

Decision under Delegated Powers

Officer Requesting Decision

Head of Planning and Growth

Officer Making the Decision

Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)

Recommendation

That subject to Council approval of the budget on 26 February 2024, with effect from 1 April 2024:

- a) the post M310 Senior Landscape Officer (grade SO2, SCP 26-28, 37 hours) is deleted
- b) A new post of Landscape Officer is created (grade PO2, SCP 33-36, 37 hours)
- c) The new post of Tree Officer is created (grade SO2, SCP 26-28, 37 hours)

Reason


To increase the capacity of the landscape and tree functions in the Planning & Growth Service and to make the posts more attractive to the jobs market.

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

SLT received a report in November 2023 setting out the case to restructure posts in the Planning and Growth Service to address capacity and skills shortages using the uplift in fee income occasioned by changes to statutory planning fees in December 2023. They heard this was worth an additional c£300k of income a year based on the 2023/24 budget. The paper explained

that while this increase was not ringfenced to planning services, the government expectation was that it should be used to support planning services. This sentiment was reaffirmed in the Written Ministerial Statement accompanying the publication of the revised NPPF on 19 December 2023.

The paper explained that investing a proportion of the fee income in planning services would help address service delivery issues and improve customer service. It would also reduce the spend on agency staff. SLT gave in principle support to the proposals subject to further information on forecast agency cost reductions and customer service improvements, which was provided in a further report on 7 February 2024.

Part of these proposals concerned post M310 Senior Landscape Officer (Grade SO2, 37 hours). The Senior Landscape Officer post provides advice on planning applications in relation to landscape impacts and supports the evidence underpinning the preparation of the local plan. The post also provides advice on making tree preservation orders and in determining applications for works to trees.

Post M310 was created in 2013 following a review of the service. The post was the amalgam of two existing part time posts dealing with landscape and trees to create one FTE doing both. Since that time the level of support required from the landscape function has increased commensurate with the scale of growth in Charnwood such that it is no longer possible for an officer to carry out the full range of duties in a fulltime role. Furthermore, following the resignation of the last post holder in March 2023 and recruitment processes, it has not been possible to find a permanent officer with the combined skills of arboriculturist and landscape architect and agency support has been required to provide a service. This situation has had a detrimental impact on the service, delaying the determination of planning applications and resulting in unprocessed tree applications presenting substantial risks to the Service.

To address this, make the post more attractive to the job market and to reduce the costs to the service arising from agency support, the post of Senior Landscape Officer has been reviewed and the arboricultural duties removed from the job description. A new fulltime post of Tree Officer is proposed to be created.

The proposed job descriptions for the two posts were subject to decisions following a Job Evaluation Panel on 26 October 2023 and graded accordingly:

- Landscape Officer (Grade PO2)
- Tree Officer (Grade SO2)

Proposals

It is proposed to delete post M310 Senior Landscape Officer (grade SO2, 37 hours) from the establishment and instead replace this with a new post of Landscape Officer (grade PO2, 37 hours). It is also proposed to create a new post of Tree Officer (grade SO2, 37 hours) on the establishment. The job

descriptions and person specifications for these two posts are attached as an appendix to this report.

These two posts form part of a wider package of changes to the service that will be considered in a later delegated decision following an organisational change process. They are being brought forward in advance of that wider review because post M310 is currently vacant and there is an urgent need to recruit a landscape and tree professional to provide business continuity.

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 at Council on 26 February 2024.

The deletion of post M310 Senior Landscape Officer (grade SO2, 37 hours) from the establishment will save £52,700 (inc on costs). The creation of the Landscape Officer post (grade PO2, 37 hours) will cost £67,600 (inc on costs). The creation of the Tree Officer post (grade SO2, 37 hours) will cost £55,600 (inc on costs).

The net increase in establishment cost from the proposed changes is therefore £69,900 (inc on costs).

The changes to the establishment proposed are subject to agreement of the budget by Council on 26 February 2024.

Comments from HR

Sally Dobrowolska – Senior Human Resources Advisor

HR agree with the proposals set out in this DD. The new posts have been job evaluated in accordance with Council process. The recruitment process will need to be followed including completion of relevant e-forms.

Financial Implications

Once the changes to the establishment have been made the cost of the posts will be met from cost centre P299 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

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
				to ensure that appropriate skills and disposition are secured.

Key Decision

No

Background Papers

SLT Reports – Planning Fees (29 November 2023) and Planning restructure (7 February 2024)

Division:	Customer Experience
Job Title:	Landscape Officer
Grade:	PO2
Post Number:	TBC
Base/Location:	Plans, Policies and Place Making
Responsible To:	Team Leader Natural & Built Environment
Responsible For:	None
Key Relationships/ Liaison with:	Officers at all levels of the organisation. Elected representatives, the public, stakeholders, internal and external customers and partners.

Job Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To contribute towards the Borough Council's place-making activities through the conservation and enhancement of Charnwood's landscape. This is to be achieved by the post holder contributing towards plan-making, decision-taking and implementation.

Main Duties and Responsibilities	
1.	Under the direction of the Group Leader, develop Local Plan policy, Design Codes and guidance in relation to landscape, that support place shaping within the Borough.
2.	Ensure the implementation of adopted development plan policies and the application of non-statutory policies, standards and guidelines through the provision of professional advice on planning applications and engagement in pre-application enquiries.
3.	To provide professional advice on a range of landscape planning aspects including landscape and visual impact of developments, landscape character, soft and hard landscape schemes, sustainable landscape issues, including reviewing the monitoring and implementation of landscape schemes.
4.	To formulate responses to the plans, policy guidance, consultation documents and circulars prepared by other Borough Council Service areas, the County Council, adjoining local authorities, regional agencies, government departments and other bodies.
5.	Prepare planning appeal evidence and appear as an expert witness for landscape related matters for the Council at Public Inquiries, Examinations in Public, Informal Hearings and court hearings as required.
6.	Prepare and present reports to Council Committees in respect of matters relating to landscape protection and related landscape enhancement matters.
7.	To contribute to and review Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessments and assist in the development of planning and design briefs/design codes for major development sites.
8.	Deal with general enquiries on landscape matters, including expert advice on

	more complex landscape issues, by telephone, in correspondence and in person.
9.	Liaise with other Council divisions, County Council departments, Town/Parish Councils and other external agencies and authorities on matters affecting landscape and design issues with attendance as necessary at meetings, presentations and exhibitions.
10.	Undertake surveys to keep under review landscape matters expected to affect the development of the Borough or the planning of its development in accordance with statutory requirements.
11.	Liaise with and assist the Planning Enforcement Team in the conduct of investigations and preparation of cases for enforcement action.
12.	To support the implementation of the government's Biodiversity Net Gain requirements through the monitoring and delivery against approved Biodiversity Net Gain plans.
13.	Assist other Team members to ensure agreed service related and corporate objectives are achieved as necessary.
14.	Assist in the preparation and maintenance of efficient research and information systems necessary to inform the plan making process and to service the information needs of other Council divisions.
15.	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 indicator.
16.	Responsible for protecting and managing information securely, and reporting breaches or suspected information security breaches, in line with Council policies.

Special Factors

This job description outlines the main duties and responsibilities of the position and is designed for the benefit of both the post holder 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 primarily to assist in the delivery of the Natural and Built Environment Team function. However, the Service is committed to the development of a flexible staff structure equipped with the broad range of skills and abilities required to ensure the attainment and maintenance of high standards of service delivery in all aspects of the Planning and Growth Service. Accordingly, the post may be seconded to assist other functions within the Service subject to overall demands upon it.

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 Prepared/Revised: October 2023



Division:	Customer Experience
Job Title:	Landscape Officer
Grade:	PO2
Post Number:	TBC

	Essential	Desirable	How assessed
Qualifications			
Degree or Diploma in landscape architecture or landscape design or related field.	✓		App/Doc
Membership of the Landscape Institute or similar appropriate professional body, or be able to demonstrate the necessary experience to be able to gain such a membership, and evidence of continuing professional development.	✓		App/Doc
Leadership Qualification such as ILM Level 3.		✓	App/Doc
Prince2 Project Management.		✓	App/Doc
Experience			
Significant relevant experience in the delivery of landscape and planning related advice, policy formulation and project delivery.	✓		App/Int
Experience of influencing, negotiating landscape matters and making decisions in order to reconcile conflicting issues and to handle sensitive situations.	✓		App/Int
Direct experience of the preparation and presentation of evidence and appearances as an expert witness at public inquiries, examinations in public or other public hearings in relation to local or strategic planning matters.		✓	App/Int

Skills/Knowledge			
Comprehensive knowledge of the Town and Country Planning Acts, Regulations and procedures and the NPPF/ NPPG in relation to the natural environment.	✓		App/Int/ Test
Able to write and present clear and concise reports in relation to more complex landscape matters.	✓		App/Test
An understanding of planning policy and the development management process	✓		App/Test
Able to use database and spreadsheet software.	✓		App/Test
Relevant experience of Microsoft Office.	✓		App/Int/ Test
Familiarity with GIS.		✓	App/Int/ Test
Use of specialist planning software (M3/Assure/Uniform databases).		✓	App/Int/ Test
Interpersonal Skills			
Knowledge and skills to be able to communicate clearly and effectively with a wide variety of people including other agencies and organisations.	✓		Int/Test
Effective Negotiation skills.	✓		App/Int
Must be able to work as part of a small team with an ability to be objective, pragmatic, flexible and adaptable.	✓		App/Int
Must be enthusiastic, self motivated, well organised, and able to work to agreed deadlines with minimum supervision.	✓		App/Int
Able to influence others.	✓		App/Int
Presentation Skills		✓	App/Int
Must be tactful and diplomatic in face to face situations and over the telephone.	✓		App/Int

Commitment to Customer Service and its improvement.	✓		App/Int
Personal Circumstances			
Must be mobile throughout the Borough.	✓		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.	✓		App/Int

Key: App = Application form Test = Test Int = Interview		Pre = Presentation Med = Medical questionnaire Doc = Documentary evidence (e.g. certificates)
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Prepared by: Group Leader Plans Policies and Place Making Date: October 2023



Division:	Customer Experience
Job Title:	Tree Officer
Grade:	SO2
Post Number:	TBC
Base/Location:	Plans, Policies and Place Making
Responsible To:	Team Leader Natural & Built Environment
Responsible For:	None
Key Relationships/ Liaison with:	Elected members, the public, stakeholders, customers and partners.

Job Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To act to conserve and enhance the Borough's trees, through the implementation and review of the statutory development plan for the Borough, advising on planning applications and in the provision of guidance to the Council and its customers upon the implications of new legislation, policy guidance and initiatives advanced by other bodies and agencies.

Main Duties and Responsibilities	
1.	Assist in the formulation of appropriate responses to the plans, policy guidance, consultation documents and circulars prepared by other Borough Council Service areas, the County Council, adjoining local authorities, regional agencies, government departments and other bodies.
2.	Assist in the implementation of adopted planning policies and the application of non-statutory policies, standards and guidelines through the provision of expert tree advice on more complex planning applications and engagement in pre-application enquiry processes.
3.	Support the preparation of reports to Council Committees in respect of matters relating to trees.
4.	Deal with applications for works to trees and statutory matters relating to the preparation, review and consideration of Tree Preservation Orders, including preparing evidence and appearance as necessary as an expert witness for the Council at public inquiries, examinations in public and other public hearings.
5.	Liaise with and assist the planning enforcement team in the conduct of investigations and preparation of cases for enforcement action.
6.	Deal with general enquiries on tree matters, including expert advice on more complex issues, by telephone, in correspondence and in person.
7.	Liaise with other Council divisions, County Council departments, Town/Parish Councils and other external agencies and authorities on matters affecting trees with attendance as necessary at meetings, presentations and exhibitions.

8.	Undertake surveys to keep under review tree matters expected to affect the development of the Borough or the planning of its development in accordance with statutory requirements.
9.	To support the implementation of the government's Biodiversity Net Gain requirements through the monitoring and delivery against approved Biodiversity Net Gain plans.
10.	Assist other Team members to ensure agreed service related and corporate objectives are achieved as necessary.
11.	Assist in the preparation and maintenance of efficient research and information systems necessary to inform the plan making process and to service the information needs of other Council divisions.
12.	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 indicator.
13.	Responsible for protecting and managing information securely, and reporting breaches or suspected information security breaches, in line with Council policies.

Special Factors

This job description outlines the main duties and responsibilities of the position and is designed for the benefit of both the post holder 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 primarily to assist in the delivery of the Natural and Built Environment Team function. However, the Service is committed to the development of a flexible staff structure equipped with the broad range of skills and abilities required to ensure the attainment and maintenance of high standards of service delivery in all aspects of Planning and Regeneration Service.

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 Prepared/Revised: October 2023



Division:	Customer Experience
Job Title:	Tree Officer
Grade:	SO2
Post Number:	TBC

	Essential	Desirable	How assessed
Qualifications			
Degree or Diploma in a related field or substantial experience of working in a regulatory arena relating to trees and their protection.	✓		App/Doc
Membership of an appropriate professional body.	✓		App/Doc
Experience			
Practical experience in the protection of trees.	✓		App/Int
Experience of appeals or other quasi-judicial processes related to tree matters.		✓	App/Int
Appearance as an expert witness at public inquiry.		✓	App/Int
Skills/Knowledge			
Demonstrate an understanding of major aspects of current legislation and Government advice relevant to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.	✓		App/Int/ Test
Able to write and present clear and concise reports in relation to more complex landscape matters.	✓		App/Test
An understanding of planning policy and the development management process.	✓		App/Test

Able to use database and spreadsheet software.	✓		App/Test
Relevant experience of Microsoft Office.	✓		App/Int
Familiarity with GIS and Use of specialist planning software (M3/Assure/Uniform databases).		✓	App/Test
Interpersonal Skills			
Good verbal skills with the confidence and clarity to deal sensitively with delicate situations.	✓		Int/Test
Negotiation skills.	✓		App/Int
Other requirements			
Disposition/Attitude			
Must be able to organise own work programme and contribute effectively to a team effort.	✓		App
Must be willing and able to be flexible and adaptable.	✓		App/Int
Ability to be self-motivated.	✓		App/Int
Able to work under pressure and meet strict targets with minimum supervision.	✓		App/Int
Commitment to the delivery of excellent customer service.	✓		App/Int
Personal Circumstances			
Must be mobile throughout the Borough.	✓		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.	✓		App/Int

Key:**App = Application form****Test = Test****Int = Interview****Pre = Presentation****Med = Medical questionnaire****Doc = Documentary evidence (e.g. certificates)****Prepared by:** Group Leader Plans Policies and Place Making**Date:** October 2023