



Candidate Briefing

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Head of Finance (S151)

CLIENT:	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
ROLE:	Head of Finance (S151)
CIPFA PENNA CONSULTANT:	Andrew Tromans – andrew.tromans@penna.com / 07805 226301

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[Corporate Strategy 2023 to 2027](#)

[Annual Service Delivery Plan](#)

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[MTFS](#)

[Capital Strategy](#)

[Treasury Management and Investment Strategy](#)

Welcome

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

This is an outstanding opportunity to take on a pivotal leadership role at one of the most financially stable and forward-looking councils in the country. With the planned retirement of our long-serving S151 Officer Sharon Shelton after over four decades of dedicated service, we are now seeking a new leader to guide our high-performing finance team into the next chapter.

Tonbridge and Malling is proudly debt-free, with a consistent track record of prudent financial management, clean audits, and strong capital investment. Our finance team is nationally recognised, highly motivated, and well regarded both internally and externally. Staff morale is exceptional, and our recent LGA Peer Challenge praised our financial resilience to such a degree that no finance specialist was deemed necessary as part of the review.

You will join us at a time of both challenge and opportunity. Key priorities will include securing resources for our capital and regeneration programme, delivering the savings targets within our MTFS, embedding financial accountability across services, and enabling transformation. As our statutory Chief Finance Officer, you will provide trusted advice to Members and senior officers, and play a central role in supporting our ambitions for innovation, service improvement, and organisational development.

This role reports directly to me and forms part of our Corporate Management Team. The finance function has recently been restructured to ensure clear focus, and you will lead a cohesive service covering accountancy, exchequer, revenues and benefits, and our award-winning internal audit partnership with Kent County Council.

We are therefore looking for a technically accomplished and emotionally intelligent finance leader who is collaborative, values-driven, and ready to make a lasting impact. Whether you are a current Section 151 Officer looking for a values-led environment, or a Deputy ready to take the next step, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Tonbridge and Malling is a great place to live and work, offering a mix of vibrant market towns, beautiful countryside, and strong transport links. Our Corporate Strategy sets out clear priorities: delivering efficient services, supporting environmental sustainability, improving housing options, and investing in the local economy. As a council, we are ambitious for our people, our place, and our future.

If you are excited by the opportunity to help shape that future – and lead a service that truly makes a difference – we look forward to receiving your application.

For a confidential discussion, please contact our recruitment partner Andrew Tromans at CIPFA Penna on 07805 226301 or at andrew.tromans@penna.com.

Yours sincerely,



Damian Roberts
Chief Executive
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Advert

Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer

Salary: £86,925 – £91,875 + £4,812 car allowance
Location: Tonbridge, Kent (Hybrid working available)
Contract: Full-time, Permanent

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council is seeking an outstanding finance professional to join our Corporate Management Team as Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.

This is an exceptional opportunity to lead a high-performing, nationally recognised finance service in a financially secure, debt-free council with a culture of ambition, kindness, and continuous improvement. We are proud of our track record: 100% success on audited accounts, zero overspends, a ten-year financial forecast, and an award-winning internal audit partnership.

The Role

Reporting directly to the Chief Executive, you will:

- Carry out the statutory duties of Section 151 Officer.
- Lead the Council's finance functions, including accountancy, exchequer, revenues and benefits, and internal audit.
- Oversee the delivery of our capital and regeneration programme while maintaining financial resilience.
- Drive performance and innovation within the service and across the organisation.
- Provide trusted, strategic financial advice to Members and senior officers.

This is a visible and influential leadership role at the heart of the Council's decision-making.

Candidates

We are open to experienced S151 Officers seeking a values-led working environment, as well as ambitious Deputy S151s ready to take the next step. You will bring:

- A recognised accountancy qualification (e.g., CIPFA, ACCA, CIMA).
- Experience of local government finance, including budgeting, treasury, audit, and financial planning.
- A collaborative leadership style, strong emotional intelligence, and confidence engaging with Members, officers and partners.
- The ability to manage performance while fostering a positive and inclusive team culture.

What We Offer

Tonbridge and Malling is a great place to live and work – combining beautiful countryside, market towns, excellent transport links, and a strong community spirit. We offer a supportive and flexible working culture, competitive salary and benefits, and the chance to make a real impact at a stable and ambitious authority.

Next Steps

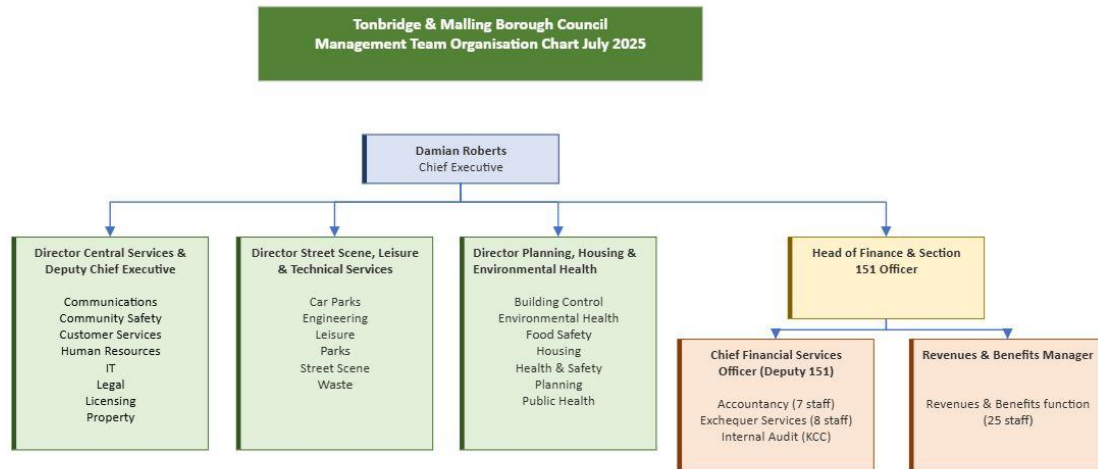
For a confidential discussion, please contact:

- Andrew Tromans – 07805 226301 / Andrew.Tromans@Penna.com
- Kelly Ridley – 07709 512415 / Kelly.Ridley@Penna.com

Closing date: Sunday, 22nd June.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council is an equal opportunities employer. We welcome applications from candidates of all backgrounds.

Structure Chart



Tonbridge and Malling Values & Behaviours

We are excited to announce the launch of our new behaviours that have been developed using feedback from the staff survey, the Wider Management Team, and staff representatives on the Joint Employee Consultative Committee (JECC). They are designed to support and strengthen our culture, help us to achieve our priorities and make our workplace a great place to be.



Our new behaviours are:

Team Work - We deliver the best outcomes by working together and sharing our knowledge. We step up to support each other and don't wait to be asked.

Can do Attitude - We rise to challenges and embrace new approaches. If we get things wrong, we learn lessons and strive to improve.

Respect - We treat all colleagues and customers with courtesy and speak in a way we like to be spoken to. We take pride in what we do and always welcome ideas or views of others.

Integrity - We know that trust is our most precious asset and has to be earned. We take care with information that's shared with us and are open and honest in everything we do.

The aim is for these behaviours to be an everyday experience of working for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. These can be seen in our new annual staff appraisal forms, in the induction for new staff, in the way we recognise and celebrate success and in our everyday interactions with each other and our residents. They apply to everyone equally and we all share a responsibility to demonstrate and promote them in the course of our work.

These behaviours will sit alongside our three core values of Innovation, Transformation, and Delivery. Together these values and behaviours will support us in continuing to develop a workplace culture in which we all feel valued, empowered and able to deliver our best.

Record-breaking staff satisfaction levels

Sometimes in Local Government, the drive for high performance can unfortunately be at the expense of the welfare and wellbeing of staff. Nothing could be further from the case in Tonbridge and Malling.

In our most recent anonymous staff survey, which achieved an overall 77% response rate:

- 93% of staff felt that they had the knowledge and skills to do their job effectively, felt empowered, and felt supported by their line manager.
 - 95% felt they could contribute to improvements in their team, and that their line manager supported their learning and development.
 - 95% of staff described the Council as a “good place to work”.
 - 97% felt that the Council takes the health and wellbeing of its staff seriously.
 - 98% feel that they deliver a good standard of customer service.
 - 100% of staff told us they were both proud of the work that they do and proud of the work of their finance team.
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Role Profile

Job Description

Job Title:	Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Service:	Finance
Grade:	M3
Hours:	37 hours per week
Car Status:	Car Allowance
Reports to:	Chief Executive
Last updated:	April 2025

This is a politically restricted post under the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.

General Description Of Duties:

This role will carry statutory responsibilities as the Council's Section 151 Officer.

Responsible for the management and direction of the financial services functions (Accountancy, Exchequer, Revenue and Benefits and Internal Audit) and will be responsible for the delivery of innovative solutions to the challenges facing local government.

Lead and champion the Council's approach to effective financial management and risk management across the organisation.

As a member of the Council's Management Team, actively contribute to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy, values, behaviours and priorities and the development of the Council's positive and high performing staff culture.

Specific Duties

1. To fulfil all the statutory duties and responsibilities of the authority's Section 151 Officer.
 2. Ensure the financial probity and competence of financial management across the organisation and that effective arrangements are in place to meet legislative and statutory requirements in relation to financial management, reporting and internal control.
 3. Provide strategic and operational leadership to develop, implement and evolve the Council's strategic priorities in respect of financial services.
 4. Lead the Service Management Team for Financial Services, and take specific line management responsibility for the Accountancy, Exchequer and Revenue & Benefits teams.
 5. Oversee the internal audit partnership with Kent County Council and the delivery of an effective internal audit function.
 6. Attend, as required, meetings of Full Council, Cabinet, Committees, Management Team and other meetings.
 7. Ensure the preparation of annual revenue and capital estimates in accordance with prescribed timescales, together with regular reviews and updates to the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
 8. Ensure the closure of the accounts and production of the statutory Annual Statement of Accounts in accordance with prescribed timescales and requirements, and liaison with the External Auditor as necessary.
 9. Exercise an overall monitoring role in respect of the Council's budget, and ensure the production of appropriate reports (highlighting the key expenditure and income areas) to Management Team in respect of both Capital and Revenue expenditure.
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10. Undertake the role of lead officer risk champion, chairing meetings as appropriate.
11. As the Council's lead financial adviser ensure the provision of high quality financial advice to officers and Members to enable them to achieve corporate priorities.
12. Responsible for advising and guiding Members, Directors and Service Managers on relevant emerging government agendas on financial issues to ensure that the Authority is prepared for any legislative changes which impact on the Council's financial position.
13. Proactive in developing and promoting the vision and objectives of the Service within the overall scope of the Council's Corporate Strategy and Key Priorities.
14. Keep abreast of economic, legislative, political, social and technical developments impacting on the service and on local government more generally.
15. Maintain professional development (CPD) and attend corporate training as required.

General Duties

1. Be an active participant of the Council's Management Team and contribute to the development and delivery of wider Council objectives.
 2. Lead and contribute to corporate working groups and corporate projects and represent the Council on external working groups.
 3. To participate as required in the Council's Emergency Planning Operations including the emergency out of hours rota and other duties that may be required outside the post holder's normal job description and contracted hours. In the event that an incident has occurred which disrupts the council's ability to deliver its critical functions, the post holder will be expected to participate in the recovery stage which may include undertaking duties within the post holder's competencies in other services and/or at other locations.
 4. A commitment and contribution to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
 5. Carry out all duties and activities having regard to the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and subsequent Health and Safety Legislation in relation to both employees and the public, and in accordance with any related Council Policy or Procedures.
 6. The post holder must ensure that data quality and integrity is maintained and that data is processed in accordance with council policy, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and any subsequent related legislation.
 7. Ensure that data quality and integrity is maintained and that data is processed in accordance with council policy, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and any subsequent related legislation.
 8. A commitment to section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which places a statutory duty on police and local authorities to work in partnership to reduce crime and promote community safety. It is also required that community safety is to be a thread running through all functions of the Authority.
 9. A commitment to the Council's statutory responsibilities in respect of safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and of the statutory duties in respect of modern slavery and human trafficking.
 10. The post holder will comply with Statute and Council Policy in all respects.
 11. A commitment to excellent customer service and the values and behaviours of the Council.
 12. To carry out other duties as may be required of you, commensurate with the grade and level of responsibility of this post.
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13. To participate in the effective management of elections, including on polling day and at the count.
14. The post holder will comply with Statute and Council Policy in all respects.
15. A commitment to excellent customer service and the values and behaviours of the Council
16. To keep abreast of economic, legislative, political, social and technical developments impacting on the service and on local government more generally.
17. To maintain professional development (CPD) and attend corporate training as required.
18. The duties of this post relate to developing functions and priorities of the Council which may change over time. Therefore this job description is not intended to be a definitive statement of all the duties of the post and the post holder may be reasonably required to undertake other related duties commensurate with the grade for this post.

Person Specification

Education	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 4 GCSE's (minimum grade C) or equivalent. • Recognised professional accountancy qualification to fulfil the role of the Council's S151 officer e.g. CIPFA, CIMA, ACCA. <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Management Qualification or equivalent. • Degree or equivalent level qualification. • Member of CIPFA
Knowledge and Experience	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant senior management experience leading a finance function. • Extensive knowledge of local government finance including all aspects of budget preparation and financial reporting. • Extensive knowledge of local government structures and operations. • Extensive experience of working with elected Members. • Significant experience of report writing and presenting complex information to a variety of audiences. • Significant experience of working with and interrogating Financial Systems. • Significant experience of advising budget holders, Members and senior officers on the monitoring of budgets, the overall financial position, key issues and financial risks, and remedial action to ensure services remain within budget.

	Desirable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of managing all the functions included in this Job Description, including internal audit.
Skills	Essential: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong audit, research analytical and problem-solving skills. • Able to establish trust and confidence with elected Members, Officers and external partners. • Able to build effective working relationships at all levels. • Able to influence positively to achieve corporate goals. • Able to lead and manage a large staff team while contributing to a positive high performing work culture. • Able to present complex ideas and information in a clear and easy to understand way both in writing and through presentations. • Ability to interpret, apply and explain financial policies, procedures, legislation and funding arrangements from Central Government and other sources to both financial and non-financial staff. • Ability to problem solve and manage areas of potential tension and conflict using own initiative. • Flexible and resilient approach to work. • Able to deliver projects on time and on budget. • Computer literate including strong capability in the use of Microsoft Office and other work-based systems.
Corporate Requirements	Essential: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to model and champion the Council's agreed behaviours: Teamwork, Can Do Attitude, Respect, and Integrity. • Able to demonstrate an understanding and commitment to equalities and the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. • Able to support the Council's role in responding to Major Incidents in the community, including being on the Emergency Call-out Rota. • Able to support the Council's role in the administration of elections particularly on polling day and at the count. • Able to work effectively and securely from home with access to reliable high-speed broadband.

How To Apply

This guidance contains important information to help with your application:

- Please apply by submitting a CV and Cover 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; 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 Cover Letter 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,
- Please contact Andrew Tromans on 07805 226301 for a confidential discussion or for any information, insight or guidance about either the role or recruitment process.

Please note the key dates in the recruitment process:

Applications deadline	Sunday 22nd June
Longlisting	Monday 23rd June (candidates do not need attend)
Initial interviews	Friday 27th June (Virtual via Teams; consists of Technical Interview + Stakeholder Panel)
Final interviews	Friday 4th July (in-person)
Full council	Tuesday 8th July (candidates do not need attend)

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