



LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON
COMMUNITY AND HOUSING DEPARTMENT
JOB DESCRIPTION

POST TITLE: Head of Housing Needs and Strategy Services

Grade: MG1

DIVISION/SECTION: Community and Housing, Housing Needs

Location: Civic Centre

Responsible to: Director of Community and Housing

Responsible for: Team of C26 staff and budget of 1.5million plus homelessness grants from Government, and any capital budget allocated by the Council for affordable housing development.

The homelessness prevention strategy minimising spend against the general fund.
(Circa 500 homelessness preventions per annum, resulting in c. £3.9m spend if homelessness episodes result in placement in temporary accommodation)

Post number: **Date:** January 2013

1. MAIN PURPOSE

- Lead for the department on the development and implementation of the Council's Housing Strategy and other housing strategies and managing relationships with Housing Associations and the Home and Communities Agency to ensure a supply of affordable housing. To take the lead on development and implementation of new initiatives to improve the quality and supply of affordable housing and the quality of services provided by the Council and other organisations

- Lead, develop, direct and manage the strategic and operational aspects associated with the housing options service, homelessness prevention and housing allocations in the borough in order to provide the best possible services which meet customers needs and aspirations and meet the Council's policies and objectives
- To ensure the Council meets its statutory responsibilities required under the Housing Act 1996
- To ensure the strategic housing service meets national and local performance targets
- To be responsible to the Director of Community and Housing for the overall management of the strategic housing service
- Lead and develop the council's strategic housing function policy, ensuring Merton plays a leading role in developing and influencing sub-regional and national housing policy.
- As a member of Departmental Management Team contribute to the achievement of corporate aims and objectives.
- Ensure the service implements corporate policies and programmes consistently and effectively across the council.
- Represent the council on outside strategic bodies such as London Directors of Housing

2. MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- To provide very specialist technical knowledge on a broad remit of housing legislation, policy and market intelligence to inform Council policy and decisions regarding future priorities
- To provide direction on a wide remit of housing strategy and functions and respond to challenging and conflicting issues under pressure
- To develop a clear strategic framework to ensure housing policies and services contribute to corporate objectives and improve the quality and choice of housing within the borough
- To provide strategic advice to Cabinet, housing portfolio holders, scrutiny commissions and others relating to housing, legislation and national policy
- Ensure effective strategies and arrangements for delivering housing services, responding to changes in local, regional and Government policy, in particular developing and leading strategies to meet Government strategies and external targets in the field of housing needs.

- Lead and manage the relationships with external partners in the field of housing and strategy services e.g. registered providers to ensure the supply of affordable housing
- Lead and manage the relationship with Merton Priory Homes
- Agreeing a budget strategy with regard to homelessness prevention types, rent deposits (bonds and deposits) and use of temporary accommodation rent levels and other charges
- Contribute to the delivery of corporate goals through the leadership, forward planning and management of the Housing Needs Service.
- As part of the Departmental Management Team, ensure that corporate strategies, policies and procedures are effectively and consistently implemented across the service.
- Ensure that the Housing Business Plan is aligned to the Council's priorities and delivered through coordination with other service areas across the council.
- Organisational objectives delivered on time and on budget; statutory and legislative compliance.
- Lead the integration of activities and resources across the Housing Needs Service to ensure the development of an efficient and effective service. The service comprises of:
 - Homelessness Prevention
 - Homelessness Assistance
 - Provision of Temporary Accommodation
 - Shared Lives
 - Housing Strategy
 - Nominations and Registration
 - Affordable Housing and Development
 - Private Sector Tenancy Rights
 - Housing Advice
 - Private Sector Supply
 - Relationship management with the LSVT landlords and Registered Partners
- Develop and implement robust performance management frameworks consistently across the service, ensuring that performance targets are reviewed in line with the council's priorities.
- Ensure effective financial management and risk assessment across the Housing Needs Service.

- Ensure Housing activities, projects and programmes are delivered on time and within budget.
- Ensure effective financial management of homelessness budgets, preventions, rent deposit scheme and temporary accommodation.
- Develop a customer service culture, creating responsive, high quality and cost effective services for residents.
- Deliver performance improvements by driving modernisation and managing change within the service.
- Lead, facilitate and promote change programmes and initiatives, ensuring staff are committed to and capable of delivering excellent services.
- Lead and motivate management and staff within the service, instilling and demonstrating corporate values and high standards of conduct.
- Appoint, develop and train staff, ensuring effective deployment and retention to deliver excellent service.
- Provide the leadership for services for the council, responsible for strategic development of the service in line with resident and council needs.
- Ensure that positive partnership working arrangements are developed and maintained with key external stakeholders to ensure improvements in service delivery and outcomes for the communities of Merton.
- Represent the council by contributing to the local, regional and national debate in the discussion and development of Housing issues, policy, strategy and legislation.
- Where appropriate lead projects and programmes to support the Director of Community and Housing in developing strong partnerships and delivering strategic and service objectives.
- Establish and maintain strong working relationships with elected members, providing professional advice and support on all matters relating to the Housing Needs Service.
- To be responsible for managing the housing and enabling role in the Borough, engaging and supporting Registered Social Landlords and private developers and the private housing sector to influence the housing market and develop the maximum supply of affordable housing.
- To provide high level and specific policy advice on housing needs and enabling issues to the Director, Senior Officers and Members of the Council.

- To lead in the provision of the Housing Advice Service that provides practical legal advice to residents of the Borough across the whole range of housing matters that ensures a joined up and corporate response to housing needs and vulnerability.
- To lead in the provision of Adult Shared Lives Service that provides housing and support for vulnerable adults
- To lead for the Housing Service in the negotiation and implementation of nomination rights to properties of Registered Providers.
- Strategic responsibility for shaping front line services with a strong focus on efficiencies, customer care and access to services.
- To lead and ensure that the Housing Register is maintained within the Council and that the nomination of the Registered Providers accommodation is in harmony with guidance and new legislation and that it contributes to effective budget management and corporate aims of the Council.
- To be responsible for the operation of the Council's statutory homeless functions including advice on policy decisions and proposals for forms of temporary accommodation and resolution of legal challenges.
- Be aware of the Council's Equal Opportunities policy and ensure that at all times the duties of the post are carried out in accordance with the policy.
- Ensure that the Corporate and Departmental Health and Safety Policies are implemented at all times and to raise any concerns regarding their operation, or any health and safety matter with the appropriate senior line manager.
- Ensure that within the scope of the job purpose, the Council aims in relation to customer service are achieved.
- Undertake such other duties as may be required provided they fall within the range and scope of the duties of the post as set out in the above paragraphs and are commensurate with the grade of the post.

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

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1. Knowledge

- A thorough awareness and understanding of current legislation, regulatory requirements, case law, ombudsmen decisions and best practice in relation to all areas of the Housing Service.
- Success in developing working relationships internally and externally to deliver a wide range of Housing Needs services
- Understanding of the principles and practical application of project management.
- Thorough knowledge of the principles of customer focused service delivery.
- Knowledge of RSL procedures and practice in housing allocations.
- Knowledge of housing development and the planning system.
- Knowledge of key issues of Government policy and policy direction in housing.

2. Skills

- Ability to provide vision, leadership and innovation for the development and improvement of the service.
- Ability to interpret and apply relevant legislation and policy.

- Excellent financial management and budgetary control skills.
- Ability to negotiate successfully, influence and persuade.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills both oral and written.
- Excellent problem solving skills.
- Ability to use IT and to assist in the development of IT based solutions.
- Ability to manage conflicting work demands and achieve in a pressurised working environment, meeting key deadlines and specified working objectives.
- Ability to see the broader picture in terms of the Housing Service and link housing needs and enabling issues into the Council's and Government agendas for services and improvement strategies to people.
- Strong customer focus.
- Excellent organisational and planning skills.
- Ability to assimilate and analyse complex information; ability to explain complex information or concepts succinctly.

3. Experience/Training

- Experience in Housing Needs or the Housing Enabling role (both would be desirable).
- A record of achievement in developing and delivering service objectives and plans based on performance management principles.
- Experience of leading and managing a large team.
- Experienced budget and financial manager.
- Experienced in the delivery of a range of complex services and projects in a customer focused environment.
- Full valid driving licence

