

CANDIDATE BRIEFING PACK

**Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring
Officer**

Prepared for Harlow Council

October 2025

Contents

1. Welcome Letter
2. Advertisement
3. Job Description
4. How to Apply

Welcome Letter

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer at Harlow Council.

This is a fantastic time to be joining us and I'm genuinely delighted that you're considering this opportunity to play a leading role in our journey of growth and prosperity. You won't feel like you're working for a small district council here. The pace, complexity and breadth of work is comparable to working in larger authorities. Our ambition to be an employer of choice isn't just a strap line - It's a lived experience that runs through the organisation. From our culture of collaboration to our commitment to development and wellbeing, we're building a workplace where people can feel supported and thrive.

With major investment underway, bold regeneration plans taking shape, and a clear ambition to become one of the most forward-thinking councils in the country, Harlow is entering a period of dynamic change. As we look ahead to the future of local government in West Essex, this role offers a rare opportunity to help steer how our legal services and governance adapt and thrive in a shifting landscape.

We're looking for a natural legal leader, someone who combines technical excellence with a collaborative mindset, pragmatic thinking and a deep commitment to public service. You'll be joining a talented and driven team, and your leadership will be key in supporting our elected members, senior officers, and wider organisation through a time of transition and opportunity.

As Deputy Monitoring Officer, you'll work closely with me to uphold the highest standards of governance and integrity. You'll also lead our Legal Services, Land Charges and Information Governance teams, delivering timely, enabling legal advice that supports our ambitious agenda. I am looking forward to developing you so that in the future you will have the ability and confidence to take on the role of Monitoring Officer, if you want to take that step.

If you're ready to make a meaningful impact and bring your expertise to a council that's embracing change, I warmly encourage you to apply.

I look forward to learning more about your legal journey, your ideas and the strengths you'll bring to help us move forward with confidence and purpose.

With best wishes,

Farida Hussain

Director of Legal and Governance
Harlow Council

Advertisement

Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Salary: Up to £80,000

Location: Harlow Civic Centre

Contract: Permanent | Full-time

Harlow District Council is hiring

Are you a skilled lawyer and natural leader ready to make a lasting impact in local government in one of the most important areas in the country? If so, there couldn't be a better time to join Harlow.

Why Harlow?

Harlow is on a bold journey to become the most forward-thinking and impactful council in the country. Harlow is one of the fastest-growing areas in the UK, with major investment and a revitalised town centre on the horizon. This is your chance to be part of a council that's leading change, restoring pride, and shaping a better future for generations to come. This role is a pivotal role for someone of influence, who wants to make a real difference shaping and being an integral part of the new local government arrangements for the future of West Essex.

One of the original post-war New Towns, Harlow is poised yet again to be the driving force transitioning one of the fastest growing areas in the country towards a bright future in a local government landscape that will see the current 15 Greater Essex authorities replaced by new

Unitary Authorities and Mayoral Combined Authority. Harlow Council is looking for an outstanding Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer who will support the Director of Legal and Governance to ensure that Harlow achieves its ambition to transform the council and secure its future as the modern, innovative anchor town at the heart of a prosperous West Essex.

The Role

- Lead our Legal Services, Land Charges, and Information Governance teams.
- Providing expert legal advice across the Council, including to the Leader, Cabinet, Full Council, Audit & Standards, and Scrutiny Committees.
- Overseeing the final stages of our land charges digitisation and land registry transfer process, using the opportunity to transform Harlow's approach to information governance.
- Acting as Deputy Monitoring Officer, sharing key committee coverage with the Monitoring Officer.
- Providing strategic legal advice on innovative and effective governance. Experience of supervising contracts and property casework would be seen as a bonus.
- Supporting and mentoring a talented team to operate confidently in a business partner legal service delivery model that provides timely, enabling and pragmatic legal and strategy advice to our client services throughout a period of change and restructure.
- Developing and maintaining relationships with other public and private sector partners

- Driving service improvement and contributing to corporate leadership across the Council.
- Doing all of the above in a way which supports and guides Harlow through the LGR transition and develops and continues to position Harlow's Legal Service as an exemplar for legal service provision in the new Unitary Authority.

What we're looking for

We're seeking a qualified solicitor or lawyer with:

- Strong leadership skills and a track record of developing high-performing teams.
- Political awareness, resilience, and the ability to build trusted relationships.
- A broad understanding of local government law and governance.
- Experience advising committees and working with elected members.
- Ideally, you will have prior experience as a Deputy Monitoring Officer – but we welcome strong step-up candidates who can demonstrate relevant experience.

How to apply

If you're passionate about public service, thrive in a fast-paced environment and want to be part of a council that's driving real change, we want to hear from you.

For an informal discussion about the role, please contact:

Carol Coyle: carol.coyle@penna.com 07500 887849

James Miller: james.miller@penna.com 07701 233159

Rachael Morris: Rachael.morris@penna.com 07840 711217

Apply today and help shape the future of Harlow.

Harlow Council Job Description

Job Title:	Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer	Post Number: tbc
Grade:	Head of Service	
Service:	Legal Services	
Location:	Civic Centre	
Responsible to:	Director of Legal and Governance	
Politically restricted post:	Yes	
Date:	24 October 2025	

JOB PURPOSE

This role will support the Executive and Executive Management Team in the leadership and management of the Council. Working across organisational boundaries as one team to transform how the Council delivers the Corporate Plan and associated priorities.

Key to the role will be the need to manage, inspire and develop a range of teams to provide high quality, value for money services for residents and contribute to effective collective corporate support to the Council to enable the delivery of the Council's ambitious agenda, through interactions with staff, elected Members and other stakeholders.

This role has an assigned portfolio of functions, which may vary from time to time. Currently these include:

- Legal Services
- Land Charges
- Information Governance

The postholder will also be expected to be the Council's Deputy Monitoring Officer supporting the Monitoring Officer to perform his/her statutory role under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

BREAKDOWN OF TASKS

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES – MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

- Work collaboratively with the Executive, Executive Management and all peers on all strategic and operational matters, encouraging a collaborative organisational culture focused upon continuous improvement and high performance and on delivering the Corporate Plan.
- Contributing to corporate leadership across the whole Council which includes creating an environment where teams can learn, thrive and perform.
- Take a collaborative approach to service delivery across the Council supporting the Executive and Executive Management Team above and service manager cohort below to deliver positive outcomes beyond traditional service boundaries where required and directed by sharing knowledge,
- Manage delivery and development of a range of services and the staff that deliver these services, as well as external suppliers / contractors or through shared service arrangements as appropriate.
- Lead service specific projects for the organisation, acting up into Director space for these areas of work
- Actively contribute and support the Executive and Executive Management Team to deliver and monitor the vision, strategic direction and core values of the councils and provide a clear sense of direction, optimism and purpose.
- Support and champion workforce and organisational development / change / transformation across the whole Council demonstrating, the ability to engage staff on a range of corporate issues and to actively promote a culture of employee progression, wellbeing and support.
- To lead on service specific cross cutting corporate projects as identified by the Executive and Executive Management Team utilising matrix management to engage talent across the Council breaking down service boundaries to offer a seamless internal and external service to customers.
- To promote an open and supportive culture which maximizes the potential of employees across the Council and encourages inclusivity, innovation and high performance.
- Support the development of a commercial focus across the teams and the whole Council.
- Monitor risks and opportunities around transformation programme

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES – POLITICAL/SECTOR CONTEXT

- To provide expert and professional advice as required to a varied audience including elected Members, senior managers and stakeholders and to implement, in line with the constitution, the Executive and Council's decisions.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES – FINANCIAL/COMMERCIAL

- To work collaboratively as part of the Council's management team to drive forward a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that within the agreed corporate framework that effective budget, performance and risk management are in place, embedded and operate across all service teams.
- Effectively deploy the staff, financial and asset resources in the delivery of services for which the post-holder has management responsibility ensuring that the team structures support this.
- Optimising all income streams into the Council and horizon scanning for commercial opportunities and efficiency savings.

- Ensuring the Council meets its statutory duties both legally and financially through sound governance and that service areas comply with relevant statutory legislation.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES – STAKEHOLDERS/RELATIONSHIPS

- To develop effective working relationships and partnerships across service areas both internally and externally.
- To act as an ‘ambassador’ for, and to promote, Harlow District Council locally, regionally and nationally.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES – GENERAL

- Contribute to your services business continuity plan and participate in the Council's emergency planning and response/recover to situations as required on an ad hoc basis
- Supporting staff within teams to work within a risk management and governance framework which clearly sets out decision making parameters and to support their development to help them understand, assess and manage risk across their areas of work.
- Ensuring that expert professional advice is provided to the Executive and Executive Management Team and colleagues across service areas covered by this role. This includes writing formal reports.
- To support the Council's response to emergency incidents and to work with the Executive and Executive Management Team to contribute to robust emergency resilience plans are in place across a range of service areas.

SERVICE RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES

- To lead and manage a high performing Legal Service, Land Charges and Information Governance functions of the Council ensuring that all associated tasks are carried out effectively, efficiently and economically and to the highest standards and responsibilities for associated budgets.
- To act as the Council's Deputy Monitoring Officer subject to an appointment being made by the Monitoring Officer. The deputy will undertake the role of Monitoring Officer in the absence of the appointed Monitoring Officer or if the appointed Monitoring Officer is unable to act due to a conflict of interest.
- To act as the contract manager for external legal support, ensuring that high standards of services are procured and managed and that value for money is achieved.
- Leading on service specific work priorities set by the Executive and Executive Management Team and providing legal advice on reports and recommendations.
- To act as the legal advisor at Council Committees and Working Groups as and when required.
- To act as deputy for the Director of Legal and Governance as and when required.
- To provide robust, strategic and pragmatic legal advice and support on projects of major corporate and political significance, including advising relevant Executive (and other) Members and senior managers, to enable corporate objectives to be achieved.
- To act as the Council's Data Protection Officer, monitoring compliance with the GDPR and other data protection laws, our data protection policies, awareness-raising, training, and audits. To provide advice and the information on data protection obligations and act as acts as a contact point for the ICO including breach reporting.
- To proactively seek opportunities for business development and income generation.

FUNCTIONS COVERED BY THIS ROLE

- Legal Services
- Land Charges
- Information Governance

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

- All employees will be expected to be flexible in their duties and carry out any other duties commensurate with the grade and falling within the general scope of the job, as requested.
- Duties and responsibilities must be carried out in accordance with relevant Council policies and procedures, within legislation and any code of professional ethics of relevant professional body.
- All employees are expected to maintain a high standard of customer care in the context of the Council's core values, to uphold equality and diversity policies and health and safety standards and to participate in personal learning and development necessary to the post
- To give due regard to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty when delivering services.
- To demonstrate and positively reinforce our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk.
- To adhere to the Code of Conduct, the Council's Constitution and all policies. To take reasonable care for the health and safety of yourself and of other persons who may be affected by what you do or fail to do.
- To co-operate with Harlow Council in order to enable statutory requirements to be implemented.
- Not to intentionally interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health and safety'.

STATEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

Harlow Council is committed to the provision of high-quality health and safety standards. In order to achieve this all staff employed by the Council have the following specific responsibilities, which are consistent with the requirements of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974:

- To take reasonable care for the health and safety of yourself and of other persons who may be affected by what you do or fail to do.
- To co-operate with Harlow Council in order to enable statutory requirements to be implemented.
- Not to intentionally interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health and safety'.

N.B. The responsibilities are intended to serve as an indication of the duties and accountabilities of the post. They are not in order of priority and should not be considered as absolutely final or exclusive. The responsibilities may be changed depending on the strategic and operational circumstances of the Council

Employee Profile

POST NUMBER:	JOB TITLE: Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
CATEGORY GROUPING	ESSENTIAL THE HIGHLIGHTED YELLOW CRITERIA IS ESSENTIAL CRITERIA FOR THE APPLICATION PROCESS – PLEASE ONLY ADDRESS THESE HIGHLIGHTED POINTS IN YOUR SUPPORTING STATEMENT AND APPLICATION
CORPORATE	A good understanding of corporate objectives and decision making and the political and legal environment in which Harlow Council operates. Experience of cross functional team/matrix working and an ability to deliver corporate objectives and messages successfully across a diverse range of services, with internal and external stakeholders. Evidence of contributing successfully to corporate decision making and development of corporate policy and strategy. Experience of working within a risk management framework. Experience of managing projects effectively. Experience of driving through organisational change, development and transformation. Possess a clear understanding of the relevance of strong governance, financial and performance regimes. Evidence of managing fairness, equality and diversity in employment and service delivery. Evidence of managing staff using performance management and development processes, encouraging employee contribution, objective setting, feedback, and performance/career development planning. Ability to deliver projects that cut across organisational boundaries, address corporate issues and deliver improved outcomes for the Council and its communities and stakeholders. Ability to deliver a high level of customer service and proactively look for ways to improve the customer experience. Ability to “model” appropriate behaviours that encourage a culture of trust, respect, empowerment, responsible initiative and transparency across the Council.

POLITICAL/ SECTOR CONTEXT	Experience of providing professional advice as required to a varied audience including elected members, senior managers and stakeholders. Ability to operate effectively at the political/senior management interface and experience of giving appropriate politically neutral professional advice to Members. Knowledge of the challenges facing local government and the wider public sector. Keen political awareness, with demonstrable experience of the ability to operate sensitively in a political environment; to develop strong, trusting, and positive relationships with all Members that generates respect, trust, and confidence.
FINANCIAL/ COMMERICAL	Corporate approach to financial and commercial challenges. Experience of effective service-related budget development, management, monitoring and reporting. Able to demonstrate good commercial awareness including experience of commercial models, maximising financial opportunities/efficiencies, and accessing funding streams available to local authorities. Ability to respond decisively and quickly to emerging opportunities or challenges, adapting approach as required. Good financial and commercial awareness, with excellent analytical skills and a creative approach to problem solving.
MANAGEMENT / LEADERSHIP	Evidence of achievement in a senior manager role within a large, complex political environment. Experience of developing high performing teams and adopting an appropriate leadership style in order for individuals and teams to develop and flourish. Evidence of creating a supportive environment that promotes performance, empathy, respect, honesty, and integrity. Ability to envision and translate the bigger picture into clear service direction for teams and individuals. Ability to appropriately challenge others to find solutions to complex issues, innovate and think outside the box. Ability to lead during periods of ambiguity and change. Ability to persuade and influence others, at all levels within and outside the Council. Ability to develop, communicate and gain ownership for a clear vision and direction across service teams. Ability to build effective teams and relationships which are not dependent on hierarchy and line management.

STAKEHOLDERS/ RELATIONSHIPS	Ability to communicate clearly and confidently with a wide range of audiences including stakeholders. Able to develop effective working relationships and partnerships and drive lasting consensus in a consistent and courteous way. Awareness of other leading organisations and ability to use this information to benchmark service delivery. Ability to network and manage/develop positive internal/external relationships with stakeholders.
SERVICE SPECIFIC	Extensive knowledge and experience of working in a senior legal position in local government. Working knowledge of relevant legislation and ability to advise on risk management and how this applies to service delivery. Experience providing clear advice on complex legal matters to senior managers and elected members. Experience of corporate governance issues. Knowledge of the role of Data Protection Officer and legislation Ability to acquire specialist knowledge of the statutory responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer and how to perform the role of the Deputy effectively with political sensitivity. Experience of mentoring and developing other lawyers, legal officers and apprentices in order to maximise their potential and act as a Training Principal if required.
GENERAL	Qualified solicitor or barrister with current practising certificate. Evidence of continuing professional and personal development. Good IT skills including use of Microsoft Office, legal case management systems and MS Teams. The post holder will be required to attend evening and occasional weekend meetings and events.

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	Midnight, Sunday 23 rd November 2025
Longlist Meeting (Candidates are not required to attend)	Friday 28 th November 2025
Preliminary Interviews & Assessment Scenario	w/c Monday 1 st December 2025
Shortlist Meeting (Candidates are not required to attend)	Wednesday 5 th December 2025
Final Panel Interviews	w/c Monday 8 th December 2025

To apply for this role, please click the link below:

<https://penna.com/jobs>

For further information or confidential discussion, please contact:

Carol Coyle: carol.coyle@penna.com 07500 887849

James Miller: james.miller@penna.com 07701 233159

Rachael Morris: Rachael.morris@penna.com 07840 711217