

Sevenoaks District Council

Graduate Planning Officer (Career Grade) Candidate Pack



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Platinum
Until 2022

The logo for Sevenoaks District Council, featuring a row of green trees above the word 'Sevenoaks' in a bold, sans-serif font, with 'DISTRICT COUNCIL' in a smaller font below it.

Graduate Planning Officer (Career Grade)

Salary: Up to £26,107 plus 10% Market Related Payment and an essential car allowance of up to £1,239.

Do you have a passion for Planning and are you looking for a challenge?

We are looking for a Graduate Planning Officer to join our dynamic team of Planners at the busiest planning authority in Kent!

This role is key to the success of the Planning department ensuring that all applications are processed accurately.

You will manage your own caseload, dealing with a variety of applications, as well as pre-application enquires. You will need to be well organised with a commitment to accuracy and meeting deadlines and as part of your development here at Sevenoaks, you will be allocated a dedicated senior officer to help mentor you and enhance your planning skills.

So if you have:

- A degree in Town Planning or related subject.
- Full Driving License with a vehicle available for work purposes.
- Excellent communication skills.
- A dedication to providing high quality customer service.

Then we would love you to be part of the Planning journey at Sevenoaks.

Do you want to know more?

Please contact Alison Salter on 01732 227337 or Aaron Hill on 01732 227494 to have a chat about the role and to find out about some of the projects we are working on.

Meet the team! - watch this short [video](#) to find out more about our Planning Team.

Need advice on how to ensure you have the best chance of being shortlisted?

Read the Job Description and Personal Specification attached to the role and ensure that your supporting statement explains how you meet the essential requirements as your application will be judged against these criteria.



Closing date: Sunday 19 September 2021

Interviews dates: Thursday 23 or Friday 24 September 2021

About the Council

Sevenoaks District Council is a unique place to work. It's a place where positive and passionate people deliver some of the very best services in local government. We are honoured to be recognised as one of the most efficient, well managed Councils in the country, an achievement we work hard to maintain.

There are very few Councils that still collect all the rubbish and recycling every week using their own team of people. We are exceptionally proud that the people who work here care deeply about what they do, that they are creative, embrace risk and work hard to deliver exceptional services to our customers and to improve the Sevenoaks District. It's our team of people that makes Sevenoaks District Council unique.

We've worked hard to develop a no 'blame culture' among the people that work here. It's a place where staff take responsibility for the work they do and are empowered to take the decisions that help them to do their job effectively. We encourage new ideas and innovation and provide people with the support and training they need to become the very best at what they do.

Our mantra of 'the customer is anyone who isn't me' helps to grow strong and positive working relationships across our Council services, and ensures our residents, businesses and partners receive the very highest quality of service each time they contact us.

Recruiting the right people to our team is incredibly important to us and instrumental to our success. We value personal qualities as much as we do the skills and knowledge to do the job. We want people who can embrace our culture, that have ambition and determination and have the ability to shape our future.

Our vision

We're committed to delivering excellent services. This means we are ambitious for our staff, our customers and our Council. Together we work to shape the District for future generations to make it a great place to live, work and enjoy.

Our mission

To work smarter with an empowering culture, a focus on wellbeing and a dynamic and innovative approach.

The Sevenoaks District provides a great range of housing options whether you are looking to rent or buy.

Many of our staff live outside of the District. With excellent links by road and rail it makes Sevenoaks District Council an employer that is accessible from most parts of Kent and further afield.

The Council is fortunate to have its own car park which, increasingly rarely, is free to all staff to use. The Council also supports car sharing and is a member of the cycle to work scheme.

Much of the District is surrounded by beautiful countryside, but our towns and villages have excellent transport links, good schools and a vibrant local economies.

Amongst the national chain stores are thriving local businesses, there are great places to eat and drink and a wonderful range of attractions for days out with friends and family.

The Sevenoaks District has three leisure centres, a range of local sports clubs and its own theatre. So if you have an interest in sport, film, comedy and stage there is something for you.

Transport

Sevenoaks mainline train station is a short walk from the Council offices and regular trains take approximately 30 minutes into central London.

The M25, M20 and A21 are all within a short drive of the Council offices.

Gatwick airport is just over a 30 minute drive and Heathrow airport is just over an hour's drive away.

Sevenoaks town

The Council's offices are based a short stroll away from the heart of Sevenoaks town. Sevenoaks is a busy town centre with a wide variety of shops, restaurants and cafes. There is a regular weekly market, as well as a choice of supermarkets, a theatre and a cinema.

The town also has the advantage of the wonderful Knole Park, including its deer, just a few minutes walk from the door of the offices for those that like to get away from it all during their lunch break.

The local area

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S

Strong sense of pride in our district

E

Enthusiastic and committed

V

Valuing others, valuing each other

E

Empowered to achieve

N

No blame culture

O

Open to new ideas; dedicated to developing talent

A

Ambitious with our community

K

Keep learning; keep improving

S

Sharing services; working closely with others

Annual Leave

You will be given a generous annual leave allowance of 24 days (plus an additional 5 days depending on having Continuous Local Government Service) as at 1 April. You will be eligible to buy additional leave or have an increased salary by selling annual leave.

Pension

We are part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). There is a 50/50 section which enables a member to pay half rate contributions for half the benefits. The LGPS is a contributory scheme that requires contributions from both employer and employee. The rate Sevenoaks as the employer currently pays is 18.7%. Your contribution rate of up to 6.5% would be based on your salary.

Health and wellbeing benefits

Free and confidential employee assistance programme

Confidential and expert advice in many areas, including family, legal, financial and consumer issues.

Regular onsite health check appointments available

We regularly offer mini health checks with our onsite Occupational Health Advisor, who offer checks on blood pressure, 'Know your numbers', body mass index, weight, risk of diabetes, stress management tips and 'Take a Walk' tips.

We also offer onsite free flu vaccinations and discounted osteopathy treatments.

Eye care

We offer eye care vouchers on request every two years to staff who use computers for a significant part of their work.

Financial benefits

Free staff car parking

Onsite staff car park, free of charge to everyone.

Cycle to work scheme

You can get a new bike for a significantly reduced cost by saving on tax and National Insurance (and paying for it monthly through your salary).

Staff Benefits

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Season ticket loan

We offer season ticket loans up to a maximum of £5,000, repayable over 12 months.

Car loan

You can apply for a loan up to a maximum of £10,000 to purchase a car, repayable over a maximum of five years at a low rate of interest.

Professional fees

Staff in roles where ongoing membership of a recognised professional body, (where this membership is gained through a qualification), is an essential requirement in the person specification for their job can claim the cost of one membership fee per year.

Recognition, Learning and Development

We believe all our employees have the potential to grow, both in their work role and personally, and endeavor to provide opportunities for this growth. We work within recognised good practice guidelines, including Investors in People, to ensure both the quality and quantity of training and development is relevant and “fit for purpose”.

The Talent in Me (TiM)

TiM is open to everyone and there are more than 60 courses available to choose from. Courses are ‘bite-sized’. Each one takes one to two hours to complete and are delivered by our own in-house service experts or external providers.

E learning

We offer e-learning courses that enable you to train at your desktop, working at your own pace wherever and whenever you want.

Coaching

We offer a tailored coaching programme with a number of professionally trained internal volunteer coaches, designed specifically to support staff performance and development and our culture, with a focus on specific skills and goals.

Apprenticeships

Any member of staff can apply to undertake an apprenticeship. There are now over 200 new apprenticeship standards with more in development.



Family friendly policies

Maternity leave

All pregnant employees are entitled to up to 52 weeks' maternity leave regardless of length of service. Staff who have worked for us for more than 12 months by the time their baby is born receive enhanced maternity pay of the first six weeks paid at 90% of the weekly salary.

Paid paternity leave

Fathers to be or employees who will share the responsibility with a partner for bringing up a child, may have the right to Statutory Paternity Leave and Pay. Employees who have worked for us for more than 12 months by the time their baby is born receive enhanced paternity pay of two weeks full pay.

Flexible working

We are proud to offer a range of flexible working arrangements to all of our staff. We are happy to consider reduced hours, job shares, home working and more, ensuring the needs of the organisation continue to be met.

Other staff benefits

We participate in the Kaarp Benefits Scheme, a voluntary benefit scheme for local authority employees. The Benefits change regularly but include:

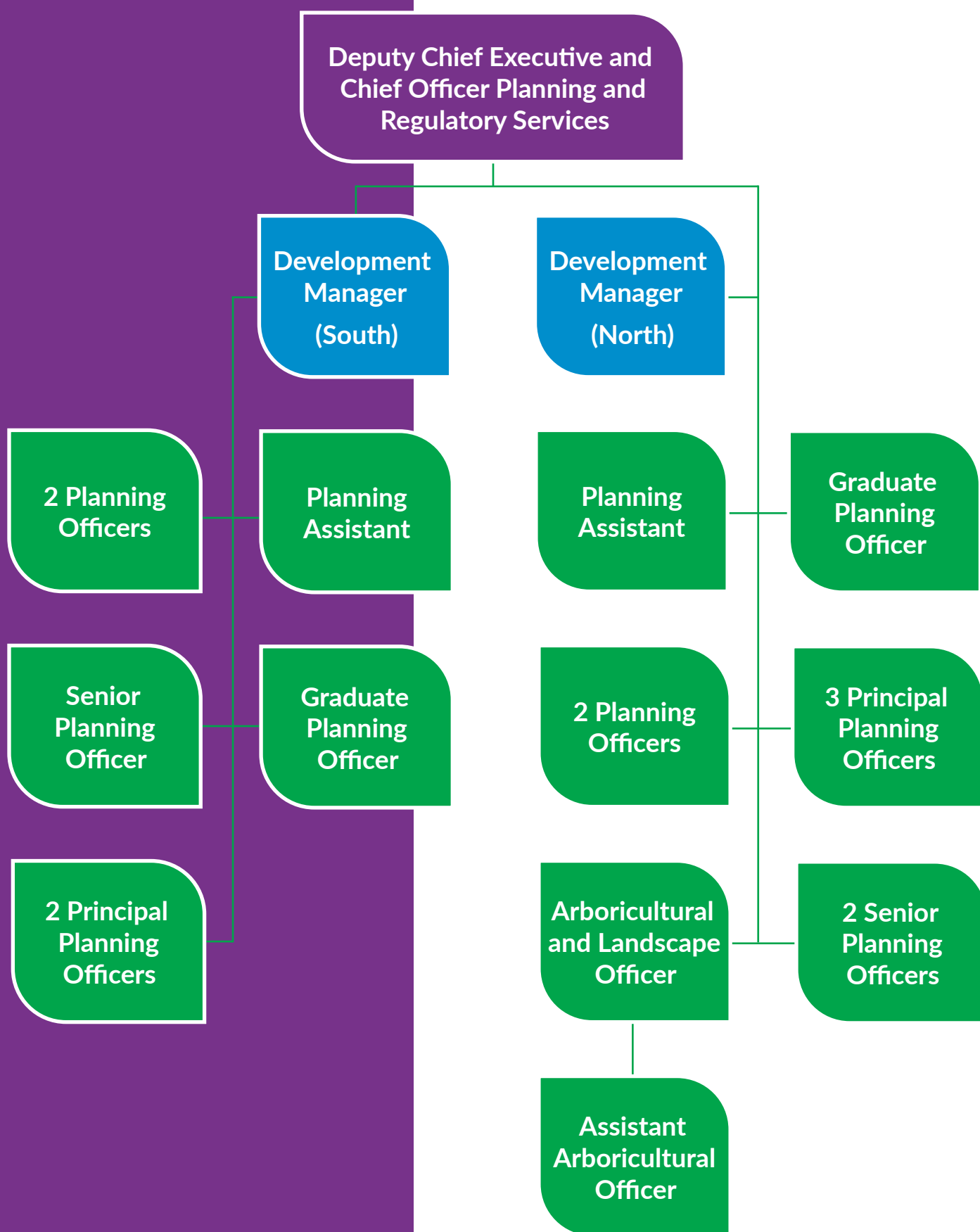
- Activities - discounted theme park entry and/or hotel rooms.
- Finance - special deals, insurance and personal finance.
- Health - money off many sports and fitness centres and golf courses.
- Motoring - discount car club, reduced breakdown cover, car servicing/MOTs and money off driving lessons.
- Shopping - many deals and offers.
- Travel - A travel club, discounts on holiday insurance, hotels and airport parking.
- Local discounts – these include many offers and discounts for restaurants, hotel rooms, hairdressers, dry cleaners and more.

Staff Benefits

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The structure of the Team



Title of post: Graduate Planner (Career Grade)

Grade: Band C1 (Career Grade)

Reports to: Development Team Manager and Principal Planners

Purpose of post

To ensure that applications for development, etc. within the area are processed within agreed performance targets

Key activities

- To process and undertake professional / technical evaluations of planning applications, enforcement cases, community infrastructure levy cases and development proposals and to make recommendations thereon.
- To give advice to and undertake negotiations with applicants and others on development proposals, enforcement cases, planning applications and pre-application enquiries.
- The preparation of reports on development proposals, enforcement cases and planning applications and to present these cases to the Development Control Committee.
- To provide colleagues with help as may be required to assist in the processing of planning applications and appeals. To work together as a team.
- To respond to enquires regarding the need for planning permission and provide excellent service to all customers.
- To prepare statements for written representation appeals.
- To comply with the Council's Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities Policies.
- To participate in any relevant training for the duties of this post and to achieve the key objectives of the Council
- To participate fully in the Council's staff appraisal scheme.
- To comply with the Council's Safeguarding policy.
- To embrace the values and behaviours of the Council.
- To carry out such other duties as may be reasonably required by a Development Team Manager.

Job description

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Other conditions

- Essential car user as appropriate.

Location

Sevenoaks District Council, Council Offices,
Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG

Approach

Essential

- Ability to recognise the importance and value of development management and policy planning in an area of pressure and constraint
- An understanding of the effects that planning has on people and communities
- Ability and desire to provide effective and efficient service to all customers
- Team player
- Ability to devise and manage own work programme and manage multiple deadlines.

Skills, experience and qualifications

Essential

- Relevant First degree or working towards relevant first degree
- Knowledge of planning policy and the planning applications process and some experience of working in a planning office
- Good report writing
- Good communication and negotiation skills
- Awareness of public expectations of the planning process
- Ability to use IT packages including Microsoft Word, Outlook

Desirable

- Seeking to study or studying for an RTPI recognised Masters or post graduate Diploma or equivalent
- Experience of dealing with planning applications in either Local Government or a Private Practice setting

Other

Essential

- Commitment to undertake any relevant training
- Flexibility in attitude to work i.e. willingness to take on additional tasks
- Full Driving Licence and use of vehicle for work purposes

Qualifications and/or experience

- A levels or equivalent and
- no or very limited practical experience in a Development Management section or relevant planning private practice organisation

Expected to undertake a Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) accredited degree relevant to the provision of a planning service and apply for student membership of the RTPI.

Main role – general terms

- To manage and maintain a case load of minor and other planning applications and make recommendations
- To give advice to and undertake negotiations with applicants and others on allocated applications
- With guidance and supervision from a senior officer, to give advice on pre application submissions
- To be part of the duty officer rota

Expected competencies

Effective communication

- Delivery of clear and concise communications verbally – face to face, in writing, by email and by phone
- Demonstration of listening skills
- Attends meetings/seminars to keep up to date
- Knowledgeable of who to seek advice from both within the service and in the wider Council
- Provides responses to email and verbal requests in a timely manner

Continuous improvement

- Keen and eager to identify and seek out relevant improvement opportunities via course, self-improvement and other training opportunities
- Keeps up to date with relevant developments in planning including technology and legislation
- Shares new knowledge and skills with others

Customer focus

- Delivers and demonstrates excellent customer care by being helpful, courteous, respectful, accessible, responsive, knowledgeable and patient
- Respects customer confidentiality where appropriate
- Actively listens to and responds to customer needs with relevant action

- Looks to and seeks advice regarding problem solving for the customer
- Able to deliver difficult information to the customer whilst remaining calm and in control

Planning and organising

- Follows all our procedures and guidelines appropriately
- Develops and use systems to help prioritise, organise and keep track of own workload
- Knows the status of own workload at all times
- Uses time and resources efficiently to set and meet deadlines
- Can ask for help to adjust plans to cope with the unexpected

Working with others

- Works well with a variety of different customers
- Treats the team and others with respect and in a professional manner
- Actively shares ideas and information
- Builds up constructive relationships
- Actively listens to others' points of view before taking action

Move to level two – on successful completion of an accredited degree and demonstration of the competencies.

There maybe the potential to accelerate progression through the grade by taking on additional duties and job swaps within the Planning Service.

Level two – Grade D

Qualifications and or experience

- Undergraduate degree or equivalent and
- studying for a relevant Masters or post graduate diploma in planning and
- up to two years' experience in a Development Management section or relevant planning private practice organisation

Expected to be a Licentiate membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute

Main role – general terms

- To manage and maintain a case load of planning applications, make recommendations and present cases to Development Control Committee as required
- To give advice to and undertake negotiations with applicants and others on allocated applications

- To give advice on pre application submissions
- To be part of the duty officer rota

Expected competencies – building on level one

Effective communication

- Builds effective two way communication with their team and others including customers
- Demonstration consultation prior to decision making
- Engages with team discussion on planning matters
- Actively seeks ways to refresh communication in order to encourage engagement

Continuous improvement

- Assists the less confident to put their ideas forward
- Inspires others to be creative
- Participates in the formulation of team objectives in order to improve performance
- Brings new ideas to the table for consideration
- Demonstrates a desire to exceed our standards and competencies

Customer focus

- Consistently strives to give a positive customer experience regardless of outcome
- Actively tries to put customers at ease and explain carefully our planning processes and actions needed
- Consistently evaluates whether they are acting in line with our requirements for obsessive customer care and acts or adapts behaviour as appropriate
- Proactively addresses internal and external complaints

Planning and organising

- Plans workload, prioritises accurately and allocates time appropriately to ensure that planning application and other targets are met
- Keeps others informed of current work
- Able to pre-empt issues through clear planning and reviewing
- Copes with set backs without panic – demonstrates a calm approach

Working with others

- Delivers high quality work regardless of pressure
- Sees the teams goals as equally important as their own
- Demonstrates sensitivity to the feelings of others

- Actively works with others to resolve conflict internally and externally

Move to level three – on successful completion of a masters or post graduate diploma and demonstration of the competencies.

There may be the potential to accelerate progression through the grade by taking on additional duties and job swaps within the Planning Service.

Level three – Grade E

Qualifications and or experience

- relevant Masters or post graduate diploma in planning and
- up to three years' experience – one of which is post qualification in a Development Management section or relevant planning private practice organisation

Expected apply for full membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute

Main role – general terms

- To process and undertake appropriate evaluations of planning proposals including complex and major applications and development proposals including the preparation of appeal statements and evidence
- To give advice to and undertake negotiations with applicants and others on complex and major applications
- To present cases to Development Control Committee, at Committee site visits and appeal hearings or public inquiries
- To provide colleagues will help as may be required to help in the processing of planning applications and appeals
- To give advice on pre application submissions
- To be part of the duty officer rota

Expected competencies – building on previous levels

Effective communication

- Confident user of presentation media
- Able to deliver our messages to all forums and in an appropriate format
- Promotes the Council's strategies and approach externally and internally
- Delivers information clearly and concisely to customers on applications with confidence

Continuous improvement

- Assists in ensuring that our service targets are met
- Ensures that we contribute to the services improvement in key areas identified by the Council
- Embraces change and seeks ways of improving our performance
- Encourages others to contribute to improvement ideas

Customer focus

- Keeps customers informed using appropriate communication channels, consulting with and inviting feedback from customers on our performance
- Maintains awareness of public opinion, pressure groups and current local issues that might have an impact on our service
- Uses customer feedback to assist in suggesting service improvements where possible

Planning and organising

- Plans workload, prioritises accurately and allocates time appropriately to ensure that planning application and other targets are met
- Keeps others informed of current work
- Able to pre-empt issues through clear planning and reviewing
- Copes with setbacks without panic – demonstrates a calm approach

Working with others

- Is recognised as a sounding board for others in the team
- Is confident in discussing cases with all colleagues and external customers
- Encourages the team to take a holistic approach to problem solving which might include working with others across the Council

Move to level four – on successful application for membership of the RTP1 and demonstration of the competencies.

There maybe the potential to accelerate progression through the grade by taking on additional duties and job swaps within the Planning Service.

Level four – Grade F

Qualifications and or experience

- relevant Masters or post graduate diploma in planning and
- up to five years' experience in a Development Management section or relevant planning private practice organisation
- is a Member of the RTPI

Main role – general terms

- To process and undertake appropriate evaluations of planning proposals including complex and major applications and development proposals including the preparation of appeal statements and evidence
- To give advice to and undertake negotiations with applicants and others on complex and major applications
- To present cases to Development Control Committee, at Committee site visits and appeal hearings or public inquiries
- Demonstrate a high level of expertise across a number of role related discipline and is recognised as a reliable source of professional advice with expertise to support the team in delivering a customer focused service
- To be part of the duty officer rota

Expected competencies – building on previous levels

Effective communication

- Assists in leading a team in a manner that builds morale, encourages ownership, develops team identity and fosters excellent customer focus in all aspects of the delivery of our service
- Is visible, accessible and approachable for others when advice is required
- Regularly communicates the service vision and objectives explaining our roles in achieving them
- Uses their own positive behaviours to influence the behaviour of the team

Continuous improvement

- Uses praise and recognition as a motivational and performance tool
- Is an effective team and individual coach
- Proactively seeks fresh ways to deliver our service
- Strives for and encourages excellence in our service

Customer focus

- Demonstrates an in depth understanding of our customer strategy and actively seeks to support and enhance it
- Sees the bigger picture and anticipates the impact of our actions on customer – seeking to minimise conflict
- Actively seeks solutions for our customers

Planning and organising

- As per previous levels

Working with others

- Is recognised as a sounding board for others in the team
- Encourages others to share their successful ideas to facilitate excellent customer care within the service
- Goes out of their way to understand the success of others in delivering quality services and applying that learning to our service