LGC Awards2026 30th ANNIVERSARY

Most Improved Council

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Chief Legal Officer

Candidate Pack

www.sandwell.gov.uk

MEET OUR SERVICE DIRECTOR

ALEX THOMPSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FINANCE & TRANSFORMATION (SECTION 151 OFFICER)

Thank you for your interest in the opportunity to join Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council as our Chief Legal Officer.

This is a particularly exciting time to be considering a leadership role within Sandwell. The Council has already undergone a significant transformation, strengthening its governance, culture and confidence. We have been recognised at the LGC Award as the Most Improved Council and we are now firmly focused on the future. We want to build on our progress and become an outstanding Council. This will require ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and ensuring we have the leadership expertise to support our ambitions for residents.

The Chief Legal Officer role presents a unique opportunity to shape and influence the strategic direction of the organisation. This is far more than a traditional legal leadership position. We are looking for someone who can provide trusted advice and challenge at the highest levels of the organisation. We want someone that will make our legal, governance and associated functions operate as modern, forward-thinking services that add real value to the organisation.

Legal expertise and a strong understanding of governance is essential. But we are also interested in your ability to lead people, drive improvement and work collaboratively across organisational boundaries.

My own career has spanned more than 30 years in local government, from district councils to large unitary authorities. I am passionate about providing quality customer focused services whether they are primarily focused on internal or external customers. Throughout my career I have seen first-hand the importance of strong professional leaders that navigate change, embrace innovation and deliver the best possible outcomes for residents. I want us to create services that are recognised for upholding our organisational values as well as offering high-quality professional advice and support. The role deliberately offers opportunities to excel across technical professional roles as well as engaging with residents, strategic partners and elected members.

The portfolio offers the opportunity to influence wider corporate services, including procurement transformation and organisational improvement. We have made good progress in many areas, but we recognise there is more to do. We are therefore looking for a leader who is ambitious, pragmatic and motivated by the opportunity to make a lasting impact.

What makes Sandwell special is its people. We are proud of the culture we are building, one that values openness, collaboration, accountability and innovation. We want senior leaders who are visible, approachable and willing to work collectively to solve problems and seize opportunities. In return, you will find an organisation with genuine momentum, supportive colleagues and the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution at a corporate level.

If you are an experienced legal leader with the vision, credibility and drive to help shape the next chapter of Sandwell's journey, I would encourage you to speak with our recruitment partners at Tile Hill and find out more about the opportunity.

Alex Thompson
Executive Director Finance & Transformation (Section 151 Officer)

We look forward to learning more about you in this process and reviewing your application.

If you'd like to find out more about our achievements, plans, and culture, from our CEO, Shokat Lal, you can watch a video now.

Our **Values** and **Behaviours**

One **team**

United and working together with a shared purpose of achieving great results

- Actively role model and create trust
- Enable honest and open communication
- Visible and approachable
- Engage in regular communication
- Recognise contributions and success
- Display a coaching leadership style and inspire others
- Encourage best practice and cross team collaboration
- Drive a healthy work-life balance
- Develop and grow future talent

Customer **focus**

We care about providing the best possible public service

- Manage customer's expectations
- Ensure the service works to the best outcome for the customer
- Create accessible channels for customer communication
- Encourage customers to lead in service provision
- Take a holistic view of services
- Be accessible to residents, service users, customers and employees
- Engage with customers, seek feedback and enable continuous improvement

Inclusive

Treating each other with respect and knowing our diversity is our strength

- Create an inclusive environment to encourage a voice for everyone
- Create opportunities and champions diversity and inclusivity
- Seek feedback from all audiences to facilitate co-production
- Seek to understand our diverse communities
- Actively challenge barriers to inclusion
- Encourage diversity of thought and perspectives to overcome challenges

Our Values and Behaviours

Ambitious

Striving for excellence, always looking to get better and making sure everyone can take pride in our borough

- Promote a growth mindset
- Communicate the organisation's ambitions and desired outcomes
- Lead, manage and communicate change
- Encourage and inspire creativity and innovation within boundaries
- Seek and encourage everyone to be the best in class
- Create channels for giving and receiving feedback
- Tackle under-performance early and challenge unacceptable behaviour with courage
- Grow personal credibility
- Communicate with passion and integrity to maintain and elevate the reputation of the service and the council

Accountable

Deliver what we say we will

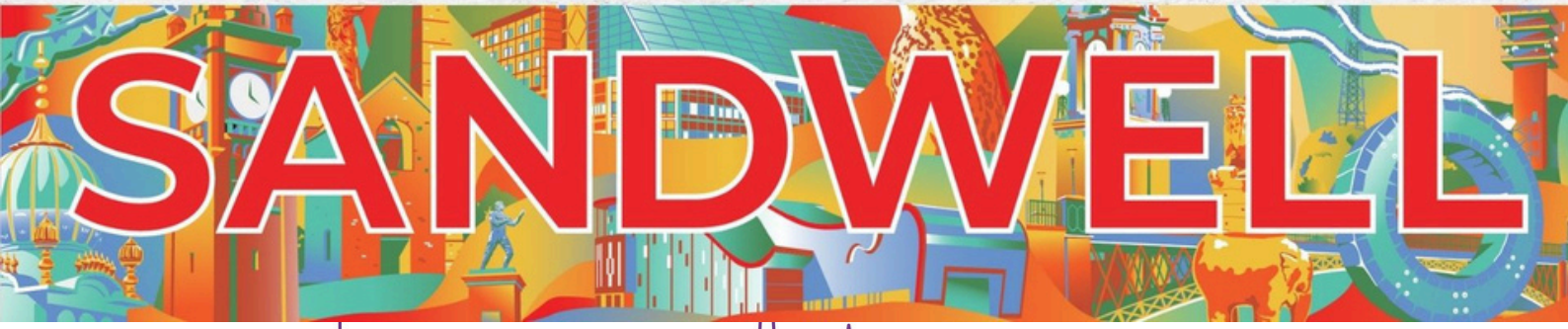
- Create a clear vision and strategy
- Consider external and internal factors
- Encourage learning from feedback and complaints
- Promote resilience and adaptability
- Set clear expectations and standards for self and others
- Provide resources for service provision
- Empower others to solve problems and take ownership
- Give support to strengthen team and personal resilience
- Make timely and well-judged decisions

A NEW STORY FOR SANDWELL

Made 50 years ago from six proud towns, Sandwell is a place built on making things happen. It's where industry met innovation, and where strong communities still shape the future.

The Sandwell Story is a campaign and programme of work to celebrate the people, places and partnerships that make this borough a great place to live, work, learn and visit. Find out more at the Sandwell Story website.

Watch the New Story for Sandwell video



PERSON SPECIFICATION

JOB DESCRIPTION

LOCATION

Sandwell is a metropolitan borough in the Black Country, which is made up of six towns - Oldbury, Rowley Regis, Smethwick, Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich.

Located in the West Midlands, Sandwell borders Birmingham city, Dudley borough, Walsall borough and Wolverhampton city.

The borough has excellent access to the national motorway network with five junctions feeding in to the M5 and M6 motorways serving the South West, South East and North West regions of the UK.

Sandwell also benefits from a mainline train station - Sandwell and Dudley and the Midland Metro.

OUR OFFER TO YOU

Join the largest employer in Sandwell, where over 3,500 of our diverse employees thrive in hundreds of unique roles.

To support you to develop your career with us, we offer:

- A competitive pay progression structure and leave allowance
- Hybrid working arrangements and a flexitime system (subject to needs of the role)
- Supportive staff networks including Culture Champions, helping to fulfil our organisational culture aspirations and make us a fully inclusive employer
- A confidential counselling service (BACP approved) and a mediation service is available on managerial referral
- Talent initiatives including apprenticeship programmes at all levels, and the prestigious National Graduate Development Programme.
- Learning and development including management development training, employee wellbeing workshops and job role specific training.
- A professional coaching and mentoring offer
- Employee performance and development processes with regular check-ins and an annual review to help you be your best
- Recognition for your hard work through our 'We our Sandwell' award scheme and colleague appreciation schemes
- Work that makes a real difference to our customers and residents, continually improving our boroughs.
- Access to trade unions

Our aim is to be an outstanding Council and we recognise that part of that is providing the best employee experience possible. At Sandwell we care about our people and commit to keeping our colleagues safe and well at work.

To make sure everyone can be their best and feel like they count, our support offer includes:

- Our employee assistance programme with free, confidential, 24/7 helpline service staffed by professional counsellors
- Access to occupational health services
- Wellbeing champions network
- Supportive carers and parental policies
- Generous maternity, paternity and adoption leave
- Disability passport scheme
- To help you make the most of your money we offer:
- Membership of West Midlands Pension Fund with generous employer contributions
- Staff deals though our employee benefits scheme

HOW TO APPLY

Join an award-winning council with genuine momentum. Sandwell Council is one of the West Midlands' largest and most ambitious local authorities, serving more than 300,000 residents across six towns. Having undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, the Council is now focused on building on that progress, driving continuous improvement and delivering excellent outcomes for its communities.

We are now seeking an exceptional legal leader to join us as Chief Legal Officer and play a pivotal role in shaping the next chapter of Sandwell's journey.

About the role

Reporting to the Executive Director for Finance and Transformation, you will be the Council's principal legal adviser, providing strategic legal leadership across a large, complex and politically led organisation. You will advise elected members and senior leaders on significant legal, governance and regulatory matters, ensuring the highest standards of legality, transparency and public accountability.

This is a highly influential corporate leadership role with responsibility for Legal Services alongside a broader portfolio that includes Procurement, Registration Services and Data Compliance. While strong legal expertise is essential, this appointment is about much more than technical legal advice. It is an opportunity to lead organisational improvement, shape governance, oversee key transformation programmes and provide trusted challenge and support at the heart of the Council.

A particular priority will be supporting the ongoing transformation of Procurement, strengthening governance, assurance and organisational controls, while continuing the development of modern, customer-focused professional services that enable the Council to achieve its ambitions.
About you

We are looking for an outstanding legal professional with experience of leading legal services within local government or a comparable public sector environment. As the Council's senior legal professional, you will be a trusted adviser and comfortable providing constructive challenge, navigating competing priorities and helping shape decisions that support both good governance and the delivery of the Council's ambitions.

You will have a track record of leading change and improvement, with experience of modernising services, developing high-performing teams and driving better outcomes. Equally important is your ability to think strategically, influence beyond professional boundaries and provide practical, solution-focused advice that supports organisational success. If you are looking for a role where your advice is valued, your influence extends far beyond legal services and your leadership can make a lasting impact, we would like to hear from you.

Find out more

For a confidential discussion about the opportunity, please contact, Chantelle Wooldridge on 07557018320 or Anita Denton on 07725 554802.

www.**sandwell**.gov.uk