CAREER EDUCATION – WRITTEN Q&A: Rhiannon Leighton

1. **What is your job role and organisation?**

   Democratic Services Assistant, Cambridgeshire County Council.

2. **What do you do in this job?**

   I organise and clerk County Council committee meetings, liaise with councillors and officers, proofread documents and publish reports.

3. **Why did you choose this career?**

   The job comes with variety, and there is always something interesting going on. I provide a lot of support for the People and Communities directorate of the Council. This allows me to understand the work done by local authorities to minimise social inequalities, and I love feeling a part of that.

4. **What background education or training do you have?**

   BA in English Literature

   A Levels in English Literature, History and Classical Civilisations

5. **What has your career path been?**

   I finished my degree last year and came to this job in January, following a brief spell working in a Children's Residential Home. During my A Level and degree I did some proof reading and had a couple of front facing customer roles too.

6. **What does a typical day involve?**

   Right now, I'm working from home. I'll start my day checking through emails with a cup of coffee in hand, before beginning on a more major task like writing minutes. Throughout the day I might host a councillor training session (and learn quite a bit from it myself!), talk to co-workers via zoom or work with them in-person if we're doing a joint project, and respond to queries from councillors. As I have flexible working, I tend to take a break most days from 4pm-5pm as my concentration wanes and get some fresh air, before working another hour doing a more mindless activity such as indexing or updating the County Council website.

7. **What is your work environment like?**

   I have flexible working, meaning I can go physically into work, or work from home. Sometimes I'll even take my work to a café for a change of scene. I'm quite sociable though, so I enjoy going in so I can chat to colleagues and visitors.

   I am part of a close-knit group of 8 in democratic services. We have online weekly meetings to discuss work and have two informal online catch ups during the week too. As I organise a lot of different Committees, I also work closely with officers from many different parts of the Council. I also see Councillors frequently and have a much more professional relationship with them. It can be a very social environment if you want it to be!

I work 37 hours a week but am allowed to work those hours whenever I like. When at home, I tend to work 8:30 – 6 (with a couple of breaks in the middle) which allows me to collect enough hours to have an extra day off every now and again. I love it because I can work less on days that I feel like doing nothing and more when I'm feeling impassioned about a project.

8. **What aspects of your job are most challenging?**

One benefit of my job is that I am introduced to lots of areas that I have much less of a natural understanding with. I work with the Fire Authority and Pension Fund which revolves around finance. Not my strong point! However, my colleagues are supportive, and the organisation will allow me to go on training courses for anything I feel I need to know more about.

9. **Can you give an example of a project or piece of work that you have been most proud of?**

I recently wrote a report that will be published and, if passed through the Committee, will change the Council's Constitution. A problem was raised and I did some research, found a solution and might get to see change made as a result. That feels pretty exciting.

10. **How do you hope your career will progress?**

I hope to get more involved in the people and communities' areas of local authorities: I want to make a difference to people's lives by helping to resolve inequalities. I love researching to make change, but I love proof reading research about those areas too. My current role lets me do both and gives me a holistic overview of social inequalities in Cambridgeshire that I wouldn't have if I had started in a more targeted role.