

Recruitment of **Chief Finance Officer (S151)**



Andrew Tromans

Penna plc | December 2025 & January 2026

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Welcome to Somerset

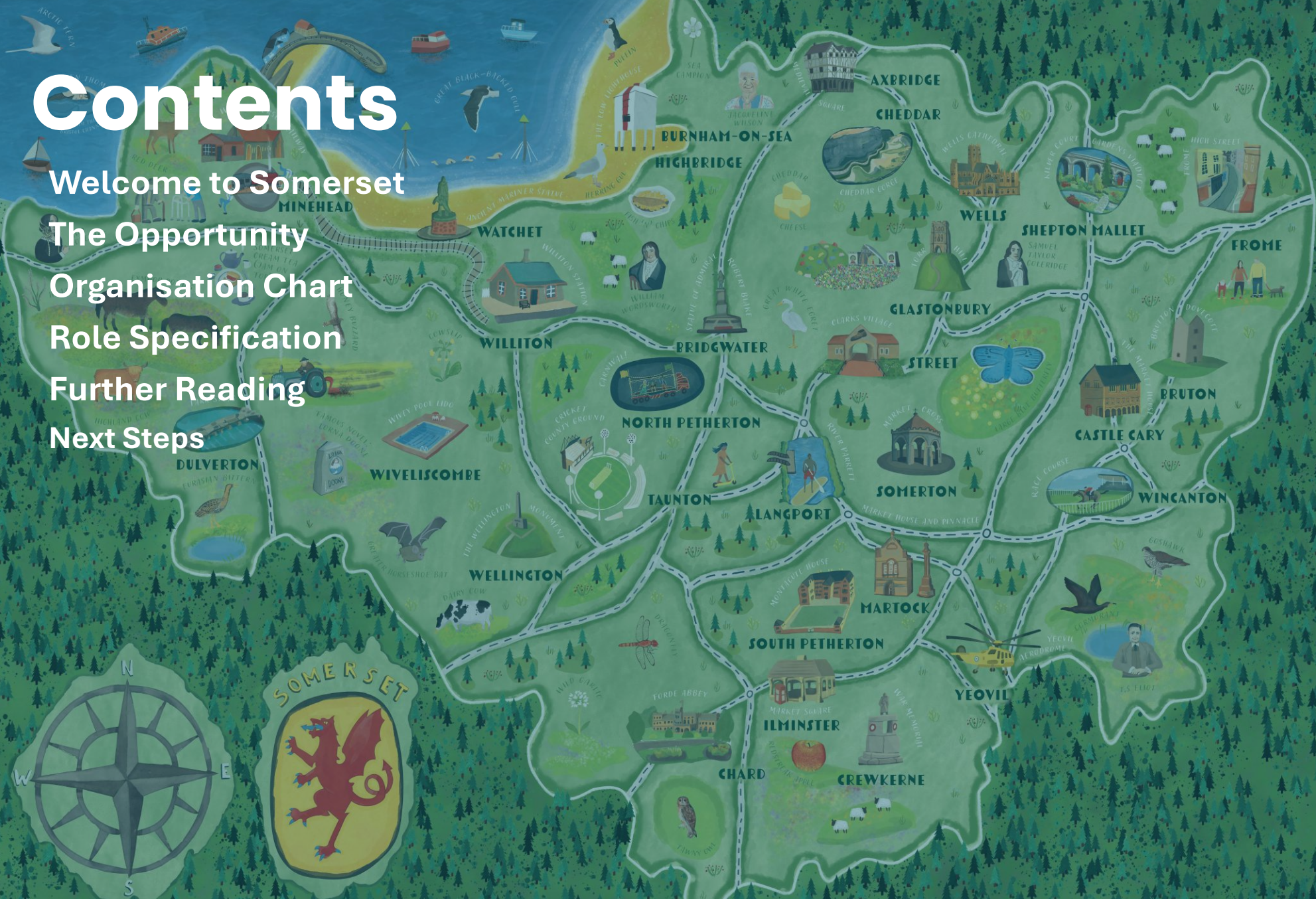
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Welcome from the Chief Executive



Duncan Sharkey
Chief Executive

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) at Somerset Council. This is a pivotal appointment for us as we accelerate the next chapter of our journey as a new unitary authority.

Somerset is a place of exceptional beauty, character and potential – from our coastline and Levels to Exmoor National Park, from world-leading engineering and energy sectors to globally recognised cultural assets such as the Glastonbury Festival.

Our Council Plan sets out an ambitious vision for a fairer, greener, healthier and more resilient Somerset: protecting our natural environment, improving life chances, strengthening communities and supporting a sustainable local economy.

Like many authorities, we have been operating in an extremely challenging financial context. In the months following the formation of Somerset Council, we had to address rising demand in Adults' and Children's Services, inflationary pressures and the complexity of integrating five predecessor councils. The steps taken since then – including restructuring, strengthening financial controls, improving data quality and securing exceptional financial support – have been decisive and necessary.

We are now focused on delivering long-term financial sustainability, and your leadership will be central to this.

You will inherit a finance function that has made strong progress under our interim CFO, Clive Heaphy, including improvements in reporting, reconciliations, accounts closure and the implementation of Microsoft Dynamics. The improvement programme is well established, with no surprises anticipated for the incoming S151, but there remains important work to complete and embed as we build the high- quality, insight-driven finance service our organisation needs.

As our statutory Chief Finance Officer, you will play a critical role in:

- Delivering a credible and sustainable Medium-Term Financial Strategy that provides stability for the future.
- Completing and embedding the finance improvement programme, ensuring consistently high standards of financial stewardship.
- Driving whole-council transformation, working with colleagues and Newton Europe to modernise services and strengthen long-term resilience.
- Enhancing financial planning, business partnering

and strategic prioritisation, ensuring resources are directed where they have greatest impact.

- Providing confident corporate leadership, working with Members, partners and the Executive Leadership Team through a period of significant organisational change.
- Supporting a renewed values-led culture, helping rebuild confidence and trust across our workforce.

Success will require technical excellence, political acumen, collaborative leadership and the resilience to navigate complex strategic issues. Experience of working alongside People Services is essential, given that Adults' and Children's Services remain our highest-risk and highest-spend areas.

Somerset Council is a young organisation with a clear determination to improve, a committed workforce, strong partner relationships and Members who are ambitious for the county. The opportunity ahead is significant: to shape a more sustainable council, influence transformation at scale, and make a meaningful difference to the people and communities we serve.

If you share our values and our commitment to delivering a better future for Somerset, I would be delighted to hear from you.

The Opportunity

Chief Finance Officer (S151)

£ Competitive

Somerset Council



A career-defining leadership role in one of England's most important new unitary authorities

Somerset Council is seeking an exceptional finance leader to become our statutory Chief Finance Officer at a defining moment for the organisation and the county.

Formed in 2023, Somerset Council serves one of England's most distinctive areas – from Exmoor and the Levels to world-leading energy and engineering sectors, vibrant towns and renowned cultural assets. Our ambition is clear: to build a fairer, greener, healthier and more resilient Somerset.

As CFO, you will lead the council's financial strategy as we accelerate towards long-term sustainability. Working closely with the Chief Executive, Members and the Executive Leadership Team, you will drive a robust Medium-Term Financial Strategy, complete a major finance improvement programme, strengthen financial planning and business partnering, and provide visible leadership across transformation.

You will inherit a function that has already made strong progress; the priority now is to embed excellence, raise capability and

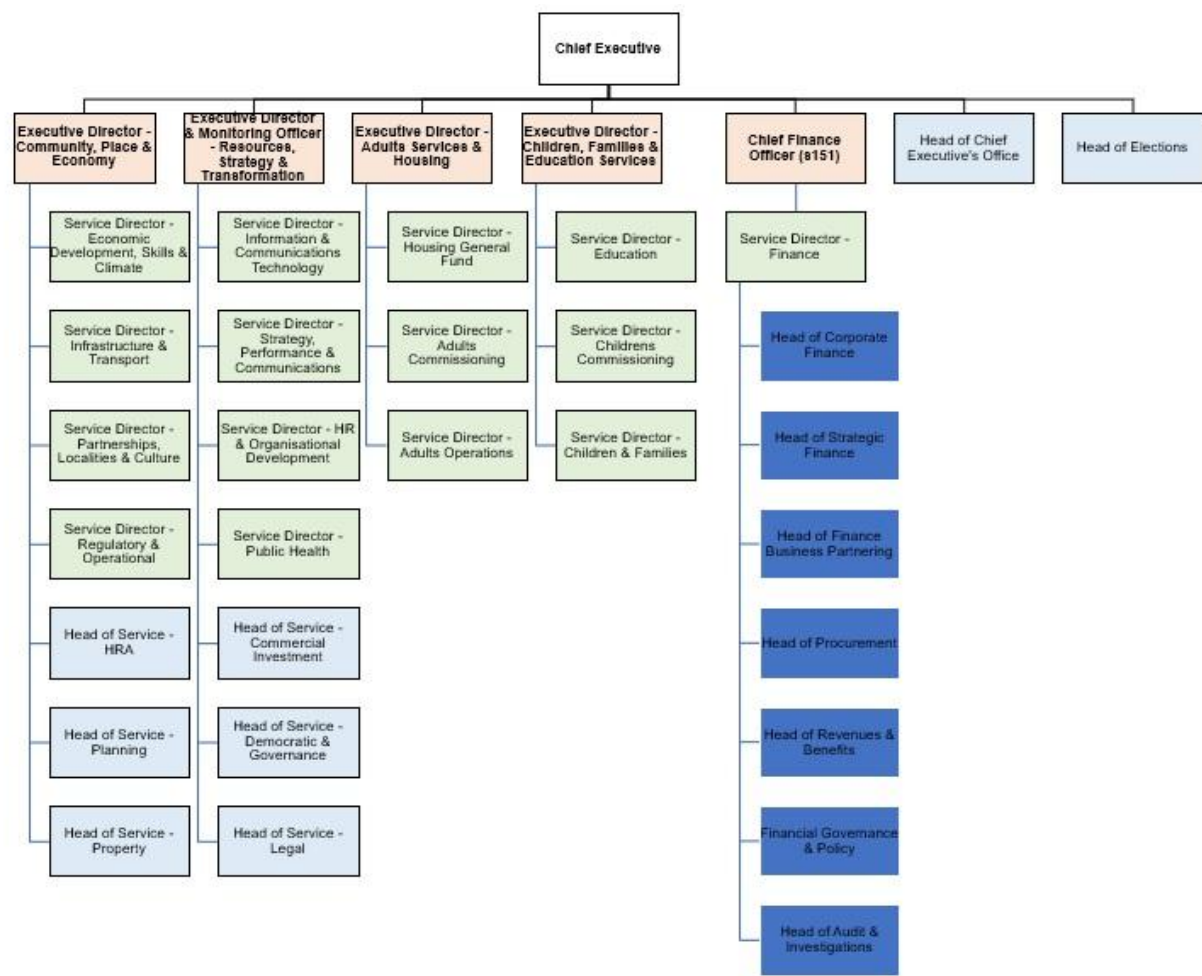
build a modern, insight-driven finance service that supports a high-performing council.

We are seeking a technically strong, politically astute, values-led leader with a track record of recovery, transformation or organisational improvement. Applications are welcomed from experienced S151 Officers and high-potential deputies, particularly those with strong Adults' and Children's Services experience.

This is a rare opportunity to shape the financial future of a young, ambitious unitary council and make a tangible impact for Somerset's residents and economy.



Organisation Chart



Role Specification

Role : Chief Finance Officer (S151)

Reports to: Chief Executive

Salary: £Competitive

Role Purpose

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is responsible for providing strategic financial leadership and direction to Somerset Council, reporting directly to the Chief Executive and serving as the Section 151 Officer.

As a key member of the Senior Leadership Team, the CFO acts as a transformational business partner and advisor to departments, leveraging technical knowledge and leadership to enhance financial sustainability and drive transformational change. They will work with Chief Executive to position Somerset nationally and regionally as an outstanding organisation with underpinning financial strategy

The CFO will delegate much of their operational financial accountabilities to the Service Director of Finance, empowering their teams to manage financial operations effectively, while fostering a culture of financial literacy and commercial expertise across the organization. They will challenge, connect, advocate, and support to ensure the

council's financial health and strategic objectives are met.

Corporate Accountabilities

- As part of the Senior Leadership Team, actively shape the financial strategy and ensure that the vision and priorities set out in the Council Plan and Business Plan are delivered whilst at the same time significantly reducing costs and re-shaping services, so that the Council builds a fairer, greener, resilient, more flourishing Somerset that cares for the most vulnerable and listens to residents.
- Act as a strategic advisor and partner to departmental leaders, providing financial insights and guidance to support their decision-making, drive financial sustainability, and enable transformational change. Ensure that financial strategies are aligned with departmental goals and Somerset's objectives, fostering a collaborative approach to financial management and planning
- Develop world leading constructive relationships with a range of stakeholders including business, central government agencies, community, local authorities, and community planning partners at both a local and national level, to build confidence in the Council's ability to develop and implement sound financial strategies and acumen to take the organisation forward
- Build capability within the finance department, encouraging teams to innovate, automate, and to raise their level of contribution.
- Build and nurture a culture of financial literacy and commercial acumen across the organization, enhancing the financial capabilities of all staff.
- Challenge assumptions and provide critical insights to support strategic decision-making, while advocating for sound financial practices and policies
- Ensure directorates use all available resources in the most efficient and effective way that represents excellent value for money, and ensuring services are continuously improved to see if they can be delivered in a more cost effective and streamlined way.
- Ensure all directorates remove barriers and enable staff to be entrepreneurial and innovative, working with stakeholders

across departmental and organisational boundaries to co-design inclusive and joined-up services that are efficient, effective, and meet the requirements of residents and communities.

- Inspire, motivate, and develop leaders and staff, to create an empowering, enterprising, collaborative, and listening organisation that enables staff to perform at their best and therefore both deliver excellent services to residents as well as retain and attract the best talent.
- Lead and model continuous improvement in the Council through considerable change and transformation across services, while ensuring continuity in performance, financial stability and ensuring statutory obligations are met.
- Identify developments in the sector and beyond, creating innovative new approaches that illustrate an understanding of the 'system wide picture,' anticipating future issues and positively challenging current thinking.
- Act as a Place Leader, creating an environment in which the Council can jointly design, commission (if required), and deliver outcomes with partners, by unlocking barriers and monitoring the success of these partnerships.

- Support the Cabinet and Members in translating their political objectives and priorities into coherent initiatives to enable the delivery of services across Somerset, working within the appropriate governance structures.
- To ensure that the statutory accounts provided to the local authority comply with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

Portfolio Accountabilities

- Discharge the responsibilities of the designated S151 Officer ensuring the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. This includes oversight of the corporate governance of the authority and the provision of effective decision-making arrangements, risk management and reporting frameworks.
- Lead, motivate and oversee the Service Director for Finance who will run and develop the financial services for the whole Council, overseeing the Council's annual budget on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer.
- To act as the Council's principal adviser to the Somerset Pension Board Committee.

- Ensure Directorates put value for money and proper financial planning at the centre of service design and decision making.
- Oversee the development and implementation of the Finance and Procurement function's strategy, plans, objectives, policies, systems, and processes to deliver council priorities, ensuring they meet internal and external reporting requirements comply with external legislative and regulatory frameworks.
- Identify trends and developments in Finance and council funding/spending, anticipating future issues, promoting innovative new approaches that illustrate an understanding of the 'system wide picture', and positively challenging current thinking to deliver outcomes for Somerset.

Knowledge / Skills / Experience Required

- Seasoned professional in area of expertise, with a breadth of understanding of all areas that the role covers.
- Degree and post graduate qualifications in relevant disciplines, and/or leadership and management qualifications.

- A fully qualified accountant and member of a CCAB body with extensive demonstrable Continuous Professional Development with significant knowledge and experience of Local Government finance.
- In-depth understanding of regulations/legislation and best practice within their area of specialism and the wider sector. Understanding of national and local government developments, policy, and emerging trends.
- Nationally recognised as have outstanding financial acumen and ability to simplify and communicate complex financial strategies
- Experience of leading a large directorate within a complex and diverse organisation, and leading constant change and transformation, establishing a mandate for change and inspiring the workforce to improve.
- Significant experience of leading diverse and multifaceted teams at a senior level, bringing activities together to achieve an aligned objective.
- A level of gravitas, and experience of building alliances with key stakeholders such as public bodies and government departments, to help position organisations favourably and to influence broader agendas.
- Excellent commercial acumen and financial management skills.
- Ability to use deep personal understanding of the agendas or motivations of others to keep them positively engaged, building behind the scenes support for ideas and initiatives.
- Ability to delegate accountabilities to a Service Director and their team, building capability rather than managing services directly.
- Ability to recognise and make use of alliances/relationships to gain support for the Vision and Plan for Somerset. Can work with and embed themselves in teams, using consultative skills and applying their technical knowledge to advise, support, and enable Council departments to deliver effective services in a financially sustainable way.
- Excellent knowledge of the impact of underlying demographic, social or political drivers, and understands the formal and informal politics at the regional and national level and what this means for the Council.
- Evidence of cultivating a high-performance, cost-effective culture, which delivers outstanding outcomes, through a variety of mechanisms, including structure, working methods, contracts, etc.

Dimensions of the Role

- The role will be leading Financial services for the whole Council, developing a vision and leading strategy.
- Financial oversight of the whole Council Budget of circa £1b.
- Planning will be over a multi-year horizon.

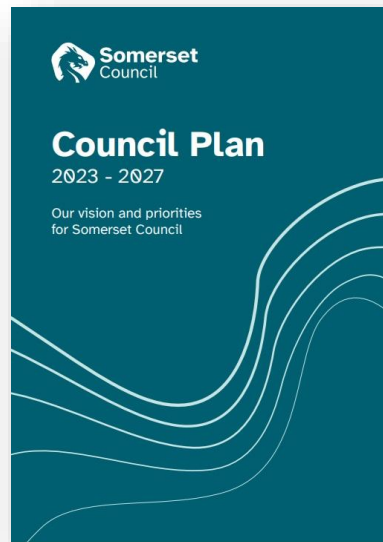
Working Conditions

- Working conditions do not have a material impact on the nature of the job once all reasonable actions have been taken to moderate or eliminate them.

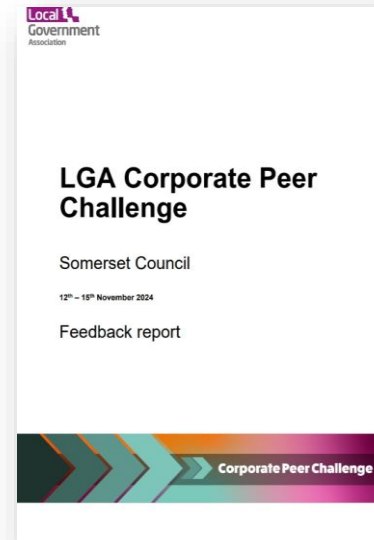
Working Arrangements

- The role is politically restricted.

Further Reading



[Somerset Council Corporate Plan](#)



[LGA Corporate Peer Challenge](#)

Next Steps & How to Apply

This guidance contains important information to help with your application:

Please apply by submitting a CV and Supporting Statement (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; where there are essential criteria, competencies and/or qualifications please 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 via our website.

Please upload 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.

Asking for adjustments: we're committed to making our recruitment practices barrier-free and as accessible as possible for everyone. This includes making adjustments or changes for disabled people, neurodiverse people or people with long-term health conditions. If you would like us to consider doing anything differently during the application, interview, or assessment process, including providing information in an alternative format, please contact us.

To apply for this role, please visit the following link to upload your CV and Cover Letter:
<https://penna.com/jobs>

Key Dates

Applications deadline	1 February 2026
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Technical Interviews	TBC
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Final Interviews	TBC
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For questions or to arrange a confidential discussion with Jess Gibbons, please contact:



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Any questions?
Please don't hesitate to contact us



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