

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Job Specification

Senior Legal Adviser (Head of Legal Services Office) - Assembly Grade 3

SALARY RANGE: £58,766 - £66,571

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Application forms are available on the Northern Ireland Assembly (the Assembly) website and should be completed online. Completed application forms, which demonstrate the skills and experience sought, must be submitted by the closing date of midnight 3rd June 2016.
- 1.2 **Candidates are reminded that the application form must be fully completed. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. CVs or other supplementary material will not be accepted in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the Commission) is a corporate body established by section 40 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission is required to provide the Assembly, or ensure that the Assembly is provided, with the property, staff and services required for the Assembly's purposes. The Commission employs a Secretariat to serve the Assembly. The Assembly Secretariat comprises of the Corporate Support Unit and four Directorates: Corporate Services, Parliamentary Services, Facilities and Legal and Governance. The management structure of the Assembly Secretariat is illustrated in the attached chart. A copy of the Legal and Governance Directorate staff structure is also attached. The Commission's vision is to be at the forefront of providing progressive, effective and efficient parliamentary services.
- 2.2 The Legal Services Office is within the Directorate of Legal and Governance Services and forms an integral part of the Secretariat. Its role is to provide such in-house legal advice and assistance as is required by the Assembly, the Speaker, the Committees, the Assembly Commission, the Clerk/Chief Executive and other clients. The Legal Services Office seeks to provide excellent service to these clients. It has a critical role in ensuring and maintaining the efficient operation of Assembly business and the Commission's affairs.
- 2.3 The Senior Legal Adviser is Head of the Legal Services Office. He/she allocates requests for advice or casework to his or her team, retaining

and handling personally any particularly complex or sensitive issues. The Senior Legal Adviser is expected to personally provide legal advice which addresses the Assembly's needs thoroughly, and which is authoritative, astute, and comprehensive.

- 2.4 The Senior Legal Adviser is responsible for the management of team performance, ensuring that deadlines are met and taking corrective action as required. He or she will also provide support and guidance to less experienced staff and is responsible for the training and development of staff.
- 2.5 The Senior Legal Adviser is a senior officer of the Assembly and is expected to be fully integrated in the affairs of the Assembly and the Commission. The successful applicant should expect to work closely with senior politicians, with clerking and corporate staff, and with Directors from all parts of the Secretariat.

3. LOCATION

- 3.1 The successful candidate will be based in Parliament Buildings.

4. JOB DESCRIPTION

Responsibility and Reporting Arrangements

- 4.1 The successful applicant will report to the Director of Legal and Governance Services and will manage a team of lawyers.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- 4.2 The main duties and responsibilities of the post are providing and ensuring the provision of:
 - (i) Legal advice and support on constitutional and procedural matters to the Director of Legal and Governance Services, or directly to the Speaker, the Assembly Commission, the Committees, the Clerk/Chief Executive and other clients. This will encompass a varied range of issues including:-
 - a. whether Bills (both Executive and Private Members Bills) are within the legislative competence of the Assembly;
 - b. interpretation of all forms of primary and secondary legislation, particularly the provisions of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and other constitutional and human rights legislation;

- c. matters relating to order and procedure including Standing Orders; and
 - d. such other matters as may arise.

- (ii) Legal advice and support on corporate legal matters to the Director of Legal and Governance Services in her role in advising the Assembly Commission, the Clerk/Chief Executive and other clients. This encompasses a varied range of legal matters including:
 - a. constitutional and administrative law;
 - b. human rights law;
 - c. discrimination law;
 - d. employment law;
 - e. contract and procurement law;
 - f. information law;
 - g. data protection law;
 - h. general corporate law issues;
 - i. the conduct of litigation; and
 - j. such other matters as may arise.

- (iii) Legal advice and support to committees of the Assembly, which may encompass any matter of law within the legislative competence of the Assembly;

- (iv) Management and professional development of legal staff and management of resources in order to provide required legal outputs, meet corporate objectives, and the production of strategic advice to the Director;

- (v) Instruction of counsel and the conduct and direction of litigation;

- (vi) You may also be required to carry out other duties that the Assembly Commission and/or the Director reasonably require of you.

5. **ESSENTIAL CRITERIA**

5.1 At the closing date for applications, applicants must:-

- (i) be a barrister, or a solicitor, of at least 5 years' standing, entitled to practice in Northern Ireland;

AND

- (ii) have at least 5 years' post qualification professional legal experience of providing legal advice on constitutional law and administrative law **and** in **two or more** of the following disciplines: human rights law, contract law, information and data protection law, procurement law, discrimination law, employment law, European Union law or legislative drafting.

5.2 In addition, applicants must also be able to provide evidence within their application form, and demonstrate at interview:-

- (i) the ability to advise on constitutional, administrative and human rights law with particular reference to Northern Ireland;
- (ii) the ability to manage a team of legal staff including work output;
- (iii) the ability to provide legal advice and prepare opinions in the context of the machinery of government and of the political and institutional relationships in Northern Ireland, and within the United Kingdom.

6. SHORTLISTING CRITERIA

6.1 The Assembly Commission reserves the right to use shortlisting as part of the recruitment process for this post. Should shortlisting be required, the following shortlisting criterion will be applied:

- (i) Have at least 5 years' experience of providing legal advice in **three or more** of the following disciplines: human rights law, contract law, information and data protection law, procurement law, discrimination law, employment law, European Union law or legislative drafting.

7. CORE COMPETENCES

In addition to the essential criteria outlined above, the following competences will be tested at interview:

People

The ability to develop teams and mentor lawyers to enhance performance, encourage innovation and meet/exceed business

objectives; monitor and manage the performance of the team, its individuals and self; create, maintain and enhance effective working relationships; assess own development needs and develop self to improve job performance and fulfil future potential and select personnel.

Information and Communication

The ability to communicate clearly and precisely; to apply legal analytical ability and exercise sound judgement in providing effective legal advice; to develop management information and communication systems in order to meet customer needs; make critical decisions, influence and gain the commitment of others and to identify customer/audience needs and communicate required information.

8. CRITERIA BASED INTERVIEW AND PRESENTATION

Criteria-based Interview

- 8.1 Final selection of candidates will be based on performance at criteria-based interview(s) structured around the qualities, skills and experience sought at sections 5.1 & 5.2 as well as the core competencies listed above. All candidates will be expected to display an acceptable level of competence in each of these areas.

Presentation

- 8.2 Applicants will also be expected to prepare for and present to the interview panel, a short presentation as part of the interview process.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 9.1 Offers of appointment will be made in order of merit and will be live for 12 months.
- 9.2 If you require more information on the recruitment process please contact the Human Resources Office on 02890 520325.
- 9.3 Further information about the NI Assembly can be obtained by visiting the Assembly's website: www.niassembly.gov.uk.

10. COMPLETION OF APPLICATION FORMS

- 10.1 **The selection panel may decide to interview only those applicants who appear, from the information available, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and ability. It is therefore essential that applicants describe fully in the application form the extent to which they satisfy the above criteria. It is not appropriate simply**

to list the various posts that the applicants have held. The selection panel will not make assumptions from the title of the applicants' posts about the skills and experience gained.

- 10.2 **It will be the responsibility of applicants to demonstrate clearly on their application forms how they satisfy the essential and shortlisting criteria. Applicants must use only the application form provided and must not submit additional material in support of their application forms.**

11. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT

- 11.1 These appointments are permanent and will be made by the Commission. The successful applicants will be employees of the Commission. All appointments are subject to the satisfactory completion of a six-month probationary period.
- 11.2 The standard working week is 37 hours, excluding meal breaks (42 hours gross). Working hours will be dictated by the mode of operation of the NI Assembly and may involve work into late evenings, at weekends and on public holidays.
- 11.3 The salary scale for this post is £58,766 to £66,571 and the starting salary will be £58,766 per annum.
- 11.4 In addition to the usual public and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave allowance of 25 days, increasing to 26 days after 4 years of service and to 30 days after 5 years of service. Applicants should be aware that a major influence in determining when leave can be taken will be the parliamentary timetable.
- 11.5 Subject to eligibility, a childcare voucher scheme is available.
- 11.6 Successful applicants will be given suitable training, including formal specialised courses as necessary.

12. PENSIONS

- 12.1 The NI Assembly offers all new employees an attractive pension package. Further details can be found on the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (Northern Ireland) website at:

<http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni/index/new-members.htm>

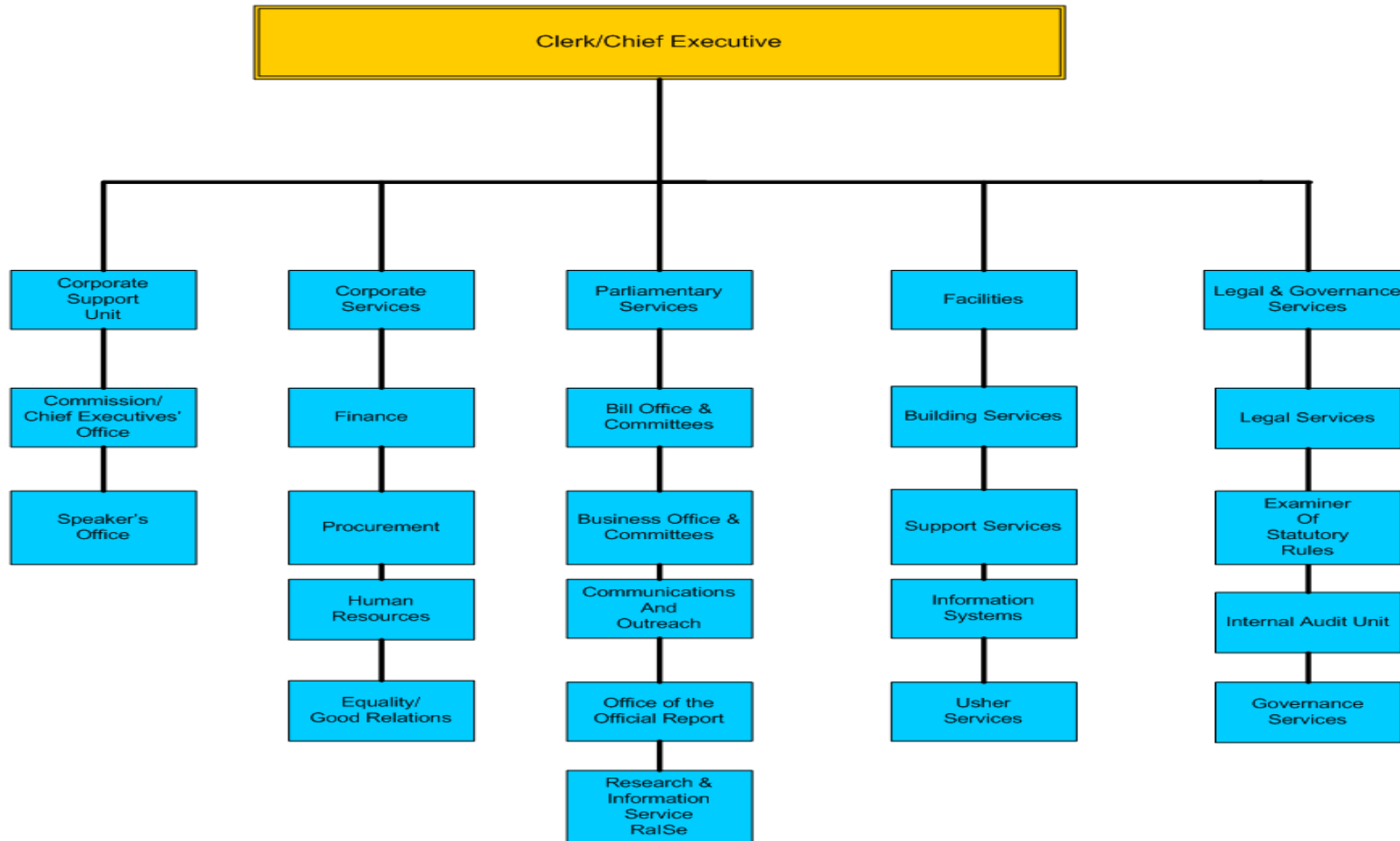
If you are unable to access the website or require the information in another format please contact:

The Pensions Manager
Human Resources Office
Room 402
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BT4 3XX
Tel: 028 9052 1685

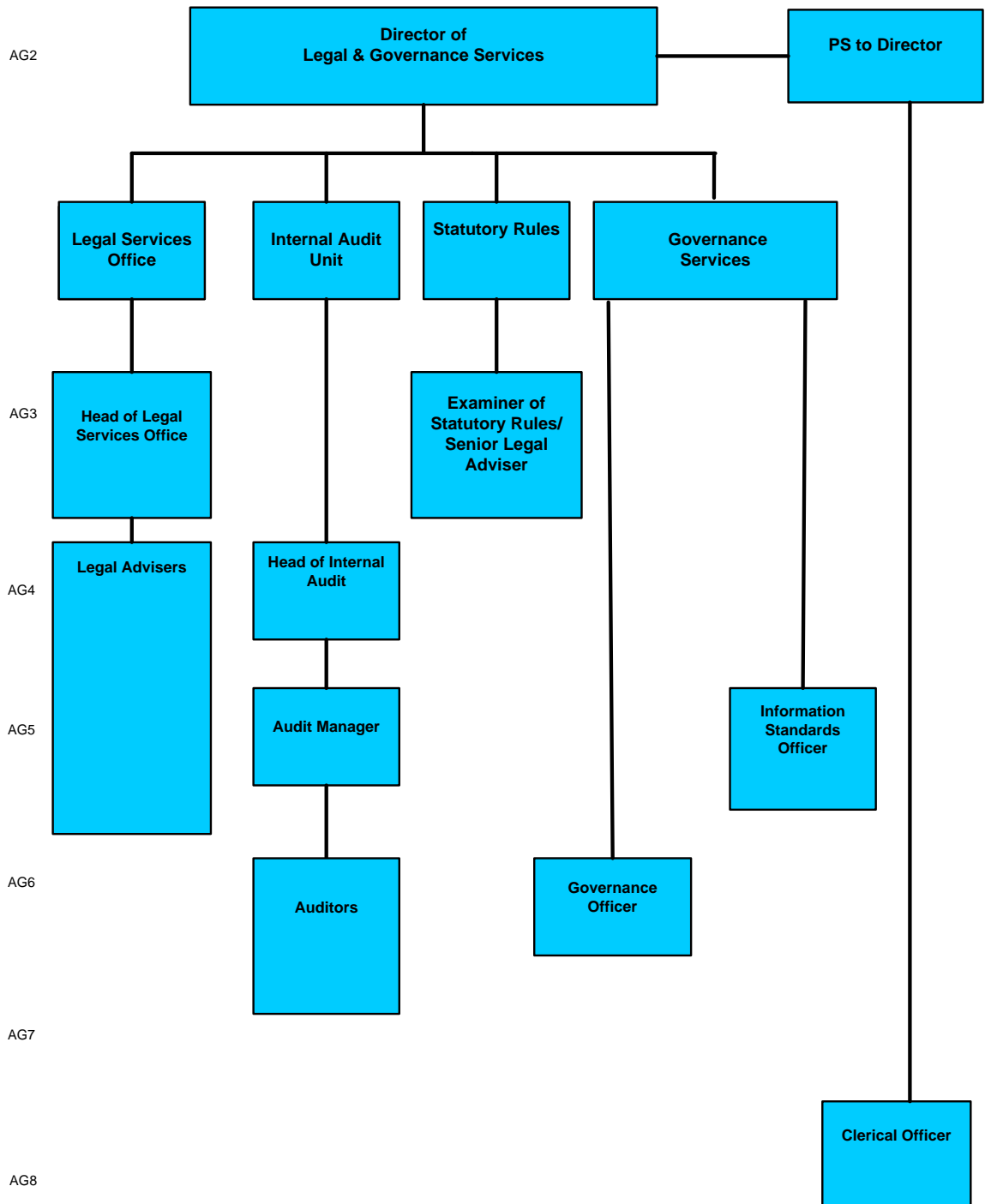
13. APPLICATIONS

- 13.1 Under fair employment legislation, the Commission is required to monitor the community background of those applying to fill vacancies. Applicants must, therefore, complete the equal opportunities monitoring section of the application form.
- 13.3 The Commission is committed to equality of opportunity in employment and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified candidates irrespective of gender, marital or family status, religious belief/political opinion, disability, age, race, nationality or sexual orientation. **All applications for employment will be considered on the basis of merit.**

THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT



LEGAL & GOVERNANCE SERVICES



17.05.16