

Post Details

Post Title: Chief Planning Officer

Grade: 14

Post Number:

Directorate: Economy and Place

Service Area: Economy and Place

Responsible To: Joint Assistant Director Place

Responsible For: Staff in Planning Teams

Disclosure:

Base: Civic Centre Pontypool, General Office Ebbw Vale.

The position is politically restricted within the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 as prescribed in the Local Government Officers (Political Restrictions) Regulations 1990.

Job Evaluation ID:

JD updated: Mar 2026

Job Purpose

The Joint Chief Planning Officer is the senior professional lead for statutory planning across Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Councils within the federated structure. Reporting to the Joint Assistant Director of Place, the role provides strategic leadership and operational oversight of planning policy, development management, planning enforcement and building control across both council areas.

Operating with significant professional autonomy, the postholder ensures that the councils' planning functions are lawful, timely, high quality and defensible, and that spatial planning effectively supports regeneration, sustainability and community wellbeing outcomes. The role provides authoritative professional advice to elected members and senior officers and enables effective democratic decision-making, including through planning committee processes and scrutiny arrangements across both councils.

The postholder leads the development and delivery of the Joint Local Development Plan and provides strategic planning leadership to shape regional planning priorities, ensuring that corporate objectives are translated into coherent spatial policy and deliverable place outcomes

Principal Accountabilities and Responsibilities

As a joint senior leadership role, the postholder is accountable to both councils for:

- Statutory Planning Leadership Across Both Councils
 - Providing authoritative professional leadership for the delivery of statutory planning functions across both council areas, ensuring legal compliance, quality and public confidence.

Principal Accountabilities and Responsibilities

- Setting and maintaining consistent professional standards and service expectations across the federated planning service.
- Spatial Strategy and Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP)
 - Leading the preparation, consultation, examination and implementation of the Joint Local Development Plan and associated spatial evidence base.
 - Ensuring spatial planning aligns with corporate priorities and supports regeneration, sustainability and wellbeing outcomes at a cross-council scale.
- Development Management Integrity and Performance
 - Ensuring development management functions are efficient, consistent and robust, with strong governance over decision quality, appeals risk and performance.
 - Maintaining a defensible planning service that balances growth, place quality and community impacts.
- Enforcement and Building Control Assurance
 - Ensuring planning enforcement is proportionate, timely and risk-based, supporting public confidence and effective control of development.
 - Providing strategic oversight of building control to ensure statutory compliance, safety standards and professional integrity.
- Democratic Accountability, Advice and Scrutiny
 - Acting as senior professional adviser to elected members and senior officers across both councils on planning matters, including the effective operation of statutory planning committees.
 - Supporting transparent decision-making and scrutiny through clear reporting, risk visibility and timely professional advice.
- Regional Influence and System Alignment
 - Acting as lead professional adviser to shape and respond to regional strategic development planning and related regional priorities.
 - Ensuring alignment between local planning policy, regional frameworks and delivery partners.
- Inclusive Planning and Tackling Inequality
 - Ensuring planning policy and practice contributes to reduced inequality and improved wellbeing outcomes, embedding Marmot-informed and inclusive planning approaches in a practical, evidence-led way.
 - Championing meaningful engagement so communities can shape place priorities through inclusive planning processes.
- Working Corporately
 - Contribute to corporate and directorate transformation priorities by strengthening how planning services operate across the federated structure (consistency, efficiency, quality and customer experience).
 - Work collaboratively across services (regeneration, housing, assets, infrastructure and sustainability) to ensure spatial planning enables corporate and place outcomes.
 - Represent both councils professionally in relevant regional and professional forums to enhance credibility and influence.
 - Lead system improvement across the joint planning services, including the responsible use of digital tools and artificial intelligence, to improve service efficiency,

Principal Accountabilities and Responsibilities

quality, transparency and professional assurance while maintaining lawful, ethical and defensible decision-making

Principal Responsibilities

- Joint Local Development Plan and Spatial Policy
 - Lead the end-to-end JLDP programme, including governance, project planning, evidence commissioning, consultation, examination preparation and adoption arrangements.
 - Ensure planning policy integrates wellbeing, sustainability and place priorities and provides a sound framework for investment and delivery.
 - Provide strategic planning advice to inform and influence regional strategic development planning and related regional frameworks.
- Development Management, Quality and Risk
 - Oversee the processing and determination of planning applications and appeals, ensuring decision quality, consistency and defensibility.
 - Maintain strong governance of performance, customer experience, complaint trends and appeals risk, using learning to improve quality and efficiency.
- Enforcement and Building Control
 - Ensure effective and proportionate enforcement practices, aligned to policy, risk and public interest.
 - Provide oversight of building control performance and statutory compliance, ensuring professional standards and service integrity.
- Member Advice, Committees and Scrutiny
 - Provide high-quality professional advice to elected members and senior officers across both councils, supporting balanced and lawful decision-making.
 - Support the effective operation of planning committees, ensuring governance arrangements, reporting and advice are robust and timely.
 - Provide regular reporting on performance, risks and improvement actions to senior leadership and members, supporting scrutiny requirements across both councils.
- Engagement and Community Confidence
 - Lead inclusive engagement and consultation approaches to ensure spatial planning reflects community needs and builds legitimacy and trust.
 - Support co-production and participatory approaches where appropriate, ensuring engagement is structured, accessible and evidence-led.
- Performance, Improvement and Transformation
 - Establish and maintain clear performance frameworks for the planning service across both councils (quality, timeliness, customer experience, appeals/enforcement outcomes).
 - Drive continuous improvement, modernisation and consistent joint ways of working, ensuring the planning service is resilient and future-ready.
- Financial and Resource Stewardship
 - Manage budgets and resources for the planning service across both councils, ensuring effective use of funds, appropriate controls and value for money.

Resources/Equipment/Material

The postholder has responsibility for the stewardship and effective deployment of:

- Planning service budgets, including revenue resources and, where applicable, programme funding supporting planning policy and service improvement
- Externally funded planning and spatial programmes, where commissioned evidence, consultation and delivery capacity are supported through grant or partner funding
- Professional planning resources, including multidisciplinary teams across policy, development management, enforcement and building control operating across both councils.
- Commissioned professional support, including specialist evidence, technical studies, legal support, design/urbanism input and examination-related expertise where required.
- Planning systems, data and performance information, supporting statutory decision-making, service performance, enforcement governance and reporting.

Supervision/Management of People

The postholder will:

- Provide visible, values-led leadership to the joint planning service, creating a high-performing culture that balances pace, quality and professional integrity across both councils.
- Lead and develop managers and professional teams across planning policy, development management, enforcement and building control, ensuring consistent standards and joint ways of working.
- Ensure robust performance management arrangements are in place, with clear objectives, quality expectations and continuous improvement discipline.
- Undertake workforce planning to ensure the service has the capacity, capability and resilience to deliver statutory duties and JLDP requirements.
- Lead staff through service change and modernisation, maintaining engagement, clarity and professional confidence.
- Ensure staff understand and operate effectively within a democratic governance environment, including appropriate engagement with elected members and committee processes across both councils.
- Address people-management issues at a senior level fairly and consistently, in line with corporate policies and values.

Special Working Conditions

- The post holder may from time to time be required to work outside of normal office hours and will need to be available and responsive to emergency, non-routine (and potentially sensitive) events.

Person Specification

Position Title: Joint Director Economy and Place	Date: Mar 2026
For office use only	
Shortlisted By:	
Name of Candidate:	Date:

Please note you will need to meet the essential criterion to be invited for interview.

Requirements	Selection Method		
	Essential or Desirable	Score	Tested at Interview and/or Application Form
Education/Qualifications/Knowledge			
1.1 Educated to a degree level, or equivalent relevant experience.	E		Application Form
1.2 Proven experience in leading planning services or strategic planning programmes.	E		Application Form
1.3 Strong understanding of development management, planning policy, enforcement, and building control.	E		Application Form
1.4 Demonstrated commitment to community empowerment and participatory governance.	E		Application Form
1.5 Management Qualification	D		Application Form
Experience			
2.1 Experience in local government and/or regional planning.	E		Application Form and Interview
2.2 Knowledge of Marmot framework and its application in spatial planning.	D		Application Form and Interview
2.3 Understanding of Welsh planning frameworks and statutory obligations.	E		Application Form and Interview
2.4 Politically astute and able to operate effectively within a political environment.	E		Application Form and Interview
2.5 Significant experience of successful leadership within regeneration/economic development, and property/estates delivering tangible/commercial benefits and outcomes for communities.	E		Application Form and Interview
2.6 Evidence of successful resource and financial management, including evidence of the resolution of conflicting priorities, formulating budgets, procurement, applying rigorous monitoring and control procedures and maximisation of available income/grants.	E		Application Form and Interview
2.7 A record of success in communication and engaging with a wide range of internal and external bodies, building partnerships and productive working relationships and positively promoting organisational reputation and interests.	E		Application Form and Interview
2.8 Demonstrable success in managing and motivating teams to achieve significant, sustainable service	E		Application Form and Interview

improvements and outstanding results, with experience of developing and sustaining a culture that harnesses the strengths and talents of employees at all levels.			
2.9 Evidence of championing successful change management within a complex and demanding environment; developing, leading and implementing strategies and change programmes to secure continuous service improvement, successful outcomes and significant operational and service changes.	E		Application Form and Interview
2.10 Evidence of establishing and leading a strong performance culture and effective performance and service quality evaluation that involves users in driving up standards and performance.	E		Application Form and Interview
2.11 Evidence of success in building and enhancing the reputation of an organisation with external bodies and the media	E		Application Form and Interview
Skills and Abilities			
3.1 Ability to operate successfully within a political environment and work closely with elected members.	E		Interview
3.2 Excellent oral and written communication skills.	E		Interview
3.3 Ability to work successfully with a wide range of stakeholders to develop, communicate and gain ownership of a shared vision and direction.	E		Interview
3.4 Ability to develop effective working relationships with the local community; focussing on their needs whilst being able to develop practical and creative solutions to service and corporate problems.	E		Interview
Personal Attributes			
4.1 Ability to deliver results within tight financial limitations and conflicting priorities	E		Interview
4.2 Ability to promote the Council, its reputation and status at a regional and national level.	E		Interview
4.3 Ability to establish a culture that promotes diversity and prevents discrimination	E		Interview
Circumstances			
5.1 Full driving licence and access to a vehicle for work purposes.	E		Application Form
Total Short-Listing Score			

Score key: 0 = Not Met Criteria 1 = Fully Met Criteria