

Sevenoaks District Council

Head of Housing Candidate Pack



Head of Housing

Salary - £63,129 - £67,813

Plus a Car Allowance of £3,400 per annum

What does Housing mean to you?

At Sevenoaks, Housing is a fundamental service where we are dedicated to making a difference and working within the community is rewarding.

In our energetic and innovative Housing service, affordable, suitable and decent housing is one of our top priorities. We take pride in our work and our customers are at the heart of our work as we strive to provide positive changes for our residents.

In this role you will help adapt and transform our housing services including: homelessness prevention, rough sleepers, private sector housing and housing policy and enabling. You will seek to shape and oversee the delivery of our Housing Strategy by working collaboratively with the whole Housing team and our Partners.

Experience of a Housing Managerial role (within a Local Authority or Housing Association) is key to this role as you will bring significant strategic and operational knowledge of delivering a variety of housing services as well as collaborative partnership working across all sectors as your influence will help to unite our partners.

Join us and you'll receive a generous rewards package, including membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme and a generous annual leave allowance.

We offer a supportive work environment, dedicated to developing talent by empowering our staff to keep learning, be innovative, value others, work together and achieve. Sevenoaks is a well-connected district, with excellent motorway links to Surrey, East Sussex and the rest of Kent and under 25 minutes by train from London.

So if you share our energy and passion to develop a proactive and meaningful Housing Service, then we would love for you to join us and shape the future of Housing.

Please note this role is politically sensitive

Do you want to know more about the role?

Please contact Sarah Robson, Chief Officer People & Places on 01732 227129 to find out more about the work of our Housing Service.

Do you want 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 28 November 2021

Interviews: Tuesday 7 December 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.



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Strong sense of pride in our district

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Enthusiastic and committed

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Valuing others, valuing each other

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Empowered to achieve

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No blame culture

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Open to new ideas; dedicated to developing talent

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Ambitious with our community

K

Keep learning; keep improving

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Sharing services; working closely with others

Annual Leave

You will be given 30 days annual leave plus any Bank Holidays. An extra five days leave is accrued after five years Continuous Local Government Service as at 1 April. Bank Holidays are pro rata (for part time staff) based on the amount of hours you work. 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 8.5% - 9.9% 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 polices

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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Title of post: Head of Housing

Department: People and Places

Section: Housing

Band: J

Reports to: Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officer - People and Places

Supervises: Homelessness Prevention Manager, Housing Strategy Manager, Housing and Health Project Officer

Purpose of the job

- To shape, implement and ensure the successful delivery of services, strategic documents and action plans as they apply to housing advice and homelessness prevention, housing register and choice-based lettings, private sector housing and housing strategy and enabling.
- To ensure that the Council's housing services comply with existing and forthcoming legislation, that they are delivered to an excellent standard and that all staff in the team are empowered and supported to achieve.
- To lead on the delivery of a quality, intelligent led customer demand service that improves services and customer experiences whilst delivering efficiencies and value for money.

Main duties

- To lead and manage a team of technical and professional staff and support them to deliver their services in an effective and efficient way.
- To contribute to the Housing service by providing advice and guidance within area of professional knowledge and experience.
- To provide support and advice to direct reports in keeping abreast of, assessing and analysing the aims and objectives of the Council in order that policy, strategy and programmes can be developed in response to these.
- To shape and implement future policies relating to housing and homelessness.
- To formulate statutory housing and homelessness policies and senior management and strategic briefings and reports.
- To challenge within and across the functions and across the Housing services to ensure they deliver services that meet the needs of residents, customers and communities.

- To ensure that this Council's statutory responsibilities relating to housing and homelessness legislation are fulfilled including completion and formal review of homelessness applications, temporary accommodation provided for vulnerable people in priority need and Government data returns.
 - To make appropriate links and arrangements with other corporate services to ensure that the Council provides a holistic housing preventative services and makes a leading contribution to the wider health agenda.
 - To lead and empower members of the team to aspire to, and achieve, excellence and innovation.
 - To lead and implement new and innovative housing solutions to increase the affordable housing stock and availability across the District to meet corporate priorities. This include managing incentives schemes for letting agents, private landlord and tenants as well as working closely with a range of housing associations and service providers.
 - To sustain close working relationships with Registered Providers, DLUHC and Homes England and other partners including private developers, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations to maximise the delivery of affordable housing in the district.
- To support the project management of a range of affordable housing schemes led by the Council, as they reach various stages of the development process at different times, throughout their duration.
- To monitor the performance of West Kent Housing Association in relation to meeting requirements of Stock Transfer Agreement, the Partnership Agreement document and delivery of other key strategic targets.
 - To maximise the contribution of the private rented sector to meeting housing need and demand through the provision of decent and well-managed accommodation.
 - To ensure that all regulatory and legal requirements are met in relation to private sector housing including HMOs, empty homes and park home licensing.
 - To lead on the procurement, commercial negotiations, delivery and contract management of externalised services such as all temporary accommodation procurement services, including developing procurement strategies for changing services.



- To deliver Member and Portfolio Holder priorities relating to housing and produce strategic and statistical reports and business cases as required.
- To ensure that the Housing service retains excellent relationships with partner organisations such as housing associations, developers, community and voluntary sector groups and make other strategic and provider links.
- To ensure that the work of the team complies with existing and forthcoming legislation. To maintain good knowledge of all current issues, legislation, guidance and codes of practice and implement changes to policy and operational processes as appropriate.
- To implement Part VI and VII of the Housing Act 1996 and related legislation to homelessness prevention, housing advice and the allocation of social housing is adhered to and correctly implemented.
- To prepare evidence in respect of legal proceedings, appeals, complaints and public inquiries and to represent the Council in such matters as necessary.
- To ensure that all housing activity complies with Safeguarding, Child Protection, Health & Safety and Vulnerable Adult policies.
- To co-ordinate and manage rest centres and emergency accommodation under a civil emergency situation and co-operate with emergency planning and readiness testing arrangements.
- To provide robust financial management for external funding and internal budgets to ensure value for money.
- To set and monitor clear and ambitious service plan and performance requirements.
- To draft committee reports, MP letter responses, funding bids and other documentation.
- To attend (or provide a deputy to attend) relevant external and internal meetings, including the Kent Housing Group, Kent Homechoice Board and the Housing Options Group.
- To support and provide clear, balanced and accurate advice and guidance to the Chief Officer – People and Places and Lead Members on the strategic and operational service issues and challenges facing the Service.
- Deputise for the Chief Officer when required.
- To work out of hours as necessary to deliver the services required by the Council for example during the evenings or weekends.

- To provide rota cover for the Council's Out of Hours service.
- To work outside normal working hours to respond to emergencies or attend committee meetings.
- To undertake any other duties as required which are commensurate with the level and nature of the post.

Dimensions

- Overall management responsibility for a total of 27 members of staff delivering: housing advice, homelessness prevention, private sector housing, empty homes, mobile homes, welfare funerals, housing strategy and enabling.
- Budget responsibility totalling over £900k, plus £2m annual funding (Better Care Fund, Homeless Prevention Grant, Rough Sleeper Initiative).
- Liaison with high profile partnerships, including government bodies DLUHC and Homes England.
- Maximising opportunities for provision of affordable housing through partnership working with developers, Registered Social Landlords, Homes England and health and social care partners ensuring best use of the Council's own capital resources.
- Supporting the Council's Member representatives on a range of local, regional and partnerships as required.
- Data/systems responsibility for customer case management systems for homelessness, housing advice and health, Agresso financial records for 24 budget codes, database systems for the voluntary sector and community grants, personnel records for project facilitators, Netcall supervisor for monitoring of staff calls, external funding and Government statistical monitoring systems, corporate performance management systems.
- Agresso financial records for 25 budget codes, database systems for the voluntary sector and community grants, personnel records for project facilitators, external funding and Government statistical monitoring systems, corporate performance management systems.
- Based at Argyle Road, Sevenoaks with occasional travel to other sites

Location

Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks,
Kent TN13 1HG with occasional travel to other sites

General responsibilities

- To embrace the values and behaviours of the Council.
- To comply with the Council's Safeguarding policy.
- To comply with the Council's Equal Opportunities policy, and to actively promote equality of opportunity wherever possible.
- To comply with the Council's Health & Safety policy.
- 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 Councils staff appraisal scheme.
- To participate in any relevant training for the duties of this post and to achieve the key objectives of the Council.
- To carry out any other related duties which may be directed by the Chief Officer People & Places.

Qualifications

Essential

- Qualified to degree level in a housing or other related qualifications and experience.

Desirable

- Professional qualification in housing, or management qualification e.g. Chartered Institute of Housing or other relevant professional body membership

Knowledge, skills and experience

Essential

- Demonstrable experience in Housing, including at least 5 years in a management level role.
- Proven experience of leading and managing teams.
- Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of housing needs issues, legislation, and case law, including lettings, and the housing register.
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- Experience of working with elected members.
- Proven ability to devise, set and implement strategy.
- Experience of taking issues through the corporate decision making process.
- Able to influence, negotiate and work with a diverse range of organisations and partners to achieve excellent outcomes for the Council

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Full driving license

Desirable

- Understanding of commercial decisions in provision of housing schemes.

Approach

Essential

- Ability to inspire and lead a team of officers to achieve excellent outcomes
- A helpful, customer and outcomes focussed approach
- To be self-motivating plus the ability to work effectively and independently with access to the Chief Officer if required.
- A flexible and innovative approach to respond appropriately at short notice to non-routine matters
- Ability to manage and monitor appropriate budgets, handling financial pressures
- Ability to deal effectively with emotive and difficult situations
- A commitment to achieve deadlines, targets and performance indicators
- Ability to effectively communicate with the Strategic Management Team and Elected Members
- Ability to deal with enquiries from Members and the media
- Ability to use enforcement powers effectively
- Ability to work outside normal office hours when required.

Person specification

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