

Lead Lambeth on its journey to an exciting future

Lambeth Council leader Claire Holland spells out the opportunities that await as the borough looks to recruit a new chief executive

For someone eager to make their mark on local government there are few roles as exciting as chief executive of Lambeth Council.

The London borough is blessed in having richly diverse communities, a host of committed partners – from multinational companies to world-leading cultural and educational organisations – and a borough-wide commitment to improve opportunities for all. But, like so many councils in the capital and beyond, it is inevitably facing huge challenges following 14 years of austerity from Westminster, meaning many residents face everything from poverty and poor housing to lack of opportunities and insecurity.

Nonetheless, the council wants to take on those challenges and harness the opportunities as it works to ensure all the borough's residents reach their full potential.

'What we can offer a new chief executive is the chance to make a genuine and lasting difference to the lives of our residents by addressing some of the most profound social challenges that our country as a whole has to face,' says council leader Claire Holland.

With 150 languages spoken in the borough and the largest LGBTQ+ community in London, Cllr Holland is clear that it is Lambeth's 'rich combination of difference' that makes it 'the greatest borough in London'.

'It's such a special and exciting place to work. Diversity is genuinely Lambeth's greatest strength. We are the home of the Windrush Generation, we're a borough of sanctuary, providing safe havens for those who need it most, with growing Spanish, Portuguese and South American communities and a proud history of LGBT activism. It is this rich combination of difference that makes Lambeth such a great place to live and work,' she adds.



Claire Holland – Leader, Lambeth Council



'The passion, diversity and ambition that runs through the borough is reflected in us as a council. Many of our staff live in the borough and I'm really proud that we've done so much in recent years under my leadership to improve the diversity of our senior leadership.'

'So much of what we do as a council is about facing down the disadvantages and inequalities that blight our residents' lives.'

'We are looking for someone who shares our ambition...to reshape our neighbourhoods, make Lambeth safer and a place we can all call home'

And the borough plan *Lambeth 2030: Our Future, Our Lambeth* goes straight to the heart of what the council represents, how it defines itself and its ambition for the borough – specifically a cast iron commitment to equity and justice.

So, Cllr Holland believes the chief executive role offers a unique opportunity for someone with experience of delivering real change to come in and help the council achieve this commitment.

'We know that as an organisation we do need to change to make that happen,' she says. 'We need to change both in how our teams and services work together to deliver on outcomes, and in how we improve the core services that we're delivering. And we know that in the current financial climate that this is hugely challenging.'

'We face unprecedented demand for housing and in children's social care. And we know we have an

adult social care system that is long overdue reform, and that national government has ignored this for far too long.'

While these are largely problems resulting from wider issues that have not been caused by local authorities, Lambeth knows the council is the last line of defence for its communities and there is a borough-wide determination to recognise this and invest in prevention so people can avoid hardship later in life.

'We are looking for someone who shares our ambition,' says Cllr Holland. 'Our ambition to reshape our neighbourhoods, make Lambeth safer and a place we can all call home.'

'So, we want a leader who can bring people together, and who can

inspire people to make that change. Someone who can lead our staff and services, but also someone who can operate beyond the council and act as the place leader for the whole borough. We have amazing partners in national cultural organisations like the National Theatre and Southbank Centre, world-leading universities, teaching hospitals and multinational companies that are working with us to invest in the jobs of the future. And that agenda is so exciting as we build a borough of opportunity for everyone.'

'Our next chief executive has to be someone who is comfortable leading that engagement with world-class institutions in the borough and with central government and the Greater London Authority, and also working

with local community and voluntary organisations on our estates and in our town centres.

'It's about having your feet on the ground and making sure that you're bringing people with you, but also that you're not losing sight of what our huge ambition is, and that is to be a borough of equity and justice for all,' explains Cllr Holland.

Leadership comes in many forms but in Lambeth a leader has to be visible, engaging directly with many partners, councillors, staff, residents and community groups and getting stuck into the knotty issues that can hold back progress. It's what makes the role so exciting, but of course it takes someone with the right character, values and experience to play that sort of leadership role.

While unafraid to get involved in knotty issues facing the authority, the successful candidate will need to be able to step back and maintain a strategic oversight.

'It's someone with ambition and who's looking at the horizon, but also isn't afraid of facing up the challenges, because they are really, really difficult.'

'However the commitment is there in Lambeth to take on the challenges and build on the opportunities. And what is great is people are excited about working in Lambeth, and excited about our Lambeth 2030 plan, and genuinely excited about being partners and delivering on it.'

Fundamentally, this is an opportunity where the right person will be free to harness the ambition of the borough and bring lasting positive change to Lambeth's communities and residents. ■

