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Slough Borough Council
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Council Tax Recovery Officer

Job Description

Position Pay Level: 6
Position Pay SCP: 24 - 29
Salary: £37,711 - £42,307 **(inclusive of Local Weighting Allowance of £1,130 per annum)**
DBS requirement: Basic

Reports to: Council Tax Recovery & Visiting Team Leader

Responsible for: Council Tax Recovery administration

Responsibilities: Collection of Council tax c. £125m income

Main purpose of Job:

To maximise the income to the Council by ensuring the appropriate recovery action is taken against non-payers and to improve on collection rates. To support customers to find sustainable ways to meet their Council Tax debt with the Council.

- Be the key point of contact for technical queries relating to the recovery of Council Tax.
- Investigate and resolve disputes, and customer queries in a professional and timely manner.
- Undertake debt recovery processes by escalating overdue accounts for enforcement or legal action where necessary.
- Ensure compliance with Council Tax legislation, internal controls, data protection, and external audit requirements.
- Promote continuous improvement by identifying process gaps and contributing to system enhancements and policy updates.
- Preparing litigation documents to support the claim for bankruptcy/charging order/committal on behalf of the council.
- The prevention of debt through effective campaigns and early intervention, and where arrears do occur, taking effective recovery action in line with agreed policies and procedures.
- To provide a customer focused and responsive service which promotes preventative measures to customers to minimise debt.
- To develop and execute debt recovery processes to provide a standard and unified framework with regards to recovery of debt, progression of cases, recovery cycles, use of Enforcement Agents and collection agencies, court action, and write-off of debt.

Main Accountabilities:

Strategy development

- Support the council's wider financial strategy by helping reduce bad debt and maximise income recovery.
- Provide insight into patterns of debt and help shape preventative measures to avoid debt escalation.

Corporate leadership

- Maintain confidentiality and operate in a way that supports the council's core values of transparency, professionalism, and fairness.
- Uphold and role-model Slough Borough Council's values when interacting with resident's, colleagues and external partners.
- Understand how your role impacts wider corporate objectives, particularly safeguarding and financial sustainability.

Service leadership and management

- Proactively manage a caseload using sound judgment, consistent practices, and compliance with procedures.
- Identify and support improvements to service delivery and share best practices across the team.
- Mentor and train colleagues where appropriate to ensure consistency and quality in service delivery

Resources / Financial management

- Maximise income to the council by taking timely and appropriate recovery actions. Prepare and submit write-off requests with full justifications based on case facts.
- Liaise with legal services and external enforcement to ensure debts are recovered effectively.

Partners and stakeholders

- To build constructive relationships with partners, suppliers, colleagues across all service areas and contribute to developing the reputation of the council.
- Promote a culture of partnership working and stakeholder involvement and look for opportunities for joint working with partners and other service areas.
- Educate and support customers to understand payment obligations and explore sustainable payment solutions.

Business change

- To recommend and support processes that will continually improve performance.
- To seek to improve the efficiency of the service and cost through opportunities presented by technology.
- To engage effectively with customers (internal and external), to understand their requirements from the service and meet their needs wherever possible.
- The post holder will be expected to proactively embrace and drive the council's channel shift agenda, promoting the transition of services to digital platforms wherever possible. This will involve identifying opportunities to move engagement and transactional processes online, reducing reliance on more traditional contact methods, and supporting service users to access services digitally.

Compliance

- Interpretation and implementation of all legislative changes and/or changes in council policy ensuring that any new legislation is implemented effectively and incorporated into working processes, legislation, and customer needs.
- Ensure that services are delivered in compliance with existing and new health and safety legislation and ensuring that duties are pursued in a safe manner with due regard to the health and safety of self and others.
- Adhere to internal controls, audit recommendations, and regulatory requirements.
- Ensure all actions comply with relevant legislation, including Data Protection/GDPR and relevant debt recovery regulations.

Equality and diversity

- Uphold and promote the aims of the council's equality and diversity policies to ensure non-discriminatory practices in all aspects of work, and that diversity is embedded in everything, from workforce planning and policy development to service delivery.
- Balance the needs of vulnerable customers with the council's duty to recover debt, ensuring a fair and consistent approach.
- Adapt communication styles and recovery plans based on customers' individual circumstances and needs.

Specific responsibilities

- To maintain an up-to-date knowledge of Council Tax and recovery legislation and case law and related policies and procedures and to liaise with the Team Leaders to ensure that the Council's approach to corporate debt recovery and enforcement is joined up and in accordance with legislation.
- To undertake the administration for the recovery of Council Tax initiating recovery action in accordance with legislation and Council policy including issuing final notices and summonses, attachment of earnings, referring cases to external enforcement agents, issue of liability orders and dealing with enforcement agents returned cases and make decisions on the next course of action.

- To assist with the compilation of statistics and reports and to assist with testing of new software releases for the Council tax system.
- To obtain evidence and prepare cases for legal action including – Charging Orders;
    - Forced Sale of Properties; Committal Action; Bankruptcy Proceedings;
    - Prosecutions for Non-Compliance of Information Requests; and to be authorised to appear before the Court in relation to these matters. To Liaise with solicitors, Magistrates and County Courts to ensure the information required is provided promptly and accurately. Dealing with enquiries and correspondence resulting from these cases, and liaising with customers' legal representatives where necessary
- Prioritise and manage own workloads to ensure objectives and targets are achieved, and customer requirements are met
- To attend court representing the authority for Court actions relating to Council Tax liability as required
- To maximise personal productivity, minimise duplication and errors; and manage our information efficiently and securely to reduce risk, though effective use our internal IT systems and applications.
- Demonstrate awareness and understanding of other people's behavioural, physical, social and welfare needs and ensure that reasonable care is taken at all times for the health, safety and welfare of yourself and other persons.
- To maximise collection of Council Tax by capturing relevant information and producing accurate bills, applying relevant discounts and exemptions to cases to ensure the policies of the Council are followed, and customer receive accurate bills whilst ensuring that customers receive all they are entitled to. The officer will make decisions on when to award discounts, disregards and exemptions following the relevant legislation
- Carry out enquiries to trace customers that have absconded without paying bills
- Using the Council's computerised systems to make decisions on all aspects of Council Tax accounts, whilst Interpreting legislation and applying case law to ensure correct liability is determined.
- Dealing with queries relating to recovery of monies from debtors, or from legal representatives, internal departments or any other persons acting for them by telephone, in person or in writing. This will include negotiating payment arrangements having considered the customers individual circumstances and relevant legislation.
- Respond to phone, e-mail and face to face enquiries from customers, including homeowners, tenants, landlords, other local authorities, advice agencies and Council departments, using current Council Tax and Benefit polices and associated legislation
- Work with colleagues across the council to provide excellent customer service - whilst the postholder works within the Revenues and Welfare service, they will interact with colleagues and customers across a range of council services and will be flexible in their approach - for example, supporting customer service colleagues, supporting hubs, supporting targeted outreach campaigns or similar based on peak workloads, process/policy changes etc.

- Assist customers in the Council Tax and Benefit application process, i.e. on-line claims and encourage the increased use of electronic channels with customers including the customer portal
- Collate, scan and index information, including correspondence from customers and data accurately into the Council's electronic document management system
- Identify potentially fraudulent applications for discounts and exemptions and refer to the Team Leader.

This in intended as a guide to the range of duties involved and other duties may be required from time to time as priorities change and evolve.

The role will primarily involve managing enquiries from the summons stage onwards. However, there may be occasions where billing activities are required to ensure a cohesive approach, including handling the account in its entirety and addressing all aspects of an enquiry that may span both recovery and billing processes.

General

- Assist in the development and maintenance of procedures to improve efficiency and accuracy.
- Comply with all council financial regulations and data protection policies
- To ensure that a quality service is provided to customers and external stakeholders, complying with appropriate codes of practice and standards whilst balancing customer needs with those of the council. Deal with enquiries by telephone, letter or personal visit as and when required and customer complaints.
- Maintain the accuracy and integrity of systems and data.
- Provide information requested by customers and interested bodies under the Freedom of Information Act or Subject Access Request.
- Support with responses to enquiries and Stage 1 complaints.
- To attend regular training sessions to keep abreast of all legislation to provide accurate advice and services in specialist areas.
- To undertake the duties commensurate to the grade as required.
- To always deal with colleagues openly and fairly and support mutual respect within teams.

Person Specification:

Council Tax Recovery Officer

Area	Description	Essential/ Desirable	Method: Application (A) Interview (I) Test (T)
Experience	Experience, 3 years of working in a Council Tax/Financial environment. Must be able to deal with all aspects of work, with only the complex matters of policy being referred to the line manager	E	A
	Extensive experience in the use of a Revenues system, preferably MRI Revenues & Benefits	E	A
	Extensive experience in a customer facing revenues services environment	E	A
	Experience of supervision, coaching and monitoring of staff performance.	E	I
	Experience of handling customer complaints and resolving complex issues.	E	A
	Previous experience in a Local Government or similar environment.	E	A
	Experience of dealing with difficult customers via telephone; letter; email, and face-to-face.	E	A
	Experience of income and debt recovery and of providing debt welfare/ money advice.	E	A
	Proven record of effectively managing complex debt recovery cases and maximising income to the organisation	E	I
Skills and abilities	Proactively identifies opportunities to support others through the use of own strengths	E	I
	Ability to work within policy, regulatory and legislative frameworks	E	I
	Knows and follows SBC's corporate values, role models these and holds others to account for following them	E	I
	Ability to work on own initiative and without close day to day supervision	E	I
	Ability to liaise and negotiate with a wide range of stakeholders, including senior leaders, providers, tenants, and members of the public	E	I

Area	Description	Essential/ Desirable	Method: Application (A) Interview (I) Test (T)
	Ability to consult and/or communicate with vulnerable individuals and families.	E	I
	Proactively identifies and sees issues through to resolution. Takes collaborative approach to problem solving, involving relevant stakeholders and maintaining a positive outlook	E	I
	Proactively manages workload and time effectively under pressure, using flexibility to prioritise the urgent and important and communicating priorities transparently and effectively	E	I
	Excellent verbal communication skills	E	I
	Analytical and problem-solving skills, and attention to detail	E	I
	Strong analytical abilities to interpret system issues	E	I
	Able to gather and use data and insight to develop a deeper understanding of our customers and communicates findings to the team.	E	I
	Able to confidently communicate information to colleagues and stakeholders, ensuring that information is presented clearly and in a way that is understandable to varied audiences	E	I
	Understands how the work and decisions made within the service impacts the work of all other service areas within the organisation	E	I
	Identifies opportunities to improve the way services are delivered and supports ideas made by others to improve services. Ensures resources are used appropriately by self and others	E	I
	Use analytical skills to decide whether a claimant should apply for Universal Credit or Housing Benefit	E	I
	Ability to work both independently and collaboratively	E	I

Area	Description	Essential/ Desirable	Method: Application (A) Interview (I) Test (T)
	Ability to deal with high volumes of phone calls and remain calm when dealing with challenging behaviour.	E	I
	Highly motivated and committed to the values and priorities of the Council and to working within a political organisation with associated governance frameworks and accountabilities.	E	I
Knowledge and understanding	Min. 3 years knowledge of Revenues Collection and Revenues issues, policy and best practice	E	I
	Up to date knowledge of legislation, policy and best practice relating to Council Tax recovery	E	I
	Excellent understanding of Housing / Welfare Benefits	E	A
	Understanding, knowledge and ability to follow guidelines that ensures compliance with Health and Safety at Work, Data Protection, and other statutory requirements.	E	A
	An understanding and commitment to promoting and implementing the council's Equal Opportunities policies.	E	I
	Understanding of local government services.	E	I
Qualifications	Educated to Degree Level standard, or above, or equivalent competence level through knowledge and experience	E	A
	IRRV Technician qualification or higher, or relevant experience	E	I
	Management or supervisory qualification	E	A