



**LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON**  
**INNOVATION & CHANGE DIRECTORATE**  
**JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POST TITLE:** Head of Leader's Office

**Grade:** MGB

**DIVISION/SECTION:** Leader's Office / Corporate Governance

**Location:** Civic Centre

**Responsible to:** [Assistant Director, Corporate Governance]

**Responsible for:** Labour Group Assistant, EA to the Leader, Leader's Caseworker, and Cabinet Support Officer (x2)

**Post number:**

**Date:** October 2022

**1. MAIN PURPOSE**

- To provide professional, high-level, strategic advice and leadership in support of the Leader and Cabinet in undertaking their roles and delivering their strategic priorities for Merton.

**2. MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To act as a senior and trusted confidential adviser to the Leader and Cabinet on issues affecting the Council.
- To act as a link between the Leader and Cabinet, ensuring effective coordination of the work of the administration and support in delivering its priorities and objectives.

- To support the Leader and Cabinet in effective liaison between the administration and Labour Group, and managing policy and administrative support to Labour Group members.
- To support a strong and effective relationship between the Leader & Cabinet and the Council's Corporate Management Team, working collaboratively in progressing key issues to achieve the administration's priorities and objectives, including taking a strategic view of the connections between different service/policy areas, and monitoring and tracking actions and progress on key issues.
- Working with the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance and Democratic Services to ensure effective strategic planning and decision-making for achieving the administration's priorities and objectives through management of the Council Forward Plan, and arrangements for the Leader's Strategy Group, Cabinet and Council.
- To effectively represent the views of the Leader & Cabinet, including attending meetings on their behalf and through contributing to discussions and thinking on policy, strategy, services and projects, in support of achieving the administration's priorities and objectives.
- To lead on specific projects and initiatives on behalf of the Leader & Cabinet, carrying out research and providing briefings, speeches and strategic policy advice, to support emerging thinking or on issues that affect the Council.
- To work closely with the Head of Communications to support long-term strategic communications planning and day-to-day communications activity, including planning for proactive Council announcements, and reactive media, ensuring effective and coherent narrative and messaging that reflects the administration's priorities and objectives.
- To maintain high level awareness and understanding of national and London-wide policy, legislation and issues affecting local government, and an understanding of how they relate to the Council and Merton.
- To proactively horizon scan for emerging issues and opportunities and ensuring timely and effective consideration of them by the Leader & Cabinet.
- To support the Leader & Cabinet in public affairs activity, including engagement with Ministers, government departments, the Mayor of London, MPs and other decision-makers and stakeholders to influence policy and advance priorities for the Council and on issues that affect residents.
- Supporting the Leader & Cabinet in engagement and work with external bodies and managing an engagement and visits programme for meeting

residents, councillors, key partners and stakeholders, including local business and voluntary and community and faith groups.

- To provide leadership of the Leader's Office to ensure a high performing and effective service to the Leader and Cabinet that allows them to fulfil their roles and meet their priorities, including through effective diary management that ensures efficient use of their time, and provision of high-quality briefings and information and support for meetings and events.
- To ensure effective management of the Leader & Cabinet's casework and correspondence, and handling complex, confidential or sensitive issues on the Leader & Cabinet's behalf.
- To manage the Leader's Office team, setting clear performance standards, monitoring and managing performance, including through regular 1-2-1s and appraisals; individual development and training; and managing recruitment and induction.



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**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

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**1. Knowledge**

- In-depth understanding of local government, its structures, governance arrangements and decision-making processes
- Understanding of the relationship between the political administration and the Council's officer team
- In-depth understanding of the current and emerging national policy agenda facing local government
- Understanding of the key strategic issues for Merton
- In-depth understanding of national current affairs and political agenda

**2. Skills**

- Ability to build strong, trusted relationships with the Leader, Cabinet, Councillors, Corporate Management Team and officers, and external partners and stakeholders
- Confidence and ability to deal directly with the Leader, Cabinet, Councillors and Corporate Management Team, providing advice and guidance on difficult, sensitive or contentious matters
- Trusted to maintain confidences and deal discretely and diplomatically with sensitive and confidential issues
- Strategy and policy development and an understanding of service delivery
- Ability to take a strategic overview of different policies and priorities and make connections
- Ability to present information and advice clearly and concisely

- Highly developed and effective communication and messaging skills, able to adapt style and tone to method of communication and audience
- Ability to analyse complex information and pull out key information and communicate key messages simply and clearly
- Ability to work collaboratively with colleagues and partners and effective at influencing, negotiating and building advocacy for positions
- Ability to lead, build, manage and motivate a high performing team that delivers a high-quality service
- Highly effective at managing and prioritising own time, managing competing priorities and using own initiative
- Ability to perform other tasks as required for effective operation of the Leader's & Cabinet Office
- [Budget management to enable delivery of a high-quality, high-performing Leader's & Cabinet Office]
- Ability to manage a public affairs approach, including stakeholder management

### **3. *Experience/Training***

- Significant experience of working in a political environment
- Demonstrating a high degree of political awareness, judgement, discretion and sensitivity
- Demonstrating excellent organisational skills, forward planning, and attention to detail
- Putting in place and continual improvement of systems and processes to improve organisational effectiveness
- Leading a busy team, handling high volumes of work in a fast-paced, high-profile environment and meeting performance and quality standards and objectives
- Managing and motivating individuals and teams, managing performance improvement and building a high-performing team

### **4. *Special Requirements***

- Ability to work flexibly and outside of office hours, as required.