



Candidate Information Pack

SENIOR CORONER

Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire

Relevant Authority: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

November 2018

www.stoke.gov.uk

CONTENTS

Senior Coroner for Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire

INFORMATION PACK

1. Advert	page 3
2. Coroner Service Information	page 5
3. Job Summary	page 7
4. Summary of Terms and Conditions	page 10
5. Recruitment and Selection Process	page 12
6. Recruitment Timetable	page 14

This recruitment pack has been drafted in accordance with the Coroners and Justices Act 2009

1. ADVERT

Senior Coroner for Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire

Salary £128,700 p.a.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council, as the relevant authority, is seeking to appoint a Senior Coroner for Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire. This is an existing post which will become vacant following the retirement of the current post holder. The appointment will be made on a full-time basis.

The Senior Coroner stands at the head of the local coroner service and statutory coroner area. They take the lead on coroner work and will be expected to conduct inquests which are difficult, complex, or likely to attract significant publicity.

The number of deaths reported to the Coroner per annum in Stoke-on Trent and North Staffordshire is approximately 4,000.

The salary includes payment for out of hour's availability.

The Senior Coroner is currently based in the dedicated Coroner's office and court in Coroners Chambers, 547 Hartshill Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 6HF.

A move of accommodation and facilities is currently being explored by the City Council.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council is looking for an exceptional candidate with excellent proven judicial, leadership, organisational and efficiency skills. Successful applicants are likely to have experience of managing and embracing change and working within financial constraints. You will work closely with the local authority manager to ensure value for money, performance, and financial efficiencies. Collaborative working with the local authority, the police and other stakeholders is essential.

As Senior Coroner you will provide strong judicial and strategic leadership to a team consisting of 4 Assistant Coroners, 4 Coroners Officers and 4 Support Staff, as well as conducting your own case load.

You will be required to demonstrate a high level of knowledge and application of coronial law and of basic medicine, have proven skills in conducting a wide range of complex investigations and a thorough understanding of court procedure. You will also need to demonstrate the excellent communication and interpersonal skills necessary to deal with sensitive situations.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council as the relevant local authority, will be looking to explore the likelihood of a merger in the future with potential neighbouring areas. You will therefore be forward thinking and open to the possibility of leading a larger coronial area should any merger take place.

It is desirable that you will have experience of running or assisting in the running of a Coroner's jurisdiction including carrying out investigations, case management, and conducting inquests.

You will be a barrister or a solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition on a 5-year basis. You will be under the age of 70, have experience of working as an Area Coroner, Assistant Coroner, or Senior Coroner and be subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions within the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (s.23 and Schedule 3).

Once a Coroner is appointed they are then a Judicial Office holder until they reach the age of 70 years (compulsory retirement age) unless they choose to resign or are removed by the Lord Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor prior to their 70th birthday.

If you wish to have an informal discussion or arrange a visit to the Coroner's Chambers please contact Martyn Brindley, Strategic Manager Public Protection, on 01782 232095 or email martyn.brindley@stoke.gov.uk

**Application will be made by CV and supporting statement to:
recruitment@stoke.gov.uk**

Please quote 'Senior Coroner Post' in the subject of your email.

Notification

The vacancy for this post has been notified to the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor (as required by statute).

2. CORONER SERVICE INFORMATION

Area information

The Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire coroner jurisdiction includes an area of approx. 375 square miles with a current population of around 480,000. Bordering counties and jurisdictions include: South Staffordshire, Shropshire, Derbyshire, and Cheshire.

The number of deaths registered annually averages 10,000 with approximately 4,000 cases (40%) referred to the Senior Coroner. Post mortem examinations are conducted at the University Hospital and nearby Public Mortuary by hospital pathologists and other pathologists. In 2017 497 inquests were held (13%) and 1,303 post-mortem examinations (34%). The Senior Coroner is expected to aim to keep post-mortem levels to 30% of reported deaths or below.

The City Council is currently in discussions regarding the establishment of a digital autopsy facility in the area.

The area contains sections of the M6 motorway as well as major A-roads and the main west coast rail line to/from London and the North West.

There is a large University Hospital specialising in a number of major surgical procedures, cancer care, and maternity as well as trauma services for Staffordshire, neighbouring counties and North Wales. Three smaller community hospitals also serve the area as well as two NHS mental health units with facilities for compulsory detained persons.

A young offender detention centre is located in the north of the district.

There are major tourist locations within the district including Alton Towers, Trentham Gardens, and Waterworld theme park, as well as regular sporting events and occasional music festivals at a number of professional sports venues.

Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire is home to a wealth of communities with their own cultural and religious requirements. The coroner's team work very closely with these communities to ensure these needs are met as quickly as possible; facilitating burial orders and out of England requests, often out of hours.

Office and court accommodation

The service is located in dedicated accommodation, including offices and a small court in close proximity to the Public Mortuary and University Hospital. An accommodation review is currently being conducted by the City Council with relocation to the main Civic Offices being explored.

Staff

The Coroner's team consists of 4 assistant coroners, 4 coroner's officers employed by Staffordshire Police, and 4 support officers employed by the City Council. All staff are currently co-located with the Senior Coroner. Assistance with inquests is provided by the Coroners' Court Support Service volunteers.

The office operates a coroner's case-management system, allowing for electronic notification and transfer of case information. The Senior Coroner will be expected to use this system and will be given relevant training to do so.

Management

Support staff, finance, accommodation, contracts and tenders are managed day to day by the Registration and Coroners Support Manager employed by the City Council. Together with the Strategic Manager Public Protection they work closely with the Senior Coroner on service delivery to ensure that those affected by the work of the Coroners team receive a high quality compassionate service.

Daily operations

The Senior Coroner will be required to work such hours as are reasonably necessary to meet the requirements of the service. This may include some evening & weekend working. The Senior Coroner will usually work each day Monday-Friday between 9am and 5pm at the office and court accommodation following the requirements of the Coroners & Justice Act 2009 and the Chief Coroner's guidance.

The Senior Coroner will also be available outside the above hours to deal with emergencies and other urgent requests, using the coroner team on a rota basis.

The coroner's officers are responsible for answering incoming calls from the public on weekdays from 8.30am to 4.30pm. One officer is on-call out-of-hours on a rota basis to receive urgent calls and liaise with the Senior Coroner as required.

The Coroner Team

The Senior Coroner, who is an independent judicial office holder, leads a team of one salaried nominated deputy and three fee paid Assistant Coroners, in line with the Chief Coroner's guidance. They provide cover when the Senior Coroner is unavailable due to leave, sickness, training etc. and as additional support (by agreement with the local authority) in office and case work.

The Senior Coroner takes the lead on coroner work and is expected to conduct inquests which are difficult or complex or will be likely to attract significant publicity.

The Senior Coroner is expected to hold regular coroner team meetings.

If a merger takes place in the future, the coronial team will expand with the Senior Coroner taking responsibility for the larger area with extra resources.

3. JOB SUMMARY

Post Title	Senior Coroner Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire
Service Area	Adult Social Care, Health Integration and Wellbeing
Contact Point	Martyn Brindley, Strategic Manager Public Protection
Location	Coroner's Chambers, 547 Hartshill Road, Stoke-on-Trent

To deliver a high quality coroner service to the people of North Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent in accordance with statutory provisions, case law, best practice and associated guidance.

JOB FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To stand at the head of the local coroner service and statutory coroner area.
2. To provide a high quality coroner service in accordance with statutory provisions, case law and associated guidance issued by the Chief Coroner, the Ministry of Justice, or Lord Chancellor.
3. To lead on coroner work and manage the area's caseload; to lead and support the coroner team, ensuring area and assistant coroners are developed and trained.
4. To work effectively with the local authorities and Staffordshire Police authority and to hold regular meetings with both and with local Registrars and other stakeholders where required.
5. To conduct investigations into deaths when made aware that bodies of deceased persons lie within the coroner area and there is reason to suspect that:
 - The deceased died a violent or unnatural death;
 - The cause of death is unknown; or
 - The deceased died while in custody or otherwise in state detention
6. To determine the identity of the deceased and how, when, and where the deceased came by his or her death; decide if a post-mortem examination is necessary and give directions to a pathologist or other appropriately qualified expert medical practitioner or scientist; to establish the medical cause of death.

7. Where required, to hold an inquest, with or without a jury, in accordance with relevant legislation and as appropriate, to notify the relevant Registrar of Deaths of the findings and conclusion of the inquest, or the natural cause of death ascertained with or without a post-mortem examination or that the death reported does not require further inquiry or investigation.
8. To provide clear direction to staff on coroner investigations.
9. To be sensitive and, as far as possible, responsive to the needs and requirements of those who engage with the coroner service, including the bereaved, witnesses, medical personnel, police, the media and other stakeholders; and to manage their expectations.
10. In liaison with other key stakeholders, to ensure that the coroner service has planned for and is prepared for any significant emergencies which may occur or affect the coroner area.
11. To comply with relevant legislation regarding 24 hour availability, and take into account the religious and cultural requirements of faith communities.
12. To engage with the local community, by for example giving talks and seeking feedback and views. To collaborate and engage with external agencies and stakeholders as required.
13. To work co-operatively with the local authority and Staffordshire police employees to ensure a safe, harmonious and effective working environment.
14. To deal with claims for treasure in accordance with statutory regulations and guidance.
15. To assist the local authority in the appointment of assistant coroners.
16. To make annual and other returns, as required, to the Chief Coroner or Lord Chancellor in connection with the investigations held and the deaths inquired into.
17. To keep an up-to-date working knowledge of coroner law, practice and guidance, and advise staff on developments as appropriate.
18. To undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training.
19. To be committed to ensuring expenditure is reasonable and controlled, working closely with the Registration and Coroners Support Manager to regularly monitor expenditure and report possible risk.

Role Requirements	Essential	Desirable
Applicants must be a barrister or solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial appointment eligibility condition on a 5 year basis and be under the age of 70.	X	
Thorough, up to date knowledge of legislation, case law and guidance relating to coroner's duties.	X	
Knowledge of structures and procedures of the police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.	X	
Knowledge of the extent to which cultural and religious requirements can be met within the constraints of coroner law and practice.	X	
Knowledge of the organisational structures of local government including an understanding of the challenges facing local government and the coroner service, both at present and in the future.	X	
An ability to drive the service and be receptive to new ideas, reforms and diverse needs.	X	
Ability to work collaboratively with staff and the relevant local authority.	X	
Effective verbal and written communication skills and the ability to explain legal and medical terms to people from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.	X	
Excellent analytical skills and a consistency of decision-making and administrative direction.	X	
Ability to work in sensitive situations with a wide range of stakeholders including relatives, police officers, medical personnel, mortuary staff, Registrars, witnesses and the media.	X	
Able to deal with emotionally charged situations that require sensitive handling and confident/positive judgement.	X	
Full current driving licence (unless disability precludes this) and use of a vehicle for work purposes.		X
Experience as a Senior Coroner, Area Coroner or Assistant Coroner.	X	
Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation.	X	
Experience of holding inquests, including jury inquests.	X	
Able to use and progress the development of I.T. systems which support the coroners service	X	

Other Requirements

You will provide an out of hours service on call 24/7, supported by assistant coroners when sick or on leave.

4. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS OF THE SENIOR CORONER

The conditions of service applicable to the post are those set out in Schedule 3, of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The Senior Coroner holds office on whatever terms are from time agreed by that Coroner and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. The Senior Coroner will not be an employee of the Council.

Salary

The annual salary for the post is £128,700 for a basic 40 hour week together with the provision of an out of hours' service.

Pension Scheme

A Senior Coroner may join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LPGS) in accordance with any provisions relating to coroner appointments as applied to that scheme.

Hours of work

The post holder will be required to work the hours necessary to meet the requirements of the post.

In accordance with The Coroner's (Investigations) Regulations 2013, the Senior Coroner shall at all times be available to address matters relating to an investigation into a death which must be dealt with immediately and cannot wait until the next working day, including emergencies and other urgent requests.

The Senior Coroner is normally expected to live within one hour travelling distance of the office and to work on a daily basis during the week in the office provided.

Holiday entitlement

The Senior Coroner will be expected to take an annual leave entitlement of 30 days.

Payment of expenses

Expenses will be paid in line with the Council's expenses policy.

Indemnity

The Council will indemnify the Senior Coroner for costs or damages in relation to legal proceedings in accordance with Regulation 17 of The Coroners Allowances, Fees and Expenses Regulations 2013.

Notice period

The Senior Coroner may resign from office by giving notice in writing to the relevant authority, however the resignation does not take effect unless and until it is accepted by the authority. The Senior Coroner will be expected to give six months' notice of retirement or resignation to enable the Council to comply with the provisions of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 in filling the vacancy.

Politically restricted post

This post is politically restricted under the terms of Schedule 3, paragraph 4 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

The Guide to Judicial Conduct

The Senior Coroner will comply with the standards as set out in the Guide to Judicial Conduct and other associated guidance.

5. RECRUITMENT & SELECTION PROCESS

Applications

You are required to submit a CV and full supporting statement of up to two A4 pages. It is important that your supporting statement fully addresses the following criteria as well as the essential criteria in the job summary.

1. Leadership and authority.
2. Efficient management and organisation.
3. Up-to-date knowledge of coroner law and guidance.
4. Coroner skills in the office and in court.
5. Integrity, sound judgment and decisiveness.
6. Collaborative working, with staff, relevant authority and police.
7. Communication skills.
8. Sensitivity to diversity and cultural requirements.

If you do not complete a full supporting statement, your application will be rejected. Please ensure you include your work, home and mobile contact numbers, home address and e-mail addresses where applicable. Please note that correspondence will be via e-mail unless otherwise stated. All correspondence and details provided will remain confidential.

Employment references

Please include the name, address and contact details for two references. Candidates should also state their relationship to the referee and at least one should be your current/most recent employer/head of chambers/relevant authority. References will be taken up for short-listed candidates.

Evidence of qualifications

Candidates will be required to bring evidence of their qualifications to the interview.

Employment checks

The successful candidate will be required to undergo the Council's pre-appointment medical screening.

Disciplinary proceedings and criminal convictions check

Due to the nature of the post, it is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and therefore any conviction, whether spent or unspent, must be declared. Applicants invited to interview will be required to complete a declaration form. The successful candidate will be required to undergo a DBS check.

Applicants must specify in their application if they are the subject of any disciplinary or complaint proceedings by any professional body to which they belong and the outcome if decided.

The applicant should declare any other matters which they believe should be brought to the attention of the Local Authority, particularly bearing in mind the basic set of guiding principles in the Guide to Judicial Conduct

Eligibility to work in the UK

Candidates must be eligible to work in the UK. The successful candidate will be required to provide original evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK.

Interview

You will be given a scenario setting out a problem drawn from a likely issue that will arise in post. You will be expected to present your approach to the problem.

Chief Coroner's role in the process

The Chief Coroner or his nominee will be providing advice to the Council throughout the recruitment process, in particular so as to ensure that the process is fully transparent and fair. Although the Chief Coroner or his nominee may be at the interviews they are not a member of the panel and as such have no role in scoring candidates or voting for a candidate.

No appointment may be made unless the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor consent to it.

Once appointed a Coroner becomes and remains an independent judicial officer holder. Once a Coroner is appointed they are then a Judicial Office holder until they reach the age of 70 years (compulsory retirement age) unless they chose to resign or are removed by the Lord Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor prior their 70th birthday.

6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Closing date: **Thursday 13th December 2018**

Candidates shortlisted: **week commencing 17th December 2018**

Interview invitations: **sent out by Friday 21st December 2018**

Interview date: **week commencing 14th January 2019**

If you do not hear by 22nd December 2018 please assume you have not been shortlisted.

The interview panel will consist of:

Up to 4 senior Council officers from Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire

The Chief Coroner or a nominee

We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post as soon as possible subject to their notice period.