legal Services function. Lead and monitor the use of available physical, and human resources, seeking efficiencies while developing and recommending appropriate permanent service structures in partnership with the Service Director.</p>	
<p>Assess service delivery alongside the service budget to identify and take advantage of opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce costs.</p>	
<p>Lead the strategy for Legal Services across all areas of the business to ensure delivery of professional, effective and value for money services to internal and external customers Engage and build effective and positive relationships with customers, partners, and stakeholders to ensure that the needs of customers are at the heart of the design and delivery of services.</p>	
<p>Assist with the development, implementation and embedding of a high-performance culture, which delivers results through rigorous challenge, disciplined execution, and continuous improvement of corporate and service outcomes through the identification of business priorities, the allocation of resources to those priorities, which support customer requirements.</p>	
<p>To be the Council's subject matter expert, providing impartial legal advice as necessary to the Executive, Committees, Full Council, panels, and appeal bodies, and to members and officers.</p>	



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Job Description

Key results area	Accountability
Corporate Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide clear leadership to deliver the Council's strategic priorities and meet the Council's financial targets, as a member of the Directorates Senior Leadership Team.• Update and advise Elected Members in respect of operational and policy issues in relation to the Strategy, Workforce and Localities Services teams.• Lead the Team with a clear identity in terms of flexible and responsive ways of working, inclusive and diverse culture, and high level of employee engagement and wellbeing.• Undertake representational and communication duties on behalf of the Council to promote and protect the Council's interests in matters concerning their specialist areas.• Function as an ambassador for the Council promoting, both internally and externally, the Council's vision, strategic aims, and values.• Value the diversity of Somerset's communities ensuring equality of access and treatment in service delivery and employment. • Function as a role model for Somerset's vision and values. Promotes a culture of continuous improvement that encourages creativity and innovation to ensure services are efficient and develop the potential and flexibility across the Council and its workforce including the motivation and development of employees within the Strategy, Workforce and Localities Service teams.• Ensure that all service place a high value on customer responsiveness by demonstrating a commitment to meeting and involving the broadest range of direct and indirect service users, citizens, customer, and communities.• Support the delivery of the Council's key strategic aims and objectives ensuring understanding and commitment from staff from across the Service.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep abreast of specific statutory or regulatory duties contained within the role to ensure any challenges and opportunities in the delivery of services are responsive, compliant, and well communicated to customers, communities, and business as appropriate.• Support Corporate and Directorate specific transformational change programmes with the aim of maximising efficiency, modernising services, and achieving better outcomes and opportunities for service users and customers.• Ensure flexibility in reacting to the needs of the Council, its' customers and partners supporting a culture of continuous improvement.• Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, the Council's standards of conduct, organisational policy, and professional codes of conduct to uphold standards of best practise.• Accountable for compliance with all relevant health and safety legislation and Somerset Council H&S policies.
People Management	Provide leadership, management, and direction to the Legal Services function.
Resource Management	Lead and monitor the use of available physical, and human resources, seeking efficiencies while developing and recommending appropriate permanent service structures in partnership with the Service Director.
Financial control/budget management	Monitor service delivery alongside the service budget to identify and take advantage of opportunities to increase efficiency, maximise income and reduce costs.
Operations Management	<p>Management and leadership of the multi-disciplinary Legal Services department, ensuring the provision of support to Members, Executive, Committees as well as to the Leader of the Council and the Lieutenancy, through both internal resources and those commissioned externally.</p> <p>Bring together the previously separate legal functions from the legacy Councils into an efficient, effective and comprehensive service.</p> <p>Works with external legal advisors, where appropriate, to ensure the lawfulness and effectiveness of policies, proposals and decisions in complex, high profile, and politically sensitive matters, where the law may be unclear or uncertain whilst delivering the objectives of the Council and protecting its interests.</p>



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	<p>Commission and manage effective and efficient services through a range of direct delivery, innovative partnerships and commercial arrangements that meet the goals and objectives of the Corporate Plan.</p>
Develop & Implement Systems	<p>Implement and develop systems for an efficient, effective and comprehensive legal service that utilises a single case management system, intelligent client and informs performance and management reporting.</p>
Develop/Implement Strategies	<p>Design and promote the development, implementation and embedding of a performance culture which delivers results through rigorous challenge, disciplined execution, and continuous improvement of corporate and service outcomes through the identification of business priorities and the allocation of resources to those priorities, which support Customer requirements.</p> <p>Ensures advice and support is provided in an appropriate and timely manner, and that in carrying out its statutory powers and duties, the Council acts lawfully and in accordance with its Constitution as well as its internal policies, procedures, and other requirements.</p>
Data Protection Management	<p>To keep abreast of legislative and other innovative local or national developments concerning Legal services and the implications of the General Data Protection Regulations and other access to information regimes as it affects local government.</p>
Delivery of Statutory Duties	<p>Provide support to the Service Director and expertise to members, ELT, senior managers and partners as necessary, where knowledge and sound interpretation of legislation, statutory guidance and/or Constitution of the Council is vital to the resolution of issues/problems.</p> <p>Fulfil the role of RIPA Coordinator in respect of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.</p>
Stakeholder management	<p>To work with members and senior management to deliver approaches that are in line with the priorities of the council.</p> <p>Engage and build effective and positive relationships with customers, partners, and stakeholders to ensure that the needs of customers are at the heart of the design and delivery of the service in a business partner approach.</p>



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Job Description

	<p>Working across the wider service area to achieve excellent customer, staff, and partner relationships.</p> <p>Establish a network or reliable external legal advisors so support the Council and individual services in delivering their priorities.</p>
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Dimensions of role (Box 4)

(Relevant facts and figures that relate to the key results areas and on which the role has an impact or influence e.g., budgets or staffing include a comment on planning horizon)

- The Legal Services Team consists of approximately 60 staff members.
- Overall budget responsibility of approximately £4million with the remit to identify and take advantage of opportunities to increase efficiency, maximise income and reduce costs.
- The role also works closely with the 110 elected members providing support and advice to allow them to take lawful and compliant decisions.
- The role will work closely with senior managers at all levels, up to and including the Chief Executive, to provide legal advice and guidance to facilitate the delivery of the Corporate Plan and service level business plans.

Qualification/ Knowledge / skills / experience (Box 5)

(Describe what would be needed by anyone to deliver the accountabilities to a competent or fully acceptable level, please also state Essential/Desirable against each one)

- Considerable and demonstrable operational and managerial experience within local government legal services.
- Ability to apply a commercial mindset to a public sector environment.
- Comprehensive knowledge of statutory regulations relating to local government, democratic decision making and related functions
- Subject matter expertise and detailed knowledge in activity through significant post qualification operational practice.
- Sound working knowledge of the statutory, regulatory, policy and contractual frameworks within which the Council and the legal service operates.
- An ability to advise/guide senior management and elected members on complex/specialist legal mater and accountability.

Qualification

- Relevant degree or professional Qualification, and / or equivalent experience **Essential**
- Post qualification **Desirable**
- Evidence of work related CPD **Essential**

Knowledge

- Comprehensive knowledge of the national policy relating to the role and major issues relating to the service area. **Essential**
- Comprehensive knowledge of Statutory responsibilities and how they apply to this role. **Essential**



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Experience

- Substantial experience of leading and managing a service in a public sector organisation (preferably local government). **Essential**
- Leadership and Managerial experience. **Essential**
- Experience of partnership working, including the ability to influence staff and stakeholders. **Essential**

Skills

- Subject matter expertise and detailed knowledge in their field developed through significant post qualification operational practice. **Essential**
- Able to advise/guide senior management and elected members on complex/specialist issues related to their service areas. **Essential**
- Sound working knowledge of the statutory, regulatory, policy and contractual frameworks within which their service area operates. **Essential**
- Proven ability to think innovatively and conceptually and deliver against this. **Essential**
- Strategic thinker, skilled communicator, and effective collaborator. **Essential**
- Skilled at preparing reports, presentations, and other documents to a high standard. **Essential.**

Notes

Working conditions:

It will be necessary for the post holder to work from and travel to multiple venues around the County. Some committee and partnership meetings may be held in the evenings outside of normal working hours.

How to Apply

This guidance contains important information to help with your application:

- Please apply by submitting a CV and Covering Letter (no more than four sides of A4 in length per document aligned to the person specification). Please also include your contact details.
- Please ensure your full employment history is outlined in your CV; and that where there are essential criteria, competencies and/or qualifications you make clear how you meet these. We may wish to verify this information during the recruitment process.
- Please provide the details of two referees. Note that we will only approach referees for candidates proceeding to final selection and only with your permission. Please clearly indicate whether we can approach each referee before the selection date.
- Please share with us in your supporting statement, the values and behaviours that you bring to your leadership, and how you will transfer your skills and experience into this role.
- Please complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form when you upload your details.
- Please return your application by the closing date – no applications will be accepted once the long listing process has begun.
- Following long listing, you will be contacted directly by a Penna consultant to update you on the status of your application.
- At any point throughout the process our retained consultants at Penna will be happy to help you with information, insight and guidance about the process and our clients.

The following timetable sets out the key dates in the recruitment process:

Date	Activity
Closing Date	23:59 Sunday 1 st February 2026
Preliminary Interviews	W/C 9 th February 2026
Final Panel Interviews	W/C 23 rd February 2026

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