

City of Edinburgh Council job description

Post title	Head of Democracy and Governance
Directorate	Chief Executive
Service	Governance and Democracy Services
Responsible To	Chief Executive
Number of post holders	1

Purpose of job

The Head of Democracy and Governance is responsible for upholding the governance of the Council, ensuring lawful, transparent, and efficient council operations. The postholder is the principal adviser responsible for the performance, efficiency and development of the Council's Governance and Democratic services. Responsible for the following functions:

- Governance, including political and operational governance;
- Democratic Services, including committee services and member services;
- Elections

The what - major tasks and job activities

Key activities will include:

1. Lead and manage the Council's democratic and governance functions including provision of expert advice to councillors and senior officers on a wide range of matters relating to the lawful, transparent, and efficient governance of the council.
2. Governance and constitutional compliance – lead the development, maintenance and regular review of the Council's governance documentation (including Council Procedures and Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation to Officers).
3. Setting standards, policies and procedures which ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities, national legislation, standing orders, delegated authority, Council policies, aims and objectives.
4. Develop, monitor, review and implement the Council and committee governance framework to it meet future needs and assess and respond to wider public service reform, taking account of any potential impacts on the council.
5. Oversee committee administration, ensuring Council and committee meetings are legally compliant, properly recorded (clerked) and accessible to the public.
6. Elections – assume statutory responsibilities (as a Depute Returning Officer) to ensure the efficient management of elections and by-elections.

7. Elected member support – facilitate training, development and administrative support for councillors to help them build capacity and fulfil their roles effectively.
8. Information governance – acting as the Council’s senior information risk owner and ensuring compliance with statutory requirements (including Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, data protection and record management, and the city archives).
9. Lead on governance associated with Council arm’s length external organisations (ALEO’s), stakeholders, community councils and third and public sector bodies.
10. Ethical Standards and Scrutiny - promoting and upholding the [Nolan Principles of Public Life](#) across the Council. Engagement with the Scottish Information Commissioner and managing elected member complaints.
11. Leading on the development of initiatives, strategic plans and policy development within own area of expertise, for the Chief Executive and across the Council, as required.
12. Effectively leading and developing team-working within own area of expertise and across the Council and ALEOs.
13. Managing and monitoring the performance of external consultants and contractors.
14. Working closely with Chief Officers, Elected Members, senior officers and external agencies to represent the Council’s interests.
15. Initiating, developing and managing the implementation of major innovative governance and/or democracy projects.
16. Securing funding packages and ensure delivery to budget and within timescale.
17. Responsibility for the preparation and content of reports, strategic plans, other documents, briefings, presentations and FOIs for Council meetings, external agencies, senior officers, including the Council Management Team and the relevant committees as well as business and stakeholder groups.
18. Ensuring and demonstrating the services under area of control providing Best Value.
19. Leading on identifying and establishing effective management arrangements for key risks within the service, compliant with the Council’s risk management policy and framework.
20. Identifying opportunities for continual improvement and demonstrating effective management of change within a complex internal and external environment.
21. Presenting expert evidence and opinion at Public Enquiries, Planning Enquiries and court proceedings etc.
22. Responsibility for supporting the delivery and improvement of outcomes for customers, working in close partnership with service managers across the Council.

The how - knowledge and skills, creativity and innovation, contacts and relationships, decision making.

You'll bring:

- Strong understanding of Scottish local government legislation and associated Local Government (Scotland) Act and Code of Conduct.
- The ability and flexibility to navigate complex political environments, manage relationships with political groups, senior officers and provide non-partisan, independent advice.
- Demonstrate senior leadership experience in a complex political and multidisciplinary environment.
- Extensive knowledge and skills in a range of unrelated professional disciplines to the extent that you can manage a major service area involving the delivery of specialist services requiring these disciplines.
- A degree or postgraduate level or equivalent experience.
- An additional relevant management qualification or extensive management experience.

You'll be responsible for:

- Providing expert advice and guidance to the highest level of the Council as well as key stakeholders including Edinburgh Integration Joint Board, Lothian Pension Fund, ALEOs etc.
- Developing and implementing proposals relating to the policy, procedures and strategic development of a major service area covering a range of diverse services and professional disciplines.
- Developing totally new approaches and key policy initiatives in a wide range of subject areas impacting across the Council and the city.
- Contacts which relate to the development and delivery of a major Council service area and, as such, will have a wide ranging impact on budgets, merging services etc.
- Representing the Council to a range of external stakeholders and presenting a positive impression of the Council.
- Representing the Council on a range of external bodies and will have the authority to commit the Council to a course action with major implications, e.g. a revised governance model or partnership arrangement.

You'll regularly take decisions:

- On the future development of a major service area impacting the entire Council and the city.
- On all advice, recommendations and proposals presented to Chief Officials, Elected Members, the Council and committees relating to policy, service practice and governance of the Council.

The decisions you take will:

- Have a major impact across the whole Council.

Environment - work demands, physical demands, working conditions, work context.

- You will strategically manage a major service area interpreting the changing local and national factors impacting on the service.
- Operational matters requiring an immediate response will normally be dealt with by the operational and service managers reporting to this post.
- Although you may be exposed to some physical demands these will be predominantly within the range of normal office based activities.
- Although you may be exposed to some adverse working conditions these will be predominantly within the range of normal office based activities.
- Will have some requirement to take care in relation to the working environment, work activities and dealing with people this will not be more than the normal required of a Council employee.

Supervision and management of people

- The post will be responsible for the planning, co-ordination and management of a major service area and as such will have a number of service managers reporting directly to them.
- The service managers will in turn be responsible for delivering a major service.
- The post is required to take on responsibility for the leadership and development of these managers, including consideration of succession planning and resilience to ensure business continuity.
- There will be around 80 staff in total across all services.

Resources the job holder will be responsible for

- The post will be the budget holder for a non-staffing budget of approximately £1 million per annum.
- The post will also have responsibility for all Council's systems relating to governance and democratic services and elections.

Additional information - health and safety

Protecting the health and safety and welfare of our employees, and our third parties including members of the public, contractors, service users and pupils, is the starting point for a forward-thinking Council.

All employees' responsibilities:

1. Taking care of their own health and safety and welfare, and that of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions.
2. Co-operating with management and following instructions, safe systems and procedures.
3. Reporting any hazards, damage or defects immediately to their line manager.
4. Reporting any personal injury and work-related ill health, and accident or incident (including 'near misses') immediately to their line manager, and

assist with any subsequent investigation, including co-operating fully with the provision of witness statements and any other evidence that may be required.

Line managers have additional responsibilities for ensuring all health and safety risks under their management are identified, assessed and controlled, with specialist input from H&S Advisers and others including Occupational Health where required. Where the risks cannot be adequately controlled the activity should not proceed.

Additional information can be found in the [Council Health and Safety Policy](#).

Person Specification

Our Behaviours

These apply to all posts:

Respect – We're inclusive, we promote equality, we treat people with fairness, understanding and kindness and we consider others in our decisions and actions.

Integrity – We're open and honest, we take responsibility, we build trust and we pull together to do what's right for our residents, colleagues and city

Flexibility – We're open minded, we keep it simple, we adapt to provide great service and find better ways of doing things, and we embrace opportunities for shared working and learning

Category	Essential	Desirable
Experience	Strong understanding of Scottish local government legislation, including the Local Government (Scotland) Act and Code of Conduct.	Demonstrated ability to navigate complex political environments, manage relationships with political groups and senior officers, and provide non-partisan, independent advice. Experience working with arm's length, ALEOs, or similar organisations.
Knowledge, skills and understanding	Senior leadership experience in a multidisciplinary context. Extensive knowledge across a range of professional disciplines relevant to managing a major service area.	Experience with major service transformations, merging services, or governance reform. Familiarity with managing elections, governance, and democratic services within a local authority context.

Qualifications and training	Educated to degree or postgraduate level, or able to demonstrate equivalent experience. Additional relevant management qualification or extensive management experience.	
Job specific requirements	Experience providing expert advice and guidance at the highest organisational levels. Proven ability to develop and implement policy, procedures, and strategic plans for diverse services. Experience representing an organisation to external stakeholders and bodies. Ability to take decisions with major organisational impact. Proven skills in managing budgets and resources at a significant scale. Experience in leading, developing, and managing managers and large teams. Commitment to upholding health, safety, and welfare standards for staff and stakeholders.	Track record of developing innovative approaches and key policy initiatives with city-wide impact. Evidence of successful succession planning and building organisational resilience.