

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
MANAGED BY:	Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
GRADE:	Head of Service 1

BACKGROUND

The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) is seeking to appoint a Deputy Monitoring Officer and head of legal services.

This is an exciting time to join the West of England Combined Authority. In the last year nearly three quarters of a billion pounds of new investment has been secured for the region. New plans are in place to deliver on Mayoral priorities to improve transport, skills and housing for our residents, take decisive action to tackle the climate emergency, and to support communities facing the cost-of-living crisis. There is a relentless focus on delivery to put the West of England on the map for regional, national, and global success.

Led by the regional Metro Mayor, the West of England Combined Authority brings together three local councils, the Local Enterprise Partnership and works with communities, other public services, and industry to deliver for the region.

Come and help shape the future of the West of England, a place so many people are proud to call home.

THE ROLE

Reporting into the Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Head of Legal Services will manage the Authority's legal and information governance teams and provide support to the Authority's Monitoring Officer helping the Mayor and the organisation deliver transformative projects within an excellent governance framework.

You will understand what it means to operate with a high degree of autonomy, operating as a local government lawyer with experience as a Deputy Monitoring Officer in a local government environment, thoroughly embedding yourself in the Authority's plans and operations and playing a key part in ensuring their success. You will be expected to confidently lead on providing legal advice and assistance ensuring a compliant, risk measured, and pragmatic approach is taken to governance arrangements and constitutional requirements of project delivery against challenging timescales and across a wide range of complex and high-profile projects.

Your main specialism will be local government law, especially constitutional, governance and standards, you may also have a good understanding of the legal and practical requirements that apply to information governance. Also some experience in transport, regeneration/development and/or commercial contract process and procedures. You will have a broad legal foundation, sound research skills and the self-awareness to enable you to work safely across areas outside of your specialisms. You will be able to provide legal advice and assistance directly but will also be expected to procure and then manage the provision of external legal support where necessary to give the client a complete, “one touch” legal service.

Previous local government experience is essential (either in-house or as a regular client base). However, you will be expected to navigate and advise on internal clearance and decision-making processes. You will also have or be able to rapidly develop a keen awareness of key events and issues on the local, regional, and national stage which will affect our priorities, ability to deliver and our relationships with key partners.

You will also be expected to deputise for the Director of Law and Governance, when necessary, including discharging the responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer in the Director’s absence, attending internal and external meetings at the highest level, and advising high-profile meetings of the authority’s committees. You will have significant post-qualification experience acting at a senior level, ideally with team or service management experience. You will be comfortable with financial planning and budget management, and with generating, interrogating and utilising management data to assist the Director in service planning and delivery and in reviewing the effectiveness of corporate governance policies and controls.

This is a politically restricted post.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The postholder will be required to:

Client Advice and Assistance

- Act autonomously and with confidence, quickly grasping the detail of complex projects and programmes, operating as the principal project or programme legal advisor/legal business partner providing holistic advice across the full range of legal, statutory and due diligence issues, procuring, and managing specialist external legal resource where required.
- To act as the Deputy Monitoring Officer and provide sound and timely legal and governance advice officers, members and the mayor.
- Provide expert guidance and support on internal and external governance controls, consultation, engagement and decision-making requirements and processes, delegated powers, due diligence, and contract/document completion processes ensuring all such considerations are planned for and actioned correctly and in a timely manner.

- Ensure the correct balance is struck between pace and compliance, advising on, and managing risk to ensure the effective and timely delivery of the Metro Mayoral priorities.
- Provide comprehensive legal advice, support, and constructive professional challenge to the Authority's projects from inception to delivery, into business-as-usual operations and, where applicable, close-down evaluation and review.
- Advise and assist on procurement law and procedure to deliver safe, compliant, and timely procurements in the changing environment post Brexit across the full range of the Authority's functions.
- Advise on the safe and effective utilisation of grant funding dealing with subsidy control issues and striking the right balance between risk and rapid delivery.
- Draft and negotiate complex legal agreements, being comfortable with industry standard contracts and bespoke drafting, to ensure the timely delivery of the Authority's objectives whilst protecting its interests.
- Provide legal and strategic advice to the Authority in dealing with information requests, complaints or other challenges and in dealing with priority correspondence, whilst deriving and embedding continuous organisational learning and improvement from the same.
- Advise on legal matters affecting a public body more generally at both an operational "day to day" basis, but with particular regard to developments at a national level likely to affect the organisation's governance requirements, future funding streams, interactions with its partners and stakeholders, powers, remit or purpose.

Work and Team Management

- To manage the legal services and information governance teams.
- Be responsible for their own workload, managing allocations across the team, maintaining quality and cost control over a portfolio of external legal work and supporting the Director in respect of constantly developing and evolving the how the authority's legal and governance functions are discharged.
- Provide support/Line manage as required to more junior members of the Legal & Governance team including junior/trainee solicitors or legal executives, information governance officers and democratic services colleagues to develop their skills and competencies.
- To manage legal budgets and costs associated with the Legal & Governance Team as well as your own caseload and any external caseloads you are responsible for overseeing, ensuring both quality, timeliness, and value for money.

- Show a genuine and constant commitment to “living and breathing” the Authority’s values and demonstrating the associated behaviours.

Ambassadorial Role

- Represent the Combined Authority with a range of stakeholders, including four Unitary Councils, the Local Enterprise Partnership, and the private sector in a professional and diligent manner.
- To represent and promote the work of the Combined Authority and the wider West of England Region, locally, regionally, and nationally, as required.
- To present (and help others present) complex information, legal or statutory considerations and strategy advice to the corporate leadership team, Metro Mayor and other key meetings or stakeholders in a variety of formats as required, ensuring this information is clear and able to be understood so that it supports effective, high-quality decision making.

Supporting the Director/Monitoring Officer

- Stand in the shoes of the Director, when necessary, in project meetings with external partners to provide advice which enables key decisions to be made to keep projects on track and within risk tolerances.
- Provide advice on constitutional and corporate governance issues, to senior leadership, politicians, and (where appropriate) senior external partners and stakeholders.
- Work with other members of the Legal & Governance Directorate and other key corporate services such as the Commercial and Procurement Team to make open, honest and effective decisions within (and continuous improvements to) the Authority’s formal governance structures.
- To deputise for the Director as required in internal meetings such as CLT, Corporate Governance Board, Commercial Panel or any of the authority’s committee meetings or briefings.
- To act as Deputy Monitoring Officer when required to do so in the absence of the Director. To, at all other times, act as the “eyes and ears” of the Monitoring Officer to identify, deal with or escalate matters of probity, conduct, corporate governance, lawfulness or maladministration.

- Undertake any other duties commensurate with the general level of responsibility of this post.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

ESSENTIAL (MUST HAVE)

Qualifications and Knowledge:

- Qualified Solicitor or barrister or CILEX with significant post qualification commercial experience.
- Currently practising and qualified solicitor, barrister or chartered legal executive.
- Evidence and commitment to continuous personal and professional development.
- Knowledge of the key issues facing the West of England Region.
- Knowledge and understanding of operating professionally and confidently in a complex political environment.
- Knowledge of the legal framework, the role, function and statutory powers of the Combined Authority.

Experience:

- Significant post qualification experience in local government with experience in constitutional arrangements, member standards, deputy monitoring officer duties and responsibilities and information governance.
- Post qualification experience in commercial work, with experience in at least three of the following areas: public procurement, commercial contracts, regeneration, transport, adult education & skills, net-zero/climate/environment, information technology.
- Experience of autonomously managing own legal caseload as a principal lawyer.
- Experience of drafting legal clauses and legal agreements to govern the commercial contractual relationships with third parties.
- Experience of operating at a senior level in own discipline.
- Experience of working, influencing and advising on contracts and structuring often complex legal transactions.
- Experience of working with, influencing and negotiating with external and internal stakeholders at all levels.
- Experience of operating effectively and collaboratively as part of a team and supporting colleagues from other departments.
- Experience of management of budgets and achieving value for money.
- Experience managing/supervising other legal professionals.

Skills and Competencies:

- Good knowledge of procurement law and experience of drafting all forms of contracts and letters of understanding.

- High standards of professional and strategic awareness and conduct.
- Ability to make risk-based legal judgements and articulate these clearly to enable sound decision making at a leadership and political level.
- Strong interpersonal skills, with the ability to deliver a proactive service and continuously improve.
- The ability to negotiate, influence and to be able to engender confidence, trust and respect.
- The ability to prioritise work against competing demands to meet deadlines.
- An understanding of and a personal commitment to delivering a high-quality legal service and ensuring service standards are met.

DESIRABLE

Qualifications and Knowledge:

- Specialist legal qualification and previous public sector experience.
- Membership of (or eligibility to join) a recognised and relevant professional body.
- A positive, flexible and responsive individual, with a creative approach to problem solving.
- The ability to work effectively as part of a project delivery team.
- A commitment to and understanding of equal opportunities.
- Experience of working in the public sector.

REWARDS AND BENEFITS

Alongside a competitive salary, we offer an excellent benefits package including:

- 26/31 days annual leave plus bank holidays
- Generous Employer-Contribution Pension Scheme through the Avon Pension Fund
- Cycle to work scheme and secure bike parking.
- Free eye tests for all display screen equipment (DSE) users.
- Discounted monthly bus tickets.
- Hybrid working to split your week between the office and home to help you achieve the best work/life balance and career goals.
- A portfolio of quality, complex and high-profile work.
- A friendly, supportive team with a commitment to accountability and professional development.
- Carbon Literacy training is available for all staff at the Combined Authority. We are working towards the authority's aim of becoming a Gold Level Carbon Literate Organisation by 2025, which means having more than 50% of staff trained and certified as Carbon Literate.

We are based in a new bright, airy, modern office space, with all the latest technology, under a 10-minute walk from Bristol Temple Meads Train Station. We offer flexible and hybrid working options too if you would rather work from home, or another suitable location.

As an equal opportunities' employer, we invite applicants to contact us to identify any additional support they may need during the recruitment process.

WE PAY THE LIVING WAGE



We're proud to have been accredited as a Living Wage Employer. Living Wage accreditation means that everyone working at The West of England and Combined Authority receives a minimum hourly wage of £15.84 - higher than the government minimum for over 21s, currently £11.44 per hour. Find out more [here](#).

WE ARE A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE GOOD EMPLOYMENT CHARTER

We're proud to have been accredited as a founding Member of the West of England Good Employment Charter. Find out more about the charter [here](#).

