

Candidate Briefing Pack

Assistant Director for Finance

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Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Welcome

Hello,

Thank you for your interest in joining our team. This post is key to enabling us to continue our drive towards delivery of an excellent finance function and supporting the delivery of the Council's priority to be 'fit for the future'.

This role offers a real opportunity to both influence and deliver the Council's financial strategy and to really leave your mark on the authority. You'll join a highly skilled and motivated Directorate Management Team at an exciting time for the authority.

We need you to build on the good progress already made and drive through our Finance transformation programme and facilitate a wider cultural shift in terms of financial management across the Council. You'll work with colleagues to put in place new financial systems, improved processes and lead the upskilling of team members to deliver a best in class service, delivered on time, every time.

The Council is ambitious for Reading's success. Every member of our team has a crucial role to play in delivering services to our customers and communities, helping to make a difference to Reading. A culture that positively enables and supports the ways of working needed to deliver our aims and help the borough thrive is critical. We call this TEAM Reading.

If you would like to be part of TEAM Reading and are a visible, ambitious and supportive leader of people with the right technical skills and proven experience, then we would like to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqueline Yates

Executive Director of Resources

Reading Borough Council

About Reading

Recently named the second-fastest growing city in the UK, and a regional powerhouse, Reading's forward momentum has been remarkable. Road and rail connections are excellent, with access to the motorway network, Heathrow, central London and the City; and this will only improve when Crossrail arrives in Reading.

Quality of life is high in Reading and it also has a high performing economy. We have the 7th highest employment rate in the UK, our working population is the 6th well-educated, and the average weekly salary is 18% above the national average. We have one of the most diverse populations in the South East outside London with a history of strong and cohesive neighbourhoods. Reading has a rich, but sometimes hidden, history and heritage and a thriving arts and cultural offer.

At the same time Reading is the 4th most unequal UK city. This means certain resident groups are being left behind and not benefiting from our successful economy. There is rising demand for services to support and protect older and vulnerable people and children at risk, which has had a big impact on our budgets at a time when funding is reducing. This means balancing the Council's budget has been difficult and has required the Council to produce and implement robust plans to deliver its Medium-Term Financial Strategy

We're proud that the Council, through our *Team Reading* approach, is driving much of this transformation.

- **T** - works **Together** as one team
- **E** - drives **Efficiency**
- **A** - is **Ambitious**
- **M** - **Makes a difference** to Reading

Reading Borough Council is determined to thrive as an organisation, so that it can lead the way in helping to shape Reading's future. The Council has a long track record of being ambitious for Reading's success, even where there are challenges. The Council is adapting and improving to meet these challenges, against a familiar backdrop of growth in demand for services and reduced government funding set out in our [Corporate Plan](#).

The authority is Labour controlled (30 of 46 elected members). Councillor Jason Brock (Labour) is the Leader of the Council. Peter Sloman has been the Chief Executive since July 2017, following nearly a decade as Chief Executive at Oxford City Council during which time it received the LGA Council of the Year award, Investors in People Gold accreditation and cross council Customer Service Excellence accreditation.

Job Description and Person Specification

Job Title:	Assistant Director for Finance (Deputy Section 151 Officer)		
Grade:	RSMA	Salary:	£82,518 - £96,392
Reports to:	Executive Director of Resources		
Accountable to:	Executive Director of Resources	Conditions:	JNC for Chief Officers
Direct Reports*: <small>* Note - Finance restructure is underway, consulting on this proposal.</small>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Accountant • Financial Strategy Manager • Revenues and Benefits Manager 	Total Staff	c. 85.6 FTE

Main Purpose of the Job:

1. To be the Council's Deputy Section 151 Officer and act in place of the Section 151 Officer in his/her absence.
2. Lead an efficient and effective Finance service in a multidisciplinary organisation, driving change projects that improve quality and performance, while providing highly effective management of the service in the challenging circumstances presented by an improvement phase.
3. Establish and maintain strong financial management across the Council underpinned by effective internal controls.
4. As Deputy, supporting the senior financial adviser (S151 Officer) to the Council ensuring that all statutory obligations are met in a timely manner.
5. To provide expert professional advice to enable Elected Members, the Chief Executive, Executive Directors and senior managers to take informed decisions.
6. Taking a lead role in transforming and strengthening the organisational culture, ensuring that our *'Team Reading'* values and approach are lived and embedded.
7. To promote and strengthen the Council's financial framework ensuring financial regulations and policies are regularly reviewed, conform to best practice and are effectively communicated across the Council.
8. To provide an efficient and effective Finance Function which is customer focused and supports delivery of the Council's strategic direction.
9. To contribute to the overall leadership of the Council through active engagement.
10. With the Executive Director of Resources, produce a robust Medium-Term Financial Strategy covering at least 3 forward years to support sound financial planning.
11. Lead the Production of the Final Accounts in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rules and regulations and within statutory and other agreed deadlines.

Key Responsibilities:

1. To act as the Council's Deputy Section 151 Officer ensuring that the finances of the Council are well managed to the highest standards of stewardship and probity, which meet the expectations of the public and Government.
2. Leadership and Management of the Finance Function, ensuring that the Team has the capacity, capability and clarity needed to fulfil all tasks to the required high standards, that continuous improvement is in place within the Service and that best practice principles are implemented and adhered to.
3. Providing competent and well-informed strategic financial advice to senior officers and elected members to enable informed decision making and the formulation of a robust Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
4. As a member of the Directorate Management Team, contribute to the management of the Directorate by assisting in the development of service plans, projects and services while ensuring that planning, forecasting, expenditure, and monitoring is in accordance with the best practice.
5. Oversee the Council's financial control framework including the system of internal controls, which underpin the production of the annual Statement of Accounts.
6. Recommend and implement the Council's Annual Treasury Management Policy and Prudential Code indicators.
7. To initiate new strategies and practices, with a focus on adopting new delivery models which bring best practice into Reading, as well as attracting outside investment and seeking actively opportunities to trade services and increase commercialisation.
8. Provide effective leadership in the development and delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Key Tasks:

1. Develop strategic plans to respond to local needs and aspirations within changing context, policy, legislation and practice.
2. Develop programmes of work and initiatives that seek to support the Council as a going concern in terms of financial robustness.
3. Ensure that all financial policies and procedures serve the interests of the Council and are communicated, implemented and maintained.
4. Maintain sound systems of financial and budgetary control across the Council, preparing reports to senior management and elected members with clear recommendations for action as required.
5. Oversee the programme of work required to successfully close the accounts each year, and to successfully audit them with minimal challenges.
6. Develop annual Service Business Plans and Workforce Development Plans in support of corporate objectives.
7. Review and comment upon all Reading Borough Council, CMT and committee papers ensuring that the reports are well-informed and accurate from a financial perspective.

8. Coordinate and manage the development of the Council's Medium Financial Strategy and annual refresh process.
9. Oversee the development of the Capital Programme and report on delivery from a financial perspective, giving advice on the implications of the proposed Programme on the Council's finances as necessary
10. Develop and lead partnerships with other agencies and public service providers on cross-cutting issues and initiatives, to build successful relationships, develop common goals and standards and achieve ambitious, improved outcomes for our residents and businesses.
11. To be accountable for the budget and cost effectiveness of the Service, ensuring compliance with the Council's Constitution and that the Council receives value for money from its expenditure.
12. To ensure that the Service promotes environmental sustainability and seeks to minimise the Council's carbon footprint.

Information Common to all Reading Borough Council Job Descriptions

1. All work performed and duties undertaken must be carried out in accordance with relevant Council and Departmental policies and procedures, within legislation, and with regard to the needs of our customers and the diverse community we serve.
2. This document sets out the main dimensions of the job it describes. It does not define all individual tasks, which may be expected to change from time to time to meet operational needs.
3. Job holders will be expected to be flexible in their duties and carry out any other duties commensurate with the grade and falling within the general scope of the job, as requested by management.

Health & Safety/Risk Management

1. Ensure that all aspects of the Council's Health & Safety Policies and Procedures are adhered to.
2. Be responsible for identifying and managing all risks associated with the job role through effective application of internal controls and risk assessments to support the achievement of corporate and service objectives.
3. To be a member of the Council's Emergency Response Team at SILVER level and deputise for the Executive Director/Chief Executive at GOLD level as required.

Contacts and Relationships

At this level the post holder will have significant contact with Elected Members and senior officers of the Council. As the lead officer for this area, the post holder will have contact with the public through engagement led by the Council as well as planned and unplanned communication with local media.

Other Role Information

This is a politically-restricted post, and the post holder cannot be elected as a councillor in any local authority.

Person Specification

Qualifications

1. Accountancy qualification (CCAB registered or CIMA) with significant demonstrable post qualification experience (essential).
2. Evidence of continuous professional development (essential).
3. A management or leadership qualification (desirable).

Experience

1. Extensive experience of leading public sector financial services, preferably in Local Government.
2. A proven track record of achieving and managing cultural and organisational change and of leading improvement within Finance services.
3. Sound financial management experience with the ability to analyse services in terms of their unit costs, value for money and market context.
4. A track record of innovative and different delivery mechanisms.
5. Proven experience of developing and delivering strategies that support organisational ambitions and priorities.
6. Track record of delivering savings through effective service delivery design, procurement and contract management interventions and/or identifying profitable commercial opportunities to grow revenue and market share.
7. Demonstrable experience of engagement with high profile stakeholders in a political environment.
8. A successful track record of working with partners to negotiate, agree and influence outcomes to help further corporate objectives.
9. Significant demonstrable experience as an efficient and effective people manager, leading, motivating, managing and developing a professional function and teams to achieve desired outcomes.
10. Experience of successfully managing budgets of a comparable scope and scale.

Knowledge

1. In depth knowledge of local government finances and the ability to interpret legislation to deliver strategies and policies for the Directorate and the Council.
2. Up to date and relevant knowledge of Finance best practice.
3. Commercially aware with an up to date and relevant knowledge of procurement and contract management best practice.
4. Knowledge and understanding of large and complex public service organisations.
5. Understanding of local government operations and how Council services interface with key public service partners e.g. police, health.

Skills and Abilities

1. A strong corporate player, able to develop shared approaches with colleagues across the Council and beyond and enable joined-up planning and shared values and objectives.
2. An enabler, with the ability to manage a wide range of complex issues and agendas at the same time and drive change through influence and diplomacy.
3. Tenacity and resilience, for example challenging existing ways of doing things and raising performance and standards.
4. The ability to lead, develop and motivate staff and teams to effect change and deliver improvement and achieve desired outcomes.
5. Excellent judgement and analysis with the ability to broker solutions to complex problems.
6. Political awareness and good political judgement, with an ability to gain the confidence of Members, senior managers, partner organisations, unions, colleagues and employees.
7. Creativity and imagination in seeing new approaches, painting the vision, overcoming obstacles and showing that ambitious goals can be achieved.
8. Ability to provide timely, accurate and correct written and verbal advice for Members, Corporate Leadership Team and Officers to develop and articulate the strategic direction for the organisation.
9. Commercial awareness and approach, recognising the importance of value for money in all Council activity.
10. Ability to work collaboratively with stakeholders, obtaining the trust of a wide range of individuals and organisations, working as part of multi-function teams.
11. Commitment to and understanding of equalities issues in service delivery and employment, with a commitment to corporate policies including the Equal Opportunities Policy and to ensuring that the service is compliant.
12. Excellent communication and negotiating skills with the ability to present complex issues in a simple and easy to understand way for internal and external audiences.
13. Ability to manage conflicting demands to tight timescales.
14. Ability to work flexibly, including attending evening meetings.

Our offer to you

- Up to 32 days annual leave
- Access to the Local Government Pension Scheme
- Access to our Ofsted Outstanding workplace nursery - Kennet Day Nursery
- A modern working environment and supportive practices
- Relocation and accommodation policies and schemes
- Season ticket loans and discounted travel with Reading Buses
- Salary sacrifice schemes for bicycle purchase, car leasing, child care vouchers, Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) and for Kennet Day Nursery fees.

Pension

You will have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme which will provide you with an income in retirement, payable for life and may give your loved ones financial security in the very secure scheme because the benefits are set out in law. This means that your pension earned each year is based on your actual pensionable pay received in each scheme year (1 April to 31 March) and not on the contributions you pay.

You will be admitted to the Scheme automatically from your first day of employment. You pay in a percentage of your salary and we will also pay a percentage depending on your salary level. You can also opt to pay in Additional Voluntary Contributions to improve your pension. You will get death in service benefit to the value of three times your salary and have access to a Credit Union.

Working hours

Your normal working week will incorporate Monday to Friday working and your hours of work are flexible according to the reasonable requirements of the organisation (not fewer than 37 hours per week on average). This will include attendance at evening meetings as required.

However, you will be expected to be in attendance whenever and for as long as may be reasonably required for the successful performance of the job. Accordingly, no regular working arrangements are specified. Overtime is not payable.

Annual leave

We offer a generous holiday entitlement - 30 days a year (plus bank holidays), rising to 32 after 10 years' service with Reading Borough Council. We also offer the opportunity to buy annual leave should you wish to.

We provide a range of family friendly provisions including maternity, paternity, and parental and adoption leave. We also recognise that at times you may have caring responsibilities for other dependants and provide other leave in addition to career breaks.

A modern working environment and supportive practices

Our Civic Offices are in the heart of Reading. Wherever possible we offer a flexible work style. We are committed to providing a wide range of positive working patterns such as 9-day fortnight and part time, flexitime and home working etc. Employees in most areas and at all levels may be considered for flexible work style regardless of personal circumstances, seniority, current working pattern, employment status (permanent/fixed term), although the ability to work flexibly will depend very much on the job you do and the service area.

Pool cars

We have a number of pool cars available for use by staff that need to make regular visits or attend appointments outside of the office.

Trains, buses and bicycles

We are located in the centre of Reading just outside the Oracle shopping centre and within easy reach of the main Reading Train Station (10 mins walk). Buses to Reading town centre are plentiful and there are bicycle racks right outside the front door.

We have a bike scheme where you can buy or hire a new bike via a salary sacrifice scheme and we offer staff season ticket loans and discounted travel with Reading Buses.

Relocation assistance

We have several relocation schemes which offer assistance for those looking to relocate to Reading. Support of up to £8,000 is available to staff relocating from at least 50 miles away and who are moving to within 25 miles of their work base location.

Childcare

Kennet Day Nursery is Reading Borough Council's workplace day nursery situated in the Civic Offices in Reading town centre. The nursery is easily accessible by car, train or bus.

Rated Outstanding by Ofsted, Kennet offers high quality day care for children aged 3 months to 5 years. The nursery is open to children who have a parent or guardian who works for Reading Borough Council and is also open to other public sector workers. However, RBC staff have priority access and discounted rates.

The nursery is open from 8am - 6pm and offers full and part time sessions with a minimum of 3 sessions per week.

For more information please contact Ita McGullion, Nursery Manager on: 0118 9372509 or email kennetdaynursery@reading.gov.uk

Health and wellbeing

Our Employee Assistance Programme offers advice on issues such as consumer and statutory rights, state benefits, landlord and tenant problems, dealing with noisy neighbours or tackling debt. The programme is available to all staff and provides telephone access to a range of advice, information and personal support including counselling and dealing with stress, relationship problems, bereavement or improving your assertiveness skills.

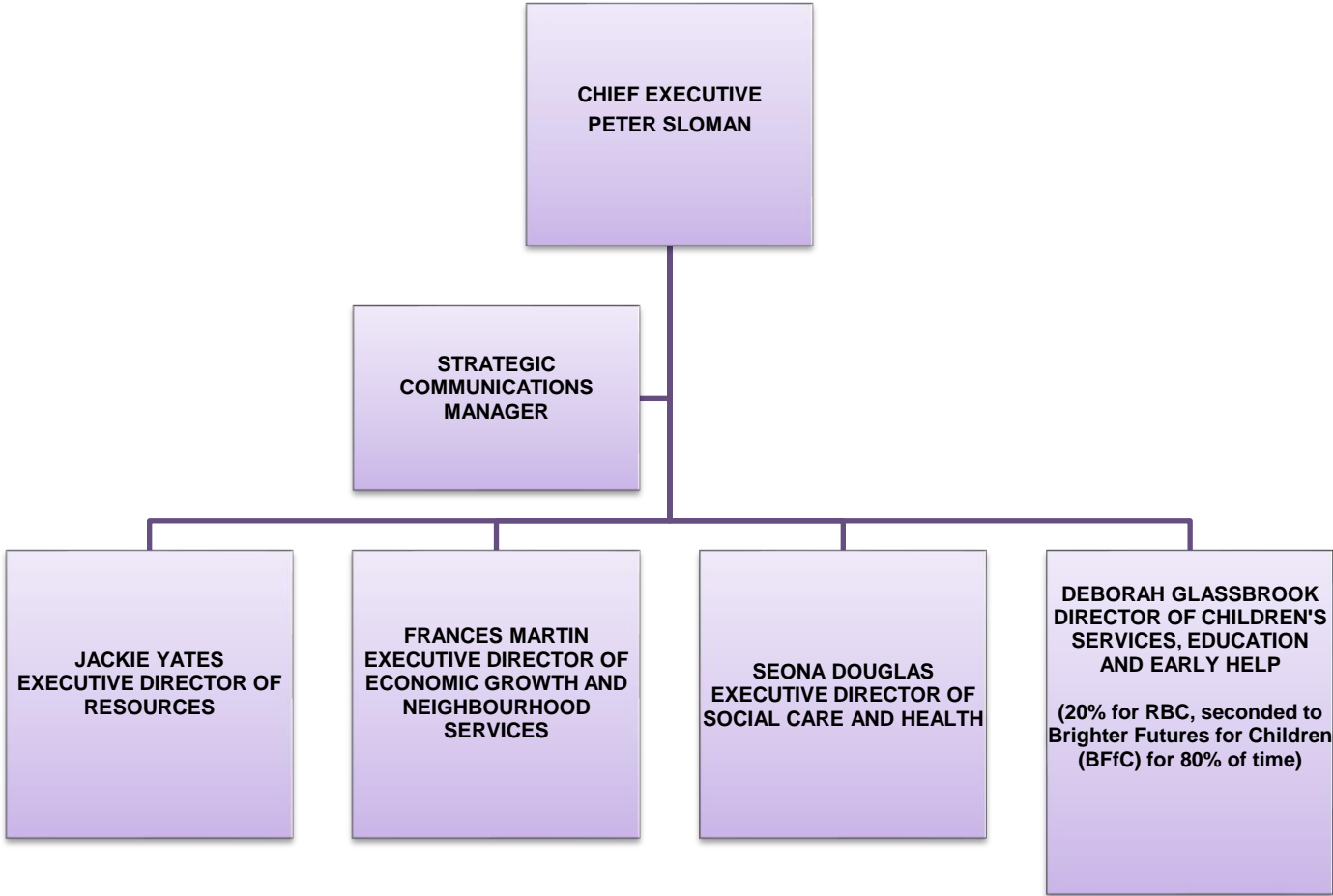
We have a health and wellbeing programme and take an active part in the Healthy Workplace Challenge and we have ample cycle facilities including lockers, showers and drying facilities at the Civic Offices.

When it comes to the social side of things, we have lots going on; our Staff Club runs a range of events like pub quizzes and theatre trips and we have lots of discounts available to staff for local sports, leisure and retail activities.

Place of work

Reading Borough Council, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU.

Corporate Management Structure Chart



Directorate of Resources

