

# Candidate Information Pack

## **SENIOR CORONER**



Relevant Authority:

Essex County Council

02<sup>nd</sup> Sept 2020

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

**1. ADVERT**  
**Senior Coroner for Essex**  
**Salary up to £135,252**

**Closing date: 04<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

Essex County Council is seeking to appoint a new Senior Coroner to replace the current post-holder who retires in December 2020

**About the Post:**

Home to 1.4 million people, Essex is the second most populated English county and one of the busiest coronial areas in England and Wales. As a broadly diverse area that benefits from an unspoilt coastline and countryside, desirable market towns, dynamic working opportunities and a varied social and cultural life, the county offers something for everyone. Home to major urban areas including Basildon and Harlow and nationally-important infrastructure such as Stansted Airport, the work we do at Essex County Council is both complex and highly interesting.

The Senior Coroner stands at the head of the local coroner service, providing judicial leadership and taking the lead on all coronial work including the conduct of inquests. Working in partnership with Essex County Council ('ECC', the relevant local authority) and across the jurisdiction of Essex which includes Southend and Thurrock areas, the Senior Coroner delivers a high-quality coronial service, building the service into a nationally recognised centre of excellence for best practice.

The Senior Coroner is an independent judicial office holder, who works collaboratively with ECC officers, the Police and other stakeholders to deliver justice in a high-quality sensitive way, providing value for money, performance and financial efficiencies while putting the bereaved at the heart of the process.

Essex County Council is a learning organisation and strives to continually improve the services it delivers to the residents of Essex through innovation and digital solutions. Through sharing of best practice from the coroner service, the senior coroner will provide insight into new innovative and digital ways of working that are taking place in other jurisdictions. The senior coroner will share those with ECC officers, to continually improve the customer experience and efficiency and effectiveness of the whole team.

The number of reported deaths pa was 5,860 in 2019. This is a significant number of reported deaths, due to the geographical size of the jurisdiction as well as its particular make-up, with a combination of major urban areas as well as rural components and means that Essex is amongst the largest coroner areas in England and Wales. Accordingly we appoint our senior coroner with a salary on a full-time basis.

The salary will include payment for out of hours availability by agreement.

You will be required to demonstrate knowledge and experience of coroner law and of relevant medico-legal knowledge, have proven skills in conducting investigations and an understanding of court procedure. You will also need to demonstrate the excellent communication and interpersonal skills necessary to deal with sensitive situations.

It is essential that the successful candidate has proven experience of running or sharing a coroner's jurisdiction including carrying out investigations, case management, and conducting inquests.

**Who can apply:**

The successful candidate will be subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (s23 and Schedule 3) including that they are a barrister or a solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility

condition on a five-year basis, which means they will have five years of experience *whilst* holding that qualification. They will be under the age of 70, have significant experience of working as a Senior Coroner, area coroner or assistant coroner.

In turn, Essex County Council can offer a desirable benefits package, plus the chance to work alongside a progressive team within the local authority. We are always keen to improve the service that we offer and explore new opportunities and better ways of working – making for a particularly fulfilling working life. With the backing of friendly colleagues and a senior management team who will help you excel in the role, you will find a solid work/life balance. So, join us in this progressive role, and share your expertise with a team who are committed to excelling in all that they do.

**Statutory terms of the Appointment:**

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.

**How to apply:**

If you wish to have an informal discussion or arrange a visit, please contact Danielle Foster, Resourcing Delivery & Strategy Manager [Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk)

Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV and their application to Danielle Foster, Resourcing Delivery & Strategy Manager [Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk)

**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 jurisdiction of the Essex Coroner Service includes not only the Essex County Council area, but also that of Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Councils; making the Essex jurisdiction the largest in the country. The service consistently receives a high number of referrals each year.

The coroner area contains sections of the M11 motorway as well as several major A-roads, main rail lines to/from London as well as Stansted and Southend airports. The area includes HMP Chelmsford and Youth Offending Institution.

There are 5 acute hospitals in total located in Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester, Harlow and Southend-on Sea) as well as several community hospitals. There is a world renowned specialist Burns Unit in Chelmsford and a specialised Cardio Thoracic Centre in Basildon.

**Daily Operations and accommodation**

The service is located in dedicated accommodation, including offices and court in Seax House, Chelmsford. The coroner's court, which is next to the coroner's offices, is available Monday-Friday allowing inquests to be opened quickly with dates set for inquest hearings, usually within the required six months

This post will work alongside the existing coronial team, including 2 current Area Coroners. The service also has 3 Assistant Coroners who work on an occasional basis. 17 coroner's officers are employed by Council as well a small team of administrative staff. In addition, there are two team leaders and a Coroner Service Operations Manager. The Coroner Service as a whole is part of the Council's Corporate and Customer Services function.

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance and support staff are managed by the Coroner Service Operations Manager, who is employed by the Council

The Operations Manager works closely with the Senior Coroner on the delivery of the service to ensure those affected by the work of the coroner team receive a high-quality service.

All staff are co-located with the Senior Coroner

The Senior Coroner will be expected on occasion to be available out of hours on a rota basis.

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

### **3. JOB SUMMARY**

#### **The role of the coroner:**

- Coroners are independent judicial office holders. When made aware that a body or bodies of deceased persons lie within the coroner area, the coroner is responsible for conducting investigations and holding inquests when required (with or without a jury) into deaths to determine **who** the deceased was, **when** and **where** the deceased came by his or her death and **how** that death occurred. A referral is made to the coroner when there is reason to suspect that:
  - i. The deceased died a violent or unnatural death;
  - ii. The cause of death is unknown; or
  - iii. The deceased died while in custody or otherwise in state detention.
- Conducting investigations of this kind will include where appropriate directing pathologists and others to determine these answers. Coroners also have a duty to produce Prevention of Future Death reports should an investigation give rise to concerns about future deaths occurring from the circumstances that caused the death. Coroners also deal with claims for treasure when required in accordance with statutory regulations and guidance.

#### **Overview of the role of a senior coroner:**

The senior coroner stands at the head of the coroner service and leads in that area to ensure that a high quality coroner service is provided to the local community that puts the bereaved at the heart of the process. This includes preparing for any significant emergencies, including mass fatality and disaster victim identification incidents and excess death scenarios which may occur, and to be available to assist with 24 hour availability on a rota basis as well as holding regular team meetings and liaising with stakeholders. The senior coroner will be responsible for submitting annual returns to the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor as and when required. The senior coroner works closely with the Chief Coroner on national and other relevant issues. The role involves working effectively with the local authority and police authority and to hold regular meetings with both and with local Registrars. The senior coroner acts as the Data Controller for material held by the coroner service, ensuring, in collaboration with the relevant authority that all relevant legislation is observed and necessary security measures are put in place to protect against accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration and disclosure of data. The senior coroner oversees the management of all post-decision challenges that are brought within the area to ensure compliance and that the challenge is properly dealt with.

#### **Senior coroner Role Responsibilities and Assessment criteria**

##### **Assimilating and clarifying information**

Senior coroners are expected to be able to quickly assimilate information to identify essential issues, seeking clarification where necessary so a clear understanding of this information is

gained. This will include possessing the ability to explain legal and medical terms to people from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds. Senior coroners are responsible for assimilating information to write reports about the jurisdiction.

### **Assessment criteria**

- 1. Excellent analytical skills and a consistency of decision-making and administrative direction.**
- 2. An ability to analyse information in order to support the effective running of a team.**
- 3. The ability to explain complex terms to those from non-legal or non-medical backgrounds.**

### **Managing work and leading effectively**

A large amount of coronial work takes place outside of the court setting and therefore senior coroners are expected to be able to lead and manage the work of the team effectively. Senior coroners will be expected to sit on the more complex and challenging inquests whilst providing an effective and efficient coronial service for the local community. When conducting inquests, senior coroners are required to lead by running hearings efficiently to facilitate a fair conclusion, minimise delays and effectively deal with case management. Senior coroners must respond calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances and prioritise work to make the most of available resources whilst taking in to account any budgetary considerations as appropriate. The Senior Coroner manages resources and assists the local authority with the appointment process of area and assistant coroners. Senior coroners are committed to ensuring that any expenditure is reasonable and controlled and works to monitor this regularly with the local authority.

#### **Assessment criteria:**

- 4. An ability to prioritise work effectively to minimise delays.**
- 5. Able to work at speed and under pressure.**
- 6. Demonstrates resilience responding calmly and flexibly to changing circumstances.**
- 7. Is able to manage and lead a team effectively.**

### **Working with others**

An ability to work constructively with others whilst demonstrating an awareness of diversity and showing empathy and sensitivity in building relationships is required in this post. Senior coroners must be able to constructively lead members of the coronial team and interact well with bereaved families and external stakeholders (e.g. relatives, police officers, medical personnel, mortuary staff, Registrars of Births and Deaths, witnesses and the media). The senior coroner will engage with the local community, for example giving talks and seeking feedback and views.

#### **Assessment criteria:**

- 8. Must have knowledge of the extent to which cultural and religious requirements can be met within the constraints of coroner law and practice.**
- 9. An ability to drive the service and be receptive to new ideas, reforms and diverse needs.**
- 10. Treats people with respect, sensitivity and in a fair manner without discrimination; ensuring the requirements of those with differing needs are properly met.**
- 11. An ability to work collaboratively with staff and their employers, internal and external stakeholders and relatives.**

### **Communicating effectively**

Senior coroners must be excellent communicators and have the ability to express themselves authoritatively when required. They must be sensitive and, as far as possible, responsive to the

needs and requirements of those who engage with the coroner service and also possess the awareness to manage their expectations of the process. Senior coroners must be IT literate and able to provide clear directions to staff on coroner investigations whilst creating a safe, harmonious and effective working environment through co-operative working and holding regular team meetings.

**Assessment Criteria:**

- 12. Excellent verbal and written communication skills.**
- 13. Establishes authority and inspires respect and confidence.**
- 14. Remains calm and authoritative even when challenged.**

**Exercising judgement**

Senior coroners must demonstrate integrity and apply independence of mind to make incisive, fair and legally sound decision. Senior coroners must also possess the ability to use sound judgement in leading the team such as deciding suitable allocation of resources.

**Assessment criteria**

- 15. Able to deal with emotionally charged situations that require sensitive handling and confident/positive judgement.**
- 16. Experience of conducting investigative enquiries including demonstrating clarity of thought in identifying issues relevant to the investigation.**
- 17. Reaches clear, reasoned decisions objectively, based on relevant law and findings of fact.**

**Possessing and Building Knowledge**

It is the responsibility of the senior coroner to keep an up-to-date working knowledge of coroner law, practice and guidance, and advise staff on developments as appropriate. Coroners must undertake compulsory Judicial College and Chief Coroner training as appropriate and the senior coroner, in conjunction with the local authority runs any local training. The senior coroner arranges and ensures that appraisals for all assistant coroners are completed.

**Assessment criteria:**

- 18. All applicants must be a barrister or solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition which includes a requirement for the candidate to hold a relevant qualification, to have also gained experience in the law for a total period of at least 5 years *whilst holding that qualification* and be under the age of 70: paragraph 3 of Schedule 3.**
- 19. Thorough, up to date knowledge of legislation, case law and guidance relating to coroner's duties.**
- 20. Knowledge of structures and procedures of the police, in particular those relating to the investigation of sudden or suspicious deaths.**
- 21. Knowledge of the organisational structures of local government including an understanding of the challenges facing local government, both at present and in the future.**
- 22. Experience of holding inquests, including jury inquests.**
- 23. Previous experience as a senior, area or assistant coroner**

Please detail the coroner work that you have undertaken including:

- (a) how many days worked as coroner;
- (b) the nature of the work;
- (c) the division of time between office and court;
- (d) the extent of experience in completing Forms 100A and 100B;
- (e) the number and type of inquests conducted;
- (f) the number of long inquests and their subject matter; and
- (g) the number of Jury inquests conducted.
- (h) experience of digital case management systems.

**Desirable criteria:**

- 24. Full current driving licence (unless disability precludes this) and use of a vehicle for work purposes.**

#### **4. 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 to time agreed between the coroner and the relevant local authority. You will not be an employee of the Local Authority.

##### **Salary**

The annual salary for the post is up to £135,252 per annum for a standard 40 hour a week in line with the JNC Coroners Circular 63 together with the provision of an out of hours service according to the working requirements of the position.

##### **Pension Scheme**

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

##### **Hours of work**

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 (excluding bank holidays and public holidays).

##### **Sick Pay**

The senior coroner is entitled to full sick pay (subject to medical evidence). Cover for any sick leave will be provided by the area coroner to meet the needs of the area.

##### **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 AND SELECTION PROCESS**

### **Applications**

To apply for this position, you are required to submit a CV, a full supporting statement of up to two sides of A4 (no smaller than font 11). It is important that your supporting statement fully addresses the assessment criteria detailed in **bold** in the job summary section above.

**In particular please demonstrate how you meet the following criteria:**

- 1. Assimilating and clarifying information**
- 2. Managing work efficiently**
- 3. Working with others**
- 4. Communicating effectively**
- 5. Exercising judgement**
- 6. Possessing and Building Knowledge**

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**

Applicants will be required to undertake ECC pre-employment checks, further details on these can be requested if needed from [Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk)

### **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.

## **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 declaration form can be found at the following link:

<https://www.workingforessex.com/media/assets/7Declaration.docx>

The successful candidate will be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

Applicants must specify in their application if they are the subject of any complaint or disciplinary proceedings by any professional body to which they belong (including personal conduct referred to the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office), Applicants will also be asked in interview to declare anything about themselves including in their past that might be an embarrassment to the Local Authority, the Chief Coroner or the Lord Chancellor 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/>

## **Interview**

You will be required to undertake a short presentation as part of the interview process. We will also ask you to complete a WAVE professional styles behavioural assessment (psychometric) 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 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.

## **6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE**

**Suitably qualified applicants are requested to email their CV, their application and their signed declaration to:** Danielle Foster, Resourcing Delivery & Strategy Manager  
[Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Danielle.foster@essex.gov.uk)

**Closing date:** 5pm, 04<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Interview invitations will be sent out:** w/c 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Interview date:** 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**If you do not hear by 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020 please assume you have not been shortlisted.**

**The interview panel will be:**

- Margaret Lee: Executive Director, Corporate & Customer
- Suzanna Shaw: Director, Customer Services
- Alison Woods: Head of People Business Partnering and Employment Practice.
- Observing - Chief Coroner or nominee

**Please note that we anticipate interviews will be held virtually.**

**We are aiming for the successful candidate to take up post as soon as their current circumstance allows.**