

CANDIDATE BRIEFING PACK

Chief Accountant

Prepared for Folkestone and Hythe District Council

October 2022



Penna

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Welcome Letter

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in Folkestone and Hythe District Council. We have recently been ranked fourth in the Best Not for Profit Companies to work for in the UK and that's not by accident - our people are our biggest assets and our 'one team' culture delivers great services for our residents.

We've also launched our new corporate plan, Creating Tomorrow Together 2021 – 2031, which sets out our key service ambitions for the district over the next 10 years and outlines our priorities for action to make Folkestone and Hythe an even better place to live, work and visit:

- Positive Community Leadership
- A Thriving Environment
- A Vibrant Economy
- Quality Homes and Infrastructure

We are recruiting for three new finance roles who will be at the forefront of robust financial governance alongside playing a key role working with departments in delivering our ambitious plan.

Whilst we have three roles available at this time, one has been newly created and another become vacant after our current postholder retires after 40 years service with us. So needless to say, we are a great team and have some really exciting work ahead with many ambitious projects to get involved within, such as the Otterpool Park Garden Town. This is a unique opportunity to get involved in such a project at its early stages, and to be part of the team considering the financial and technical implications as it progresses. We need you to have a positive, proactive attitude and be able to deliver success in partnership with colleagues & elected members.

I hope that the unique range and scale of the ambitious and exciting projects proposed in our district will encourage you to make an application to join our finance team, to further your career and to gain unique experience.

If you have the vision, energy, creativity and enthusiasm for required, combined with a passion for the public sector then please make an application to join us.

For more information on this opportunity, please contact our recruitment partners at Penna in the first instance.

Kind regards,
Charlotte

About Folkestone and Hythe District Council

Folkestone & Hythe District Council serves more than 53,000 households and 5,000 businesses in one of the most diverse, vibrant and well-connected parts of Kent's south coast.

Under an hour away from London via High Speed rail, Folkestone is the civic heart of the district and the base for the council headquarters. The residents of Folkestone & Hythe are represented by 30 councillors covering the districts' 13 wards. The current political composition of the council is: Conservatives - 11, Green Party – 6, Labour Party - 5, Liberal Democrats - 3, UKIP – 2, and Independents - 3.

The council's corporate plan - Creating Tomorrow Together – outlines our bold ambitions to 2030 and our focus on fostering a vibrant economy and a thriving environment whilst demonstrating positive community leadership and ensuring our residents, tenants and leaseholders benefit from quality homes and infrastructure.

Exciting changes are happening in the district, including rapid expansion in the number of homes and jobs – our new Garden Town will deliver up to 10,000 new homes and land for business use over the next 30 years.

Several other high profile proactive development projects are also being pushed forward by the council including the regeneration of key town centre sites and the creation of a new leisure centre.

Our council is transforming and modernising with digital first principles and an inclusive attitude to agile and remote working. This coupled with our regeneration ambitions, long-term vision and sound financial management means we are in a strong position to positively shape our future for the benefit of all residents.

To find out more about our council please visit folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

About Folkestone and Hythe

Folkestone and Hythe is an extraordinary place to live, work and visit.

Twenty-six miles of stunning coastline extend from the creative buzz of Folkestone and the elegance of Hythe to the big sky country of Romney Marsh and the UK's only desert at Dungeness. Unique landscapes, art, heritage, culture and foodie experiences combine to create an extraordinary place which also happens to be one of the sunniest places in the UK.

The district regularly enjoys national coverage – particularly Folkestone with the recently restored Harbour Arm becoming a popular destination for events, music, eating and discovering the history of the area. Internationally renowned is the Folkestone Triennial, an arts festival held every three years, where site-specific artworks are commissioned around the town. Select pieces are retained after each event creating a cultural legacy that draws in thousands to an ever-growing collection of public art - from pieces by Anthony Gormley to Yoko Ono.

Folkestone & Hythe is also well connected with the M20 running through the district and providing easy access to local towns and villages, the national motorway network, Eurotunnel and the Port of Dover. The district also has excellent connectivity to central London too via high speed rail services, with trains between Folkestone Central and London St Pancras taking as little as 54 minutes.

To find out more about Folkestone & Hythe please visit <http://www.folkestoneandhythe.co.uk/>

Advertisement

Chief Accountant

Folkestone & Hythe Council

£57,000 – £63,000 plus car allowance of £3,900

Folkestone & Hythe is a vibrant, connected and energetic district located on Kent's south coast. Thanks to the high-speed rail, it's just under an hour away from London. And it's where you'll find some fantastic benefits, including corporate memberships and reward schemes, an Employee Assistance Programme, the Local Government Pension Scheme, and much more.

About the role

As our Chief Accountant, you'll tackle a new role with a big agenda, including lots of great project work. We're the primary lender for a 30-year project to build 8,500 new homes in a new garden town. As part of this, you'll help us review the progress, advice on the financial and accounting implications and, providing guidance to Members and senior leaders at every step. This scale for a district is unique. And the challenge for you is unique, too.

You'll help the Chief Financial Services Officer and Director of Corporate Services meet our statutory, regulatory and professional obligations. This is about ensuring compliance, as well as effective financial administration and stewardship. To support our decision-making, you'll ensure that financial reporting is accurate, relevant and timely. And you'll help complete budget monitoring and preparation of our annual financial statements to specified standards and deadlines.

About you

We're looking for someone who brings at least four years' experience of working within a local government finance team. This includes extensive experience of supporting and advising senior stakeholders and leaders. Ideally, you also have experience in management, closedown, collection fund and statement of accounts.

In terms of technical capability, you bring a CCAB (Accountancy) qualification, as well as the detailed knowledge required for effective budget monitoring and Group Accounts. You're very competent with IT (particularly Microsoft Office) and financial systems. And you're passionate about identifying new opportunities to use technology to improve performance.

You're equally good with people, and excellent at building relationships at all levels.

Applications will be considered as they are submitted.

We reserve the right to close the vacancy once enough suitable applications are received

How to apply

For further information or to apply please click [here](#).

For a confidential discussion, please contact Andrew Barton on 07922 386432 or andrew.barton@penna.com

Job Description

Job Title	Finance Lead Specialist (Chief Accountant)
Behavioural Framework Level	4
Grade	J
Reports To	Chief Financial Services Officer
Politically Restricted Post	Yes
DBS Requirement	N/A

Responsibilities

- To support the Chief Financial Services Officer and the Director of Corporate Services (Chief Finance Officer) in ensuring that their statutory, regulatory and professional obligations are met with regard to maintaining effective financial administration and stewardship for the Council and associated organisations.
- Ensure that budget preparation, budget monitoring and preparation of the Council's annual financial statements are completed to the specified standards and deadlines.
- Provide professional advice to Members and to service management on the financial implications of current and proposed service delivery activities.
- Provide professional support (for example, financial modelling, options appraisal and business planning) for new initiatives and opportunities to enable informed decision-making.
- Carry out professional and technical research to ensure that all financial management activity and reporting is in line with current best practice and legislation/regulation. To include providing timely advice to the Chief Financial Services Officer and the Chief Finance Officer (Director of Corporate Services) on the impacts of any changes or developments and the required action to address them.
- To support the Chief Financial Services Officer in the preparation of estimates for inclusion within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- Ensure that financial reporting is accurate, relevant and timely to support effective decision-making and meet statutory responsibilities.
- Ensure that the council's financial record-keeping arrangements are managed in line with legislation, the council's Constitution and current professional standards.
- Support the development and review of key financial strategies, returns and plans
- Lead the councils management of the Collection Fund, ensuring that all relevant accounting is undertaken, return made and monitoring of pooling arrangements undertaken.
- Working with the Chief Financial Services officer manage the reserves position of the Council.
- Support the Chief Financial Services Officer with ongoing review of the Accountancy team's service plan, including monitoring delivery against targets/deadlines and taking action to address shortfalls in performance.
- Lead, develop and motivate accountancy staff, by providing direction, identifying emerging issues and determining priorities.
- To lead the management of the succession plan for the accountancy team, including any resulting training plan and actively developing trainees within the service area.
- Address any staff performance issues and identify any required training support/plans while adhering to the Council's Capability & Disciplinary policies.
- Monitor all sickness absence within the teams and identify any triggers/patterns. Work with HR to arrange regular sickness absence monitoring meetings and devise an agreed improvement plan (with the individual).
- Authorise overtime and expenses claims.
- Identify and deliver continuous improvement/best practice initiatives.

- Network with professional and technical contacts and external advisors to identify best practice and follow up opportunities/challenges identified.
- Lead service development projects to deliver agreed outcomes/benefits.
- Taking lead responsibility for liaising with external audit and responding to audit queries during their work on the annual statement of accounts.
- Taking lead responsibility for liaising with internal audit when carrying out reviews of financial processes and taking lead responsibility for agreeing management actions in response to their recommendations and for implementing them.
- Make effective use of resources allocated for service delivery, including managing the team budget.
- Optimise the use of technology in service delivery and identify new opportunities for investment to improve performance.
- To undertake any required procurement activity within the service area in a timely manner and within the requirements of the Financial Procedure Rules, Contract Standing Orders and the Constitutional requirements.
- To have oversight over the management of the Public Inspection to the Accounts period of inspection.
- Manage service complaints and information requests.

Autonomy

- This is a management role within the Council and the post holder will be expected to have a high level of autonomy to manage their workload and priorities with minimal managerial direction
- The post holder will have the independence to lead and shape their own specialist area & team, consulting as appropriate with the Chief Financial Services Officer for discussion, development and approval.
- The post holder will be working across a range of activities and will be expected to demonstrate the relevant initiative to oversee their development and execution.
- The postholder will be working within a broad range of legislative and regulatory requirements and will be expected to demonstrate expertise in their interpretation and resulting recommendations to others.
- The post holder must have the expertise and confidence to present to committee meetings attended by the public and press with confidence and authority, particularly when providing professional advice on the financial implications of proposed activities.
- The post holder will be expected to take decisions in consultation with the Chief Financial Services Officer to assess the adequacy of arrangements to ensure that financial reporting is accurate, relevant and timely to support effective decision-making and meets statutory responsibilities.
- The postholder will be expected to make decisions about the use of resources allocated for service delivery, including managing team budgets and deployment of their team staffing resource.
- The postholder will be expected to take decisions within the approved scheme of delegation such as journal transfers, budget virements, write offs, BACS and cheques release, Bankline urgent payment releases, late payments, VAT returns, Pooling of Capital Receipts return, loan and investment decisions for treasury management.

Role specific qualifications, experience and knowledge

- CCAB (Accountancy) qualification
- Minimum of 4 years' experience of working within a Local Government finance team.
- Extensive experience of providing professional advice to senior stakeholders and to service management within the public sector on the financial implications of current and proposed service delivery activities.

- Experience of managing activities to ensure that financial reporting is accurate, relevant and timely to support effective decision-making and meet statutory responsibilities.
- Experience of having input into the development and review of key financial strategies, returns and plans
- Leading, developing and motivating staff.
- Experience of forward planning and monitoring delivery against a delivery plan.
- Experience of developing and improving service standards.
- Managing service budgets.
- Optimising the use of technology in service delivery including identifying new opportunities for investment to improve performance.
- Skills to develop a network with professional and technical contacts and external advisors
- Excellent service and team leadership skills
- Experience of working with/advising senior stakeholders
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Proactive and committed to continued service and personal development
- Ability to adapt and proactively organise and prioritise work effectively in order to meet deadlines and maintain high standards at all times.
- Strong project management skills
- Excellent interpersonal skills with the ability to operate and build excellent working relationships at all levels
- Very competent user of IT, particularly Microsoft Office
- Very experienced in use of financial systems
- An in-depth knowledge and understanding of Local Government Finance.
- Detailed knowledge of mechanisms for effective budget monitoring.
- A technical accounting understanding of Group Accounts (desirable)

Corporate Expectations

- Adhere to the council's safeguarding policies and procedures and undertake relevant training to help protect children and vulnerable adults within the district.
- To comply with legislation, council policies and procedures including the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, Information Security Policy, the Code of Conduct for Officers and to participate in any Emergency Planning activities as required.
- To actively demonstrate the values and behaviours of the council.
- To ensure our customers are valued by taking into account their views and needs in all that we do.
- To contribute to the development and achievement of relevant corporate and service objectives by suggesting ideas for service improvements.
- To communicate openly and honestly with colleagues, members and customers.
- To undergo any training necessary to be able to fulfil the requirements of the job.
- To carry out other duties commensurate with the grade, skills, experience and qualifications of the post holder as directed and as may be required from time to time.

Specific Responsibilities

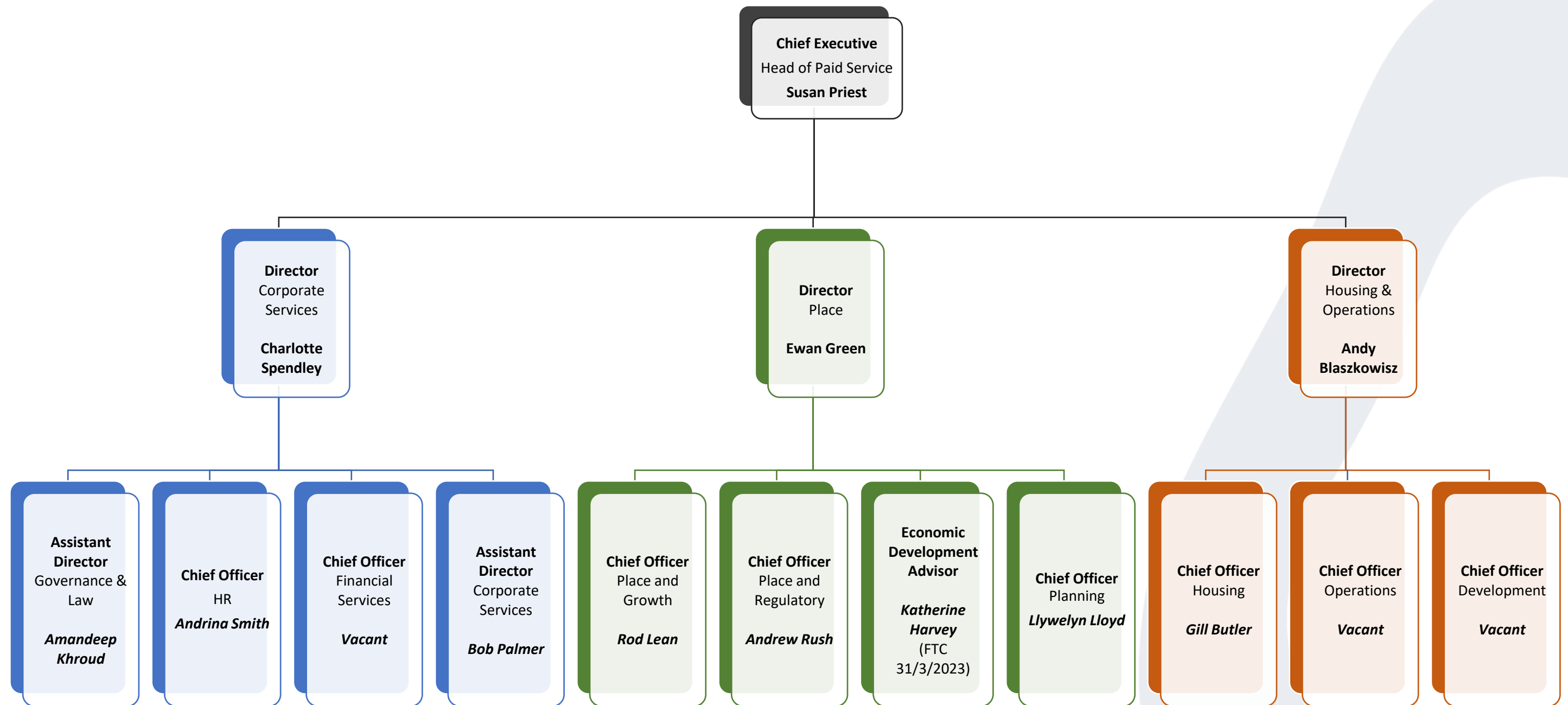
Staff	Responsible for the Accountancy team (c. 9 FTE)
Financial	Responsibility for overseeing budgets and the deployment of resources relating to their own team.

Generic Role Profile: Lead Specialist

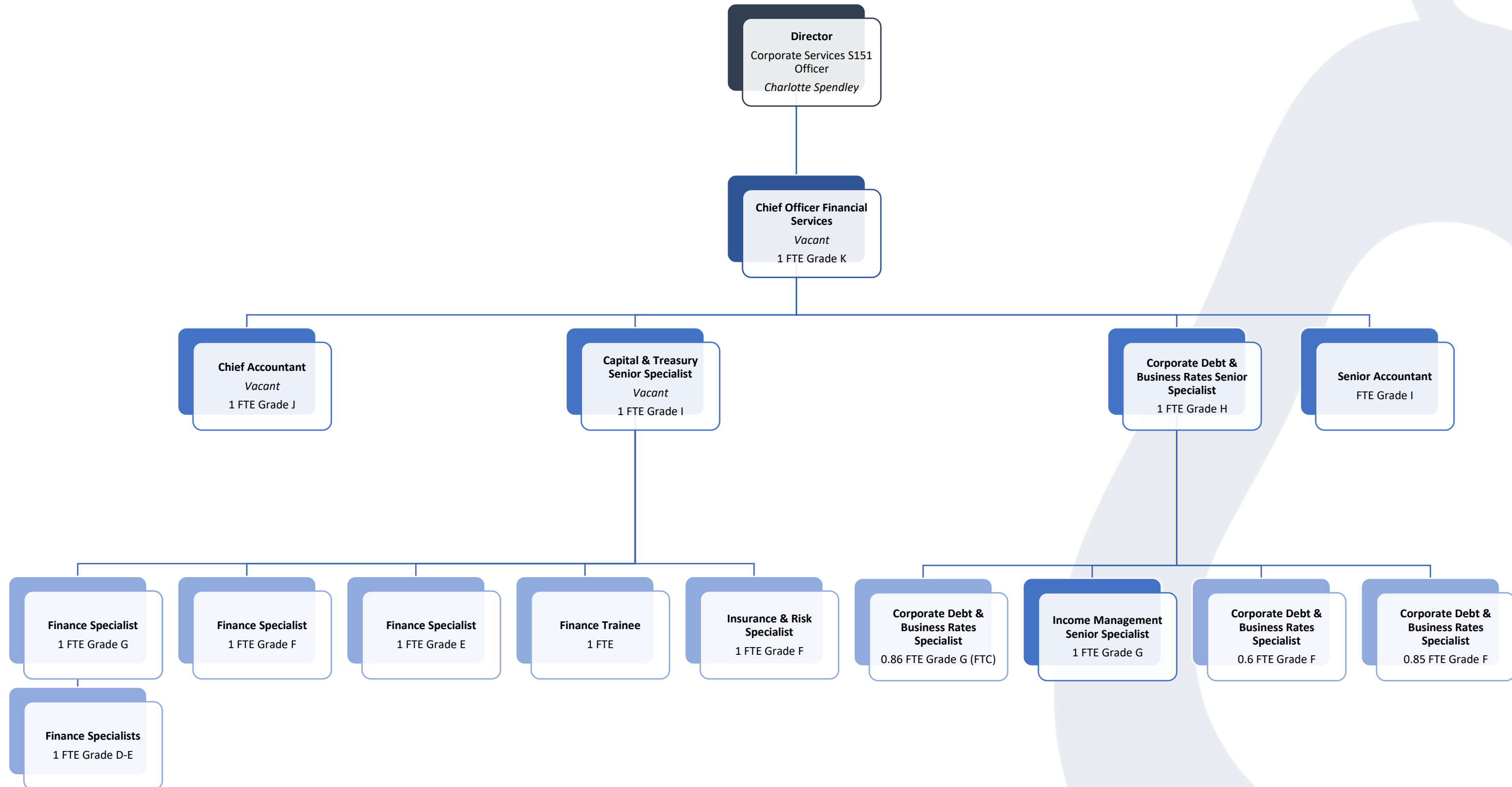
Role purpose and commercial focus	Knowledge and skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be the Council's lead professional expert providing advice to the Cabinet and the Corporate Leadership Team with a focus on supporting the delivery of key corporate projects and priorities. • Work collaboratively with the Corporate Leadership Team of the Council and stakeholders to develop and deliver the objectives of the Corporate Plan. • Drive, lead and manage change within the relevant specialist area at pace ensuring involvement and engagement with key stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The post holder will be self-sufficient in the role, with detailed expertise underpinned by significant theoretical knowledge in organisational and business concepts with the ability to apply knowledge to develop innovative solutions to highly complex problems. • Formal training / qualifications (typically degree / masters / chartered professional qualifications) may be applicable or expertise may have been obtained through extensive relevant experience. • Significant management skills including resource planning and project management • Significant experience of monitoring budgets and accounting for very large expenditures to ensure delivery within available financial resources • The post holder will be expected to have advanced theoretical and practical knowledge across a relevant service area plus detailed organisational knowledge and awareness of the political environment • Knowledge of advancements in the relevant specialist areas including different delivery models and the use of digital technology • The post holder will require excellent business analytical skills and an ability to retain complex information in order to translate strategy into delivery plans and programmes.
Organising and forward focus	Communicating and Influencing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for establishing policy, performance monitoring and reporting frameworks over the medium and long term, and delivering on-going improvement. • Lead change programmes within the specialist area responding to complex and changing situations by using creative problem solving and bringing new thinking, delivery mechanisms and solutions to the council. • To keep up to date with and implement any changes in so far as they apply to the role, be they new or amended legal requirements, internal or external policies or any council or delegated decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of building sound and productive multi-agency, cross-council partnerships, engaging others in a credible, persuasive way in order to influence the desired outcome. • Ability to resolve a wide range of issues relating to the specialist area which may be complex and contentious whilst tailoring the response to the appropriate audience (eg members of the public or member of parliament) accurately with tact and diplomacy • Develop and present reports/presentations to the Chief Executive and the wider CLT/SMT to create buy-in and support in setting the council's future direction.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent reporting will be required, including reviewing reports from officers within the specialist area or the wider council, which will vary but include analysing business cases, realisation of benefits data, strengths & weaknesses of proposals and ideas or requirements for improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop detailed reports, documents and presentations for a range of audiences ensuring accuracy of information and data Represent the Council at county and national meetings, conferences and events.
Scope of role	Demands of role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role has a major responsibility for the relevant specialist area in the development of strategies and policies which may have impact upon the wider council The post holder has considerable discretion over their specialist area with accountability for decisions made The post holder has responsibility for the relevant specialist area including reviewing the working practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a highly demanding and high profile role subject to high levels of scrutiny of recommendations and decisions both internally and externally. Adept and resilient at managing resistance to change. The post holder will be subject to unavoidable interruptions which may create conflicting demands on work plans and agreed deadlines. The post holder is expected to produce long term plans for their specialist area which will have numerous wide ranging and very complex aspects to be taken into consideration.

Senior Management Structure Chart



Finance Structure Chart



How to Apply

This guidance contains important information to help with your application:

- Please apply by submitting a CV and Covering Letter (no more than four sides of A4 in length per document aligned to the person specification). Please also include your contact details.
- Please ensure your full employment history is outlined in your CV; and that where there are essential criteria, competencies and/or qualifications you make clear how you meet these. We may wish to verify this information during the recruitment process.
- Please provide the details of two referees. Note that we will only approach referees for candidates proceeding to final selection and only with your permission. Please clearly indicate whether we can approach each referee before the selection date.
- Please share with us in your supporting statement, the values and behaviours that you bring to your leadership, and how you will transfer your skills and experience into this role.
- Please complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form when you upload your details.
- Please return your application by the closing date – no applications will be accepted once the long listing process has begun.
- Following long listing, you will be contacted directly by a Penna consultant to update you on the status of your application.
- At any point throughout the process our retained consultants at Penna will be happy to help you with information, insight and guidance about the process and our clients.

The following timetable sets out the key dates in the recruitment process:

Date	Activity
Closing Date	Friday 18th November 2022
Shortlist Meeting	Monday 28th November 2022
Psychometric Online Testing	W/C 28th November 2022
Stakeholder Panels & Final Interviews	Monday 12th and Wednesday 14th December 2022

To apply for this role, please click [here](#).

For further information or confidential discussion, please contact Andrew Barton on 07922 386432 or andrew.barton@penna.com