

Role Profile: Lead Officer – Planning Enforcement

Context

Kingston, like all London boroughs, operates within a complex planning environment where effective enforcement is essential to maintaining public confidence in the planning system, protecting amenity, heritage and environmental assets, and ensuring that approved development is delivered lawfully and responsibly.

The borough faces increasing enforcement pressures including unauthorised development, changes of use, heritage breaches, HMOs, short-term lets, advertisement control, and non-compliance with planning conditions and legal agreements. The Lead Officer – Planning Enforcement provides senior professional leadership to ensure Kingston delivers a robust, proportionate and legally sound enforcement service aligned with London-wide best practice.

Role Purpose

To provide strategic and operational leadership for Kingston's Planning Enforcement function, ensuring the effective investigation, resolution and prosecution of breaches of planning control in accordance with legislation, national policy, the borough's Planning Enforcement Plan and principles of proportionality and public interest.

The postholder acts as the Council's senior professional lead for planning enforcement matters, providing expert advice to Members, senior officers, legal services and external stakeholders, and ensuring enforcement activity supports Kingston's wider place-making, regeneration, heritage protection and community objectives.

The role reports to the Head of Development Management / Planning with direct line management of planning enforcement officers and the tree officer.

Key Activities

1. Enforcement Leadership and Professional Advice

- Provide authoritative professional advice on planning enforcement legislation, policy, case law and best practice.
- Lead on the most complex, sensitive and high-profile enforcement investigations across the borough.
- Act as Kingston's senior expert on enforcement matters, advising Members, senior officers and corporate colleagues.
- Ensure enforcement decisions are robust, defensible, proportionate and consistent with public interest tests.

2. Investigation and Case Management

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(London-standard senior enforcement leadership role)

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The role reports to the Head of Development Management / Planning and has no direct line management responsibility, but leads multidisciplinary enforcement case teams and commissions specialist support where required.

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2. Investigation and Case Management

Oversee and, where necessary, personally lead investigations into serious or complex breaches of planning control, including:

- Unauthorised development and changes of use
Listed building and conservation area breaches
- HMOs and short-term lets
- Advertisement control
- Non-compliance with planning conditions and Section 106 obligations
- Ensure evidence gathering, site inspections, interviews and record-keeping meet legal and procedural standards.
- Direct the preparation and service of formal notices including Enforcement Notices, Breach of Condition Notices, Planning Contravention Notices, Stop Notices and Temporary Stop Notices.

3. Appeals, Prosecutions and Legal Proceedings

- Lead on enforcement appeals and prosecutions, preparing robust statements and evidence.
- Represent the Council at enforcement appeals, hearings, public inquiries and court proceedings as required.

- Work closely with Legal Services to determine appropriate enforcement strategies and litigation routes.
- Act as expert witness for the Council on enforcement matters.

4. Enforcement Strategy, Policy and Performance

- Lead the implementation, monitoring and periodic review of Kingston's Planning Enforcement Plan.
- Ensure enforcement priorities reflect borough objectives, London-wide pressures and emerging risks.
- Monitor enforcement performance, trends and outcomes, using data to inform service improvements and resource planning.
- Contribute to corporate reporting, Member briefings and service planning.

5. Partnership Working and Community Confidence

- Build strong working relationships with Members, residents, community groups, ward councillors and external agencies.
- Liaise with internal services including Development Management, Housing, Environmental Health, Licensing, Legal, Regeneration and Anti-Social Behaviour teams.
- Engage constructively with landowners, agents and developers to resolve breaches through negotiation where appropriate, while taking firm action where necessary.
- Respond to complex complaints, Member enquiries, FOIs and Ombudsman cases relating to enforcement activity.

6. Leadership and Service Development

- Provide visible professional leadership to enforcement officers, offering case direction, mentoring and quality assurance.
- Promote consistency, fairness and professionalism across enforcement decision-making.
- Support service modernisation, digital working, process improvement and skills development within the enforcement function.
- Deputise for the Head of Service as required on enforcement-related matters.

7. Commissioning and Specialist Support

- Commission and manage external consultants, barristers, expert witnesses or specialist advisors as required.
 - Ensure value for money, quality outputs and effective integration of external advice into enforcement cases.
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Digital and Modern Working

- Champion effective use of enforcement case management systems, GIS, evidence-gathering technology and digital tools.
 - Support innovation and improved transparency in enforcement processes.
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Person Specification

Qualifications

- Degree in Town Planning or a related built-environment discipline or equivalent professional training/qualification.
- Chartered Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) or eligible for chartered membership and/or equivalent professional body.

Experience

- Significant experience in planning enforcement, ideally within a London borough or comparable urban authority.
- Proven track record leading complex enforcement cases, appeals and prosecutions.
- Experience providing professional advice to Members and senior officers in politically sensitive environments.
- Experience acting as expert witness at appeals or court proceedings (highly desirable).

Knowledge and Skills

- Expert knowledge of planning enforcement legislation, policy and case law.

- Strong understanding of heritage protection, residential amenity, HMOs and urban enforcement challenges.
 - Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including preparation of legal statements and reports.
 - Strong judgement, negotiation skills and ability to manage risk and conflict.
 - Ability to lead complex cases, influence stakeholders and maintain public confidence.
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Kingston's STAR Values

Postholders are expected to model Kingston's organisational values:

- Supportive – encouraging professionalism, learning and collaboration
- Transparent – clear, fair and evidence-based decision-making
- Appreciative – recognising good practice and team contribution
- Respectful – valuing communities, diversity and lawful process
- Oversee and, where necessary, personally lead investigations into serious or complex breaches of planning control, including:
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