

# Candidate Information Pack

## **SENIOR CORONER**

Central Hampshire, North East Hampshire,  
Southampton & New Forest

Relevant Authority: Hampshire County Council

30 May 2019

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## SENIOR CORONER FOR CENTRAL HAMPSHIRE, NORTH EAST HAMPSHIRE AND SOUTHAMPTON & NEW FOREST

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

## Notification

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

## 1. CORONER SERVICE INFORMATION

### Area information

Hampshire County Council is currently responsible for three coroner's jurisdictions; Central, North East Hampshire and Southampton & New Forest. There are currently two Senior Coroners; one part time Senior Coroner for North East Hampshire, who retires in May 2019, and one full time Senior Coroner for Central Hampshire and Southampton & New Forest who is taking over the North East Hampshire jurisdiction on 1 June and who also is then retiring at the end of October 2019.

Hampshire County Council covers the majority of Hampshire, with the exception of two unitary authorities, Southampton and Portsmouth. As Southampton is a unitary authority it therefore funds Hampshire County Council for the administration of the coronial service for this area. Portsmouth has a separate coroner's jurisdiction and is managed by Portsmouth City Council.

The Senior Coroner for Portsmouth and South East Hampshire is also retiring in October 2019, and therefore Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council are in discussions to merge the four jurisdictions into one larger Hampshire area. Hampshire County Council would be the lead local authority for this merged jurisdiction.

Should this merger be agreed, the successful candidate for this appointment will become the Senior Coroner for the merged jurisdiction.

Bordering counties include: Berkshire, Surrey, Dorset, Wiltshire, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.

The number of deaths registered annually averages 14, 000 with approximately 5,000 cases (36%) referred to the senior coroner. The merged area would include a further 2,500 deaths referred.

Post mortem examinations are conducted at North Hampshire Hospital, Royal Hampshire County Hospital, Southampton General Hospital and Queen Alexandra Hospital by hospital pathologists.

Jurisdiction	No. of Inquests (2018)	No. of Post-Mortem Examinations (2018)
Central Hampshire	114 (8%)	447 (32%)
Southampton & New Forest	190 (7%)	813 (37%)
North East Hampshire	108 (7%)	472 (32%)
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	285 (12%)	976 (40%)

The coroner area contains sections of the M3 and M27 motorway as well as several major A-roads, main rail lines to/from London, the Midlands and the West Country.

There is one prison. Southampton also has an airport and a busy port with incoming cruise ships. Portsmouth also has a dock and is the home of the Royal Navy.

### Office and court accommodation

The service for Central North East and Southampton and New Forest is located in Hampshire County Council accommodation based in Winchester, alongside court facilities. There are additional court facilities in Basingstoke.

Should the merger of the jurisdictions be agreed, there will be a further office and court facilities in Portsmouth, however it is expected that the Senior Coroner's main office base will be in Winchester.

## **Staff**

There are 5 Coroner's Officers supported by 2 administrators based in the office in Winchester. There are also two part time court and administration officers based in both Winchester and Basingstoke. All staff are employed by the local authority.

Subject to the merger, there are 4.5 Coroner's Officers and 2 administration staff based in the office in Portsmouth.

## **Management**

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance and support staff are managed by the Coroner's Service Manager, who is employed by the County Council. The Coroner's Service is part of the Regulatory Service department within the County Council, alongside Registration, Hampshire Scientific Services, Trading Standards and Asbestos.

The Coroner's Service Manager works closely with the Senior Coroner and various key agencies to manage delivery of the service to ensure those affected by the work of the Coroner's office receive a high quality service.

## **Daily operations**

The Senior Coroner will work standard office hours (9 – 5) Monday-Friday at the office and court accommodation in Winchester. This arrangement allows the service to provide a high level of service and performance to meet the requirements of the Coroners & Justice Act 2009 and the Chief Coroner's guidance.

The Senior Coroner will be available, on a rota alongside the Area Coroners, outside the above hours to deal with emergencies and other urgent requests.

The administrative support staff are responsible for answering incoming calls from the public on weekdays from 9am to 5pm.

## **The coroner team**

The Senior Coroner is the head of the local coroner service and leads the team of coroners. This team includes a full-time an assistant coroner acting up in a support role to the senior coroner whilst discussions are ongoing in regards to the merger. Should the merger be agreed, an open competition will be held to appoint two Area Coroners. Deputy cover is provided by the assistant coroner who is acting in a support role or a nominated Assistant Coroner 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 is expected to hold regular coroner team meetings.

## 2. JOB SUMMARY

<b>Post Title</b>	<b>SENIOR CORONER</b>
<b>Service Area</b>	<i>Coroner's Service, Regulatory Services</i>
<b>Contact point:</b>	<i>Rhiannon Warner-Harvey, Coroner's Service Manager</i>
<b>Location</b>	<i>Castle Hill, Winchester, SO23 8UL</i>

To deliver a high quality coroner service to the people of Hampshire 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 and 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.
4. To work effectively with the local authority and police authority [where applicable] and to hold regular meetings with both, and with local Registrars.
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 Section 7 of the 2009 Act 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 the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 for 24 hour availability. To take into account the religious and cultural requirements of faith communities.
12. To be prepared to engage with the local community, 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 staff team and police employees [where applicable] 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 Area (where applicable) and 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 as appropriate.
19. To be committed to ensuring expenditure is reasonable and controlled, working closely with the Registration & Coroner's Service Manager [as applicable] to regularly monitor expenditure and report possible risk.

<b>ROLE REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>
All 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.	<b>x</b>	
Thorough, up to date knowledge of legislation, case law and guidance relating to coroner's duties.	<b>x</b>	
Knowledge of structures and procedures of the police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.	<b>x</b>	
Must have knowledge of the extent to which cultural and religious requirements can be met within the constraints of coroner law and practice.	<b>x</b>	
Knowledge of the organisational structures of local government including an understanding of the challenges facing local government, both at present and in the future.	<b>x</b>	
An ability to drive the service and be receptive to new ideas, reforms and diverse needs.	<b>x</b>	
An ability to work collaboratively with staff and their employers.	<b>x</b>	
Effective verbal and written communication skills and the ability to explain legal and medical terms to people from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.	<b>x</b>	
Excellent analytical skills and a consistency of decision-making and administrative direction.	<b>x</b>	
Ability to work in sensitive situations with a wide range of stakeholders (eg. relatives, police officers, medical personnel, mortuary staff, Registrars, witnesses and the media).	<b>x</b>	
Able to deal with emotionally charged situations that require sensitive handling and confident/positive judgement.	<b>x</b>	

Full current driving licence (unless disability precludes this) and use of a vehicle for work purposes.		<b>x</b>
Previous experience as a Senior Coroner, Area Coroner or Assistant Coroner.	<b>x</b>	
Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation.	<b>x</b>	
Experience of holding inquests, including jury inquests.	<b>x</b>	

### **3. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS OF THE SENIOR CORONER**

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

#### **Salary**

The annual salary for the post is £130,000 for a basic 37 hour a week together with the provision of an out of hours service according to the working requirements of the position.

This salary is subject to review pending agreement on the merger of the four jurisdictions.

#### **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.

Following discussion and agreement with the relevant local authority, the Senior Coroner will arrange for an out of hours service. In accordance with The Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, the Senior Coroner shall ensure that a coroner is available in the area at all times 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 County 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.

## **4. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS**

### **Applications**

You are required to submit a CV (maximum 3 pages) and full supporting statement of up to two A4 pages. It is important that your supporting statement fully addresses the following criteria.

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, empathy and resilience.
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. All applicants will be required to complete a declaration form which will need to be submitted with the application form and CV.

The successful candidate will be required to undergo a DBS check.

Applicants must specify in their application if they are subject of any complaint or disciplinary proceedings by any professional body to which they belong and clearly state the salary or fee payable. Applicants will also be asked in interview to declare any 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:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/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 required to give a short presentation as part of the interview process.

### **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 attend 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.

## **5. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE**

**Suitably qualified applicants are requested to register and apply for the position via the County Council's recruitment portal.**

**Closing date: Midnight 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2019**

**Interview invitations will be sent out: 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

**Interview date: 8th July 2019**

**If you do not hear by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 please assume you have not been shortlisted.**

**Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed by 2 Interview Panels in Winchester. The first will consist of:**

**Felicity Roe – Director of Communities, Culture and Business Support for Hampshire County Council**

**Mitch Sanders – Service Director Transactions and Universal Services for Southampton City Council**

**Peter Baulf – Deputy City Solicitor and Head of Legal Services for Portsmouth City Council**

**Derek Winter – Deputy Chief Coroner**

**The second (advisory) Interview Panel will be confirmed when shortlisted applicants are invited to attend the interviews.**

**We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019.**