



SWINDON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Role Profile

Job Title: Political Assistant	Level: Level 8	Post Number: SBC-10645
Directorate: Enabling/Legal Services/Committee and Member Services	Job Family: Government Operations	Date Prepared: Revised September 2023

Role reports to (Job Title):
Committee and Member Services Manager
Operationally reports to: the Leader of the political group(s) assigned to this post

Fixed term contract:- up to three years ending on or before the day of Annual Council in May 2026
The continuation of this post is subject to annual review to ensure that statutory provisions relating to this post remain satisfied.

Job Purpose:

To provide assistance, in the discharge of any of their functions as members of Swindon Borough Council, to the members of the political group(s) assigned to this post (referred to as “the political group”) as provided by S9 of the Local Government and Housing Act, 1989.

To provide research, communications and policy development advice to the members of the political group and support them in their responsibilities.

To provide a high level of advice and assistance to the Leader of the political Group and the political group on a broad range of policy and other issues impacting on the operation of the Council and its services.

To maintain effective liaison between the political group and the Council and its Chief Executive and Corporate Directors / Directors.

NOTE – this is a politically restricted post.

Key Accountabilities:

1. To be directly responsible for investigating, undertaking research, horizon-scanning and obtaining information on Government, Council and political party related policy and general items of interest or concern to the political group (including the group Leader, Cabinet / Shadow Opposition Members and Councillors of the political group).
2. Prepare agendas, draft reports, attend meetings and produce minutes for the meetings of the relevant political Group - including drafting and co-ordinating briefing papers for the Group leadership as required and ensuring proper co-ordination of meetings with officers across the Council and external organisations.
3. Research and prepare concise, clear, accurate and logical reports supported by appropriate research evidence as necessary for or on behalf of the political Group members. To provide advice and to formulate recommendations for the group Leader and political group on the development

and implementation of Council policy and on service related issues.

4. To provide advice and to formulate recommendations for the political group on central policy developments within the relevant political party at the national level and general items of interest or concern to the group Leader and political group.
5. To attend selected Council, Cabinet and other meetings of any Council decision-making function to provide advice and support to the group Leader and political group members.
6. To identify, analyse and brief within appropriate timescales, and in collaboration with others where necessary, the group Leader on all matters of importance that arise from information received by the group, and from other official organisations with whom the group Leader is associated.
7. Provide administrative and personal support to the group Leader and Deputy Leader.
8. To liaise with the Group Leader and act as a central contact point to ensure effective and timely communication on the Leader's behalf:
 - a. Within the Political Group
 - b. With local Member/s of Parliament
 - c. With senior Council employees
 - d. With the National Political Group
 - e. With Union representatives
 - f. With the media on Political Group issues
 - g. With the general public
9. To identify, establish and maintain a "database" of key contacts that arise from the workflow of the group and from other official organisations with which the Leader of the Group and the relevant political group are associated.
10. Develop and maintain a good knowledge of all the key functions, operations, policies and programmes of the Council, its departments, and key partner agencies.
11. Respond on behalf of the Leader of the Group and Cabinet / Shadow Opposition Members to enquiries from Members of Parliament, Councillors, partner agencies, members of the public, voluntary bodies and the media on all aspects of Council policy and Council initiatives.
12. Responsible for developing and maintaining an up-to-date knowledge of working practices, management developments and techniques and legislation in the field of local government, and to be aware of all central policy developments within the relevant political party, in order to convey this information by way of briefings to the group Leader and members of the political group to enable their relevance to be taken into account in policy development at a local level.
13. To project manage, monitor and progress / chase all initiatives and matters initiated by, or of interest to, the Leader of the political group, and other members of the relevant political group, including where appropriate Cabinet / Shadow Cabinet meetings.
14. To maintain a high level of confidentiality and discretion in all dealings relating to the Leader of the political Group, the Council and the relevant political group.
15. To be responsible for monitoring and responding to media coverage of Council policy and the political group, including preparing press releases on behalf of the political group.
16. To be responsible for dealing with other publicity matters in liaison with the Council's Communications Team, and development and maintenance of any relevant political group Web pages.
17. Attend meetings of relevant local and national bodies, groups, agencies and associations as required by, and on behalf of, the Leader of the political group.
18. To act on behalf of the group Leader and political group as required.
19. To be responsible for briefing on behalf of the group Leader the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, Directors and other partners and stakeholders, on emerging issues, and to be responsible for clarifying agreements, resolving misunderstandings, and identifying outstanding issues wherever reasonably possible.
20. To provide direct support to the Leader of the political group in achieving and progressing

decisions and policy within the Council and within external partnerships.

21. To be directly responsible for making recommendations to the group Leader, the Cabinet / Shadow Cabinet, and the political group on proposals for the future direction of Council policies and initiatives.
22. To facilitate and coordinate the activities of the Group Leader and the Cabinet / Shadow Cabinet with those of the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team.
23. To develop and maintain good working relationships and high levels of internal and external communications with Councillors, officers and external organisations.
24. Provide support to the Group Leader to assist in the management of the Group and ensure the efficient operation of the Group's business and affairs. Prepare reports, attend meetings of the Group and take required follow up action to ensure the smooth running of the Group. Support all members of the group in their respective roles and ensure effective working arrangements across the group.
25. To be responsible for all arrangements in relation to meetings required by the group leader, including invitations, agendas, external speakers, drafting of speeches, liaison with facilities management / venues, taking and circulating notes, minutes and actions as necessary
26. To co-ordinate key projects across the Council including where the Leader of the Group or Group Members are sponsoring or chairing the project/programme board; including arranging and servicing meetings, agenda planning, updating the corporate project tracking system, monitoring and chasing progress against project plans, making links between activities and carrying out research to support project goals.
27. To support group members in managing the preparation and submission of motions, questions, briefing notes and reports to Council and its Committees. Ensuring that reports meet the corporate committee report sign off process.

Supplementary Accountabilities:

To comply with the Council's Equal Opportunities policy, Code of Conduct and other relevant policy, procedures and legislation and data protection policies.

The responsibilities outlined above cannot totally encompass or define all tasks that may be required of the post-holder. The outline of responsibilities given above may, therefore, vary from time to time without materially changing either the character or level of responsibility or grade.

The post is politically restricted under the terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Job Scope: Number and type of jobs managed:

Typical tasks supervised/allocated to others:

Job Scope:

Budget: None Directly - Responsible for working within the Division's approved budget.

Assets: Responsible for IT and Office equipment issued to post holder.

Knowledge and Experience:

Essential:

- Degree level qualification or equivalent, or significant vocational experience demonstrating development through a series of more demanding relevant work / roles
- Excellent Communication skills (Oral and in Writing)
- Good understanding of online communications and social media
- IT literacy (Microsoft software)
- Detailed knowledge of issues affecting local government
- Detailed knowledge of current UK politics and the policies of major parties
- Excellent administrative, coordinating and organisational skills with ability to plan own workload and meet deadlines
- Proven ability to undertake research and produce reports on complex issues for a variety of audiences and meeting types
- Ability to demonstrate political awareness, sensitivity and diplomacy and an understanding of the role and challenges of being a councillor
- Capacity to work well under pressure, work proactively and manage competing demands
- Ability to persuade and influence at the highest level and to build and maintain productive working relationships at all levels

Desirable

- Minimum 2 year's experience of working in a political environment
- Experience of communicating effectively with the media, particularly on contentious issues
- Detailed knowledge of Swindon politics

Behavioural attributes (Essential)

- Politically astute
- Emotionally resilient
- Personal credibility to provide support to councillors at the highest levels of decision-making
- Able to cope and function effectively when working in a pressurised environment
- Able to work effectively with people at all levels within the council, relevant political party, central government, other outside bodies
- Ability to work effectively as an individual, planning and delivering own work programme without direction
- Able to respond to a changing pattern of demand at work which can be unpredictable and unplanned, requiring constant shifts of priority

Work Environment

- Mainly “office based” at the Council’s offices. Post holder will on occasion be required to attend meetings at venues external to Swindon Borough Council and, on occasion, “site visits” to external locations.
- The job’s responsibilities will require evening and, on infrequent occasions, weekend working in order to support the group Leader / the relevant political group subject to liaison with line manager.
- The job is pressurised as the post is the first stop for officers of the Council and the public in seeking information with regard to the relevant political group and its views and policies as the group Leader is at the centre of the Council’s decision- making processes.

Decision Making:

- The post holder will be involved in directly providing advice and support to the leadership of the Group as well as the wider membership. The Group Leader should be consulted whenever the post holder is unclear about a course of action when there is a political dimension rather than a purely process query.
- The Post holder will be involved in directly making recommendations to enable the group Leader and the group leadership to make informed decisions relating to all key and significant issues that are central to the Council’s decision-making process.
- The Post Holder will use their knowledge, experience and discretion in evaluating whether and how matters should be brought to the Leader’s attention, and how such matters should be dealt with by providing sound and well-reasoned options.
- The Post Holder makes decisions on conflicting priorities, stays focused on delivering priority outcomes, and decides if changes to a course of action are required when priorities shift.
- Political Assistants must respect the terms on which confidential information is provided. At times certain information will only be supplied on a ‘need to know basis’. The Monitoring Officer will be the arbiter in such instances.

Contacts and Relationships:

- The job requires the post holder to communicate in person and in writing with the group Leader, Cabinet Members / Shadow Cabinet Members, Councillors, the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, Directors and officers from across the Council on a day-to-day basis.
- The post holder will also come into regular contact with the public, the media, Members of Parliament, Government departments and other outside organisations on a regular basis.
- The post holder will be required to identify, establish and maintain contacts with key Government, political party, public sector, Council, community and other groups.
- The Post Holder will consider how others will respond to decisions made and adjust thinking and action accordingly
- The Post Holder seeks challenges to thoughts and ideas outside the team and challenges others in a constructive way
- It is important that the postholder builds a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the Group leader and group members. The Group must be able to rely on the post holders ability to treat Group information, discussions, views and documents in complete confidence.

Creativity and Innovation:

- The Post Holder will be required to prepare material for the Leader of the group, the Cabinet / Shadow Cabinet and the relevant political group, for example, press releases, media responses, position statements and policy documents.
- The post holder will be required to write reports for or on behalf of the Leader of the group,

Cabinet Members / Shadow Cabinet members and political group members.

- The post holder will be required to be creative and flexible in the way they establish contacts, gather information, implement and undertake consultation, analyse data and produce reports and formulate recommendations to enable the Leader of the group, Cabinet / Shadow Cabinet Members and appropriate political group members to make informed decisions across a diverse range of topics affecting the Council and the local community.
- The post holder will be required to develop new ways of working and new techniques to assist the development of Group / Council policy, and in respect of specific Group policies.
- The Post Holder will share best practice, standards and procedures with others, and supports the overall team to deliver outcomes

Job Specific Competencies:

- Excellent interpersonal / people skills, experience with dealing with Councillors / the public.
- Proven ability to work on own initiative, demonstrate organisational skills and manage a varied workload in a high-profile, pressurised working environment.
- Takes personal accountability for own performance, improvement and results
- The job requires sufficient IT literacy to use the Council's Microsoft Office package.

In accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, jobholders should take reasonable care to ensure that personal data is not disclosed outside Council procedures, or use personal data held on others for their own purposes. In accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, ensure requests for non-personal information are dealt with in accordance with the Council's written procedures.

In accordance with the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, you must take reasonable care so as not to endanger yourself and of other persons whilst at work. You must also co-operate with the Council to enable it to comply with its statutory duties for health and safety. You must work in accordance with training or instructions given, make proper use of any personal protective equipment provided and inform your manager of any hazardous situations or risks of which you are aware. You must ensure you undertake responsibilities relating to your position as detailed within the Council and Directorate Health and Safety policy.

Employee Signature:

Print Name:

Date

Line Manager's Signature

Print Name:

Date: