

Decision under Delegated Powers

Officer Requesting Decision

Head of Planning and Growth

Officer Making the Decision

Head of Paid Service

Recommendation

That the post of Planning Intern (grade C SCP 8-12) is added to the establishment on an ongoing basis from 1 April 2024, subject to confirmation of the budget by Council on 26 February 2024

Reason

1. To create stronger links between Loughborough University Planning School and the Charnwood Planning and Growth Service and the strategic partnership between the two organisations.
2. To broaden awareness and incentivise students to take up town planning in the public sector as a career choice.

Authority for Decision

Under the Council's constitution delegation is afforded to the Head of Paid Service under Section 8.2 (6) to agree changes to the establishment, within budget and without major operational disruption or interruption of services or involving a change from direct to indirect provision or vice-versa or other policy implications

Decision and Date



07/03/2024

Background

It is now well-understood that there is a national shortage of planners with the situation exacerbated by fewer graduates coming into the profession, an aging workforce and the expansion of the private sector in recent years. Those graduates that are coming into the profession have a greater choice of employment in both the private and public sectors and the entry level salaries are rising.

The Planning Service has been following a philosophy of growing its own graduates since 2018 and has had success in bringing on undergraduates and training them to attain post graduate degrees and RTPI accreditation, both through the Post Entry Training route and more recently through apprenticeships. The service has graduate posts on the establishment linked to further learning at masters level (Post M362 at Grade D). These are permanent rather than fixed term posts and the seed bed for post graduates to move to professional career graded roles in the service (Post P112 at Grade E-PO1). This post takes new planning graduates on a further learning and experiential journey, through stage gates to attain RTPI accreditation and then on to develop supervisory experience, to enable them to become rounded professional planning officers.

Loughborough University

The University is a strategic partner of the Council and the two organisations work closely on many matters of mutual concern. Opportunities to forge stronger operational links such as by supporting internships can help to strengthen these strategic relationships.

The Urban Planning course is three years old and is looking to build its reputation and also achieve RTPI accreditation – this will make it a more attractive proposition for students who wish to access an RTPI backed fast track route to membership. Achieving and maintaining RTPI accreditation will also provide a local planning school for the Council to use when sponsoring its staff to achieve a planning degree.

There is an obvious opportunity to build closer links between the Service and the School to assist their ambitions and for the council to input into coursework and other academic areas including potential areas of research to further the Compulsory Professional Development of officers. This has been practiced in 2023 with the roll out of lectures by staff on key topic areas such as local plans, biodiversity and design as well as project based work on submitting planning applications, committee and planning appeals, which commenced in February 2024.

Interns

Interns are students looking for relevant employment during their year out phase of sandwich degrees. The University works hard to develop relationships with employers to find placements for their students to ensure they obtain relevant and meaningful experience and commitment to their mentoring and support. One way in which organisations are engaged is through the annual careers fair held in October where students can meet organisations, find out more about what they do and then make applications for internships for the following year. Other companies run their own internship schemes whereby students can apply to undertake unpaid summer work experience and if successful they may be invited to apply for a paid internship for the year out phase of their degree.

Interns are often inexperienced in the workplace and for many this will be the first experience of working in a professional setting. They are likely to come to the organisation with little understanding of the work involved beyond a theoretical level and the culture of the workplace.

Interns are rather like apprentices in terms of the support package that needs to be wrapped around them. They need close supervision and mentoring and line managers must keep in touch and meet with the university to provide meaningful feedback. The university attend on site twice during the placement to speak to the student and line manager to garner information for progress reports. The student must prepare an end of placement project, which feeds into their overall assessment.

HR implications

The usual duration of an intern is up to 45 weeks in the workplace with pro rata leave applied in addition. The minimum duration is 25 weeks although the student must make up the deficit through additional academic study or meaningful work. The student must be paid at least minimum wage as appropriate for their age although all posts at the Council must be subject to Job Evaluation.

A job profile has been created and assessed by a Job Evaluation Panel (appendix 1). This job profile will be fixed term and linked to the University Intern programme and will need to reflect the expectations to be deployed in different areas of the Service.

The Council doesn't have to follow a normal recruitment process if the post is linked directly to the university; however, officers are advised by the University that students will be expected to apply by CV/Statement for vacancies and therefore there is potential for a competitive selection process if more than one student applies. The Council is not obligated to take on students if they are deemed unsuitable at interview.

The University has provided a copy of its 'Placements Handbook' that explains the expectations around student conduct in a professional setting. However, the student is bound by the normal policies and procedures of the employing body.

Financial implications

The Service has submitted a service pressure through the budget process to use a proportion of planning fee income uplift to support an increase in capacity in the service from 2024/25. This request is subject to the outcome of the budget process in February 2024. The Planning Intern post is one of several posts that have been identified in a package of measures to support the capacity and skills in the service.

The Planning Intern post has been assessed at Grade C (SCP 8-12) by the Job Evaluation Panel, which is up to £39,700 pa (inc on costs). The existing

post is currently funded on a one off basis as described under DD012 2023. The planned budget provision for the balance of the internship for the 2024/25 year will be replaced by the provisions in this DD.

The funding of this post on an ongoing basis from 1 April 2024 is subject to agreement of the budget by Council on 26 February 2024.

Comments from HR

Sally Dobrowolska – Senior Human Resources Advisor

The arrangements for this post have been previously agreed in DD012 2023. The relevant e-forms will need to be completed including a new starter e-form upon appointment to the post.

Financial Implications

Once the post has been established the cost of the post will be met from cost centre P330 A0101.

Risk Management

| Risk Identified | Likelihood | Impact | Overall Risk | Risk Management Actions Planned |
|--|-------------------|---------------|---------------------|--|
| That candidates prove to be unsuitable | Unlikely (2) | Minor (1) | Very low (2) | Ensure testing as part of the interview process to ensure that appropriate skills and disposition are secured. |

Key Decision

No

Background Papers

SLT Report – Planning Fees (November 2023)



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|---|---|
| Division: | Planning and Growth Service |
| Job Title: | Planning Intern |
| Grade: | C |
| Post Number: | tbc |
| Base/Location: | Southfields |
| Responsible To: | Team Leader Development Management Team Leader Local Plans Team Leader Planning Enforcement (on rotation) |
| Responsible For: | None |
| Key Relationships/ Liaison with: | Officers at all levels of the organisation and elected members. Clients, architects, surveyors, designers, the public, government agencies/statutory undertakers and other local authorities and consultees. |

| Job Purpose |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the determination of a range of planning applications and their validation. • To support the investigation of planning breaches and their resolution. • To assist in the provision of a full development management service to the community. • To research and prepare evidence to support the preparation of planning policies. • To assist in the preparation and monitoring of planning data. • To support the Service in the communication of planning concepts to the residents of Charnwood. • To deliver an effective and appropriate service to all service users, fairly and without discrimination. |

| Main Duties and Responsibilities | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. | <p>Support planning officers with their caseload of householder and other planning applications including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Provide pre-application advice.b. Check, validate and register planning and other applications as required.c. Ensure site notices are displayed and press notices are made.d. Undertake site inspections and surveys.e. Undertake research.f. Consult with stakeholders: including the public, statutory |

NO-RESPONSE

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| | <p>consultees and amenity and community organisations in accordance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>g. Negotiate with applicants and professional agents.</p> <p>h. Assist Councillors, Town and Parish Councils and others to understand proposals.</p> <p>i. Prepare delegated decision reports on applications with recommendations based on national and local planning policies and guidance and planning judgement; and</p> <p>j. Ensure the back office system and document management system are kept up to date in respect of the case files being managed.</p> |
| 2. | Prepare evidence and witness statements and provide submissions for appeal written representation hearings as required. |
| 3. | Support the Planning Enforcement team in their investigations and preparation of cases for enforcement action. |
| 4. | Assist when required in the production, formatting and checking for accuracy of decision notices and agenda items. |
| 5. | Deal with correspondence and telephone enquiries and provide support as part of a Duty Rota of staff as required. |
| 6. | Assist in the research and preparation of data and evidence to support the preparation of policies for the local plan and other planning documents. |
| 7. | Support the work of the Natural and Built Environment Team including the process of making of Tree Preservation Orders and applications for works to trees, Biodiversity assessments, listed building applications and conservation area appraisals. |
| 8. | Prepare electronic maps and presentations for meetings as required. |
| 9. | Support the Service in its student outreach programme and teaching as required. |
| 10. | Contribute to the continuous improvement in the delivery of customer satisfaction ensuring all work is carried out to meet agreed expectations for customer service and defined performance indicators. |
| 11. | Responsible for protecting and managing information securely, and reporting breaches or suspected information security breaches, in line with Council policies. |

Special Factors

- This Job Profile outlines the main duties and responsibilities of the position and is designed for the benefit of both the postholder and the Council in understanding the prime functions of the post. It should not be regarded as exclusive nor exhaustive as there may be other duties and requirements associated with and covered by the grading of the post.
- In particular it should be noted that the job is designed to give the post holder exposure to all elements of the Planning and Growth Service to provide an overall understanding of the Local Planning Authority. The post holder will therefore be allocated time within both the Development Management Group and the Plans, Policies and Place Making Group during their contract term on

an even basis where this is possible.

- Management have the right to vary the duties after consultation with you.

This job description sets out the duties and responsibilities of the job at the time when it was drawn up. Such duties and responsibilities may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the duties or the level of responsibility entailed. Such variations are a common occurrence and cannot in themselves justify a reconsideration of the grading of the job.

Charnwood Borough Council is seeking to promote the employment of disabled people and will make any adjustments considered reasonable to the above duties under the terms of the Equality Act 2010 to accommodate a suitable disabled candidate.

Date Revised: December 2022



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| Division: | Planning and Growth |
| Job Title: | Planning Intern |
| Grade: | C |
| Post Number: | Mxxx |

| | Essential | Desirable | How assessed |
|---|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Qualifications | | | |
| Completion of two years academic study on a planning undergraduate degree. | ✓ | | App/Doc |
| First degree in Town Planning or equivalent in a related subject area. | | ✓ | App/Doc |
| Experience | | | |
| Experience of working in a Planning service. | | ✓ | App/Int |
| Writing letters and reports. | ✓ | | App/Int |
| Skills / Knowledge | | | |
| Awareness of planning legislation and its application. | ✓ | | App/Int/Test |
| ICT knowledge and aptitude especially MS Office suite of software. | ✓ | | App/Int/Test |
| Ability to interpret plans and technical drawings. | ✓ | | App/Int/Test |
| Analysis of evidence and research and ability to make judgements based on findings. | ✓ | | App/Int/Test |
| Understanding of the planning process. | ✓ | | App/Int/Test |
| Use of specialist planning software and knowledge of planning legislation. | | ✓ | |

PERSON SPECIFICATION

| | | | |
|---|---|---|----------|
| Interpersonal Skills | | | |
| Good oral communication. | ✓ | | Int/Test |
| Presentation skills. | ✓ | | Int/Test |
| Effective negotiation skills. | | ✓ | Int/Test |
| Disposition / Attitude | | | |
| Attention to detail. | ✓ | | Int/Test |
| Ability to work on own initiative. | ✓ | | Int/Test |
| Commitment to team work. | ✓ | | Int/Test |
| Commitment to customer service and its improvement. | ✓ | | Int/Test |
| Must be self-motivated and well-organised so that agreed deadlines and standards are met. | ✓ | | Int/Test |
| Personal Circumstances | | | |
| Must be mobile throughout the Borough. | | ✓ | App/Int |
| Must be able to visit / inspect sites and buildings. | ✓ | | App/Int |
| Must have the ability to work flexibly from the office, home or remotely as required. | ✓ | | App/Int |
| An understanding of, and commitment to equal opportunities, and the ability to apply this to all situations. | ✓ | | App/Int |
| Must be able to perform all the duties and tasks of the job with reasonable adjustments, where appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. | ✓ | | |

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| Key: | |
| App = Application form | Pre = Presentation |
| Test = Test | Med = Medical questionnaire |
| Int = Interview | Doc = Documentary evidence (e.g. certificates) |

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| Prepared by: Head of Planning & Growth | Date: December 2022 |
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