Role profile

**Principal Lawyer - Litigation**

**Our values:**

**We are dedicated, respectful, collaborative. We are Milton Keynes City Council.**

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| **Service** | Law and Governance  |
| **Reports to** | Head of Legal - Litigation & Social Care and DMO |
| **Job family** | Professional and Technical |
| **Grade**  | L |
| **Political restricted?** | Y  |
| **DBS required?** | N  |
| **Date**  | March 2025 |
| **JE Code** | JE2682 |

Key deliverables

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| **1** | To lead a specialist legal team of lawyers dealing with civil, criminal, general litigation, including housing law, regulatory law, employment law, and be responsible for a mixed caseload of complex and routine matters. Ensuring through appropriate delegation and supervision that all work is of the correct quality and performed in a timely manner. All work will be undertaken with the purpose of assisting the Council to achieve its business objectives.  |
| **2** | Provide legal expertise for litigation matters, including civil and criminal, employment law, housing law, planning, highways, licensing, regulatory law, corporate governance, including representation at courts or tribunals, and to provide advice, guidance, and practical assistance on local government law generally. |
| **3** | To support the Head of Legal, Litigation & Social Care and Deputy Monitoring Officer (Head of Legal, LSC) by deputising when required and where appropriate, contributing and overseeing all aspects of the delivery of the Litigation team, in all aspects of their work, including casework and advocacy, championing continuous improvement and efficiency for both short term and long term. |
| **4** | To have full responsibility for the efficient management of the budget for the Litigation team. To ensure that external legal costs relating their areas of legal work are efficiently and properly managed and that contracts with external providers are managed efficiently and that the quality and service provision represent good value for money and any performance issues are addressed in a timely manner. |
| **5** | To ensure the team assists and supports the Council in achieving its outcomes successfully and that the team has the skills and competencies to advise on all relevant matters within agreed resources and to demonstrate success by providing regular data to the Head of Legal and the Director of Law and Governance, setting out clearly measured timely quality outcomes. |
| **6** | To ensure through robust performance management, the delivery of value for money services to high practice standards within a culture of continuous improvement, including providing clear succession planning measures to ensure staff development, progression and effective service continuity. |
| **7** | To establish and maintain an understanding of the client’s business needs and objectives through building and maintaining professional relationships. Mentoring and encouraging more junior team members so that the client’s objectives are understood and shared throughout the team. |
| **8** | To ensure through proper delegation and professional supervision arrangements that work is undertaken in the most efficient manner. To ensure that the use of external advice and support is only procured in accordance with agreed procedures and is focused on achieving best value.  |
| **9** | To work with clients to ensure that where practicable activity is moved into client functions where that represents a more effective arrangement. |
| **10** | Be a legal expert in Litigation and be responsible for a legal case load, dealing with an appropriate number of complex cases. |
| **11** | Be an integral part of the Management Team of Legal Services demonstrating a personal commitment to the Council’s Values and encouraging and holding to account those values throughout their team. |
| **12** | To deputise for the Director Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) and the Head of Legal at Committee meetings, meetings with Senior Officers or other important meetings with Councillors and external stakeholders. |

*Within reason these key deliverables may evolve to meet service need and it is expected that you will be flexible and adaptable in your delivery to meet both service and city council wide needs*

**Essential requirements** Key skills, expertise, and qualifications

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| **1** | Solicitor, Barrister (Supreme Court of England and Wales/English Bar) or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives or equivalent relevant qualification with relevant experience |
| **2** | Proven ability to draft legal, transactional and other formal documentation. |
| **3** | Demonstrable significant knowledge of relevant local government law and ability to be the Council’s lead expert in Civil and Criminal Litigation, and Regulatory Law and directly manage the delivery of other specialisms where required.  |
| **4** | Demonstrable ability and experience of complex and routine advocacy.  |
| **5** | Demonstrable ability to handle cases involving medium to high risk to the Council’s reputation or finances. |
| **6** | Demonstrate aptitude to manage and motivate staff, including an understanding how to manage the quality, timeliness and volume of a team’s work. |
| **7** | Demonstrable knowledge of researching complex areas of law and presenting them in clear and understandable terms to clients. |
| **8** | Proven ability to effectively manage budgets. |

Job family

**Professional and Technical (Grade L)**

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| **Colleague expectations*** Be professional at all times
* Work together for the good of the team, city council and local people
* Promote a supportive culture
* Challenge assumptions
* Take ownership
* Be willing to change and do things differently
* Always work in a safe manner
 | **Manager expectations*** Be a role model by displaying positive behaviours at all times
* Make well-considered decisions
* Support, coach and communicate with my team
* Be accountable for my team’s performance
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Professional and Technical job holders rely upon their deep knowledge of the specialism or discipline in which they work to carry out vital tasks and provide authoritative advice to others. Often developing within recognised career paths, their evolving expertise sees them bear increasing responsibility for managing city council assets, the development of policies and procedures and the strategic direction of the functions they support.

This element of the profile, taken from the job family descriptor for this grade, provides a general understanding of the level of work and demands required.

**Role characteristics**

At this level job holders report to a Director and are responsible for the development and implementation of strategy relating to several functions within that service. Posts carry significant responsibilities for finance and a range of other non-financial assets and job holders will make autonomous decisions and lead the management of change throughout their area of influence within the service.

**The knowledge and skills required**

The advanced theoretical knowledge required to make appropriate judgements and decisions at this level is augmented by ongoing professional development and thorough understanding of external legislative and societal change. Also by a deeper understanding of the city council operational structures which both support and depend upon the job holder’s actions and advice. Roles will be professional experts, providing expert professional leadership across a number of functions.

**Thinking, planning and communication**

Job holders will use their professional expertise to deal with highly complex, pressing issues including service level change initiatives and risk management. They will also look well ahead and take a long-term, strategic view of their project and service delivery objectives over several years into the future, shaping their service’s composition, approach and operating procedures in accordance with wider goals mandated by the service directorate.

The information exchanged at this level will be routinely complex, contentious in nature and/or highly significant to the city council’s reputation. Job holders will, however, have additional demands placed upon them by the need to persuade others to adopt courses of action they may not otherwise wish to take, based on evidence and reasoned argument. This will occur in written interactions but can also in face to face verbal exchanges where job holders will advocate the city council’s position in response to opposing opinion in a formal or informal setting.

**Decision making and innovation**

The limitations to job holders’ decision making will be only the broad policy and practice guidelines that exist at both a corporate and even national/professional level.

At this level of autonomy, job holders will be the final arbiter of many escalated technical and professional disputes and problems. They will report to a Director and will devise and implement strategic plans and policy in relation to several functional areas.

**Areas of responsibility**

With a diverse range of jobs being represented at this level, the precise blend of responsibilities for which the job holder is accountable will depend upon the service in which they operate.

Roles will focus on the needs of whole classes of people - whether external service users or partners and will be responsible for critical day to day decisions with legal and reputational dimensions and the development of directorate level policy and functional procedures.

In addition, such roles are likely to have very high levels of responsibility for such elements as finance (very substantial budget management), information assets (council-wide systems) or premises (of extremely high value and critical operational importance).

Roles will have full line management responsibility over several functional areas with differing specialties and employee profiles.

**Impacts and demands**

The combination of both tactical and strategic matters that job holders deal with means roles are inherently very complex, demanding of particularly lengthy periods of concentrated mental attention while also managing very high levels of work-related pressure from deadlines, interruptions or conflicting demands.

Tasks and duties will be generally carried out in a sedentary position but there will always be a requirement for standing and walking from time to time, and the occasional need to lift or carry items.

Duties of jobs at this level will not require job holders to develop and maintain working relationships with people who, through their circumstances or behaviour, place particular emotional demands on the job holder.

Job holders find themselves exposed to some disagreeable, unpleasant or hazardous working conditions. Particularly when the needs of their specialism require them to work on external sites exposed to the weather, in or around refuse and waste plant, close to particularly noisy machinery and in similar environments.

Other jobs, such as enforcement roles, may also see job holders exposed to verbal abuse and threatening environments. In all cases, job holders will minimise risk and conform to health and safety regulations to mitigate any negative effects of such exposure.