

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Recovery, Revenues and Welfare Officer		
Directorate	Finance and Procurement		
Reporting to	Recovery, Revenues and Welfare Senior Officer		
Grade	13		
Evaluation ref:	TR0230	Job Family ref:	
Role Purpose			
<p>The post holder is responsible for interpreting a variety of primary legislation covering different areas of law (The Local Govt. Finance Acts of 1989 and 1992 and The Housing Benefit Regulations 2006) and supporting legislation, statutory instruments, Government Guidance, local policy, and case law, exercising delegated authority to make decisions on liability, the award of discounts, reliefs and exemptions, the assessment of benefit applications, discretionary awards, maintaining property valuation records, negotiating repayment arrangements, determining appropriate recovery and enforcement action.</p>			
Accountabilities			
<p><i>The sections below have been created to show the varying parts of the role and although some wording may appear repetitive, they refer to fundamentally different legislation.</i></p> <p>Welfare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess and make independent decisions using information provided in relation to claims under the national Housing Benefits scheme or our local Council Tax Reduction scheme, as well as assessing applications for a variety of Discretionary payments (including Discretionary Housing Payments & Exceptional Hardship payments), requesting further evidence deemed necessary, notifying claimants and other affected parties of entitlement determinations. This can involve responding to enquiries from customers or their representatives, including Solicitors, Local Councillors etc. by telephone, in writing and in person, as well as communicating with external organisations such as the DWP, Social Services, The Rent Service, other Local Government Bodies. • Ensure the council is maximising income and efficiencies by working within guidance with an awareness of the overall service. This will include being proactive and vigilant for fraudulent applications, and to refer any suspect cases through the correct process. To provide evidence and statements for ongoing DWP fraud cases or to our internal fraud teams. Where applicable provide evidence such as written statements for the court. • Work closely with Children's & Adults Services in supporting placements for vulnerable people in the community by offering preventative measures which will maximise income and savings opportunities for the Council. 			

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- Working in conjunction with the Recovery Team to establish Housing Benefit overpayments and the most appropriate way to seek recovery to maximise income and reduce outstanding debt in this area.

Council Tax

- To make independent determinations in relation to liability and the award of discounts and exemptions, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Govt. Finance act 1992 and associated statutory instruments, case law, and local policies. Ensuring that demand and decision notices are issued in a timely manner with correct instalment details & entitlement.
- Assessing applications and making recommendations in respect of applications for discretionary awards under the Section 13A 1(c) provisions and our local policy. This includes assessing income and expenditure, making a judgement and recommendation which balances the needs of the individual Council Tax payer against the wider interests of Council Tax payers in general.
- Processing and actioning the Council Tax Valuation list changes received from the Valuation Office Agency, including reconciliation of the list against our database. Ensuring that we have maximised our tax base and are monitoring for new growth.
- Working in conjunction with the other Revenues and Welfare services to reduce Council Tax arrears, increase in-year collection and prevent / reduce cases being taken through the recovery route by the Recovery Team. Work with the Recovery Team will also be required to support cases through the liability order / recovery route.

Non-Domestic Rates

- To make independent determinations in relation to liability & the award of discounts and exemptions, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Govt. Finance act 1989 and associated statutory instruments, case law and our local policies and particularly in relation to rateable occupation, empty properties, the applicability of relevant reliefs etc.
- Ensuring that demand notices and decision notices are issued in a timely manner with correct instalment details & entitlement, including associated work to ensure this occurs e.g. issuing of completion notices. Assessing applications and making recommendations in respect of applications for hardship relief under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance 1988 Act and in accordance with our Discretionary Rate Relief Policy. This includes assessing accounts as to the future viability of the business of the applicant, making a judgement and recommendation which balance the needs of the individual business against the wider interests of Council Tax payers in general.
- Processing and actioning the Non-Domestic Rating Valuation list changes received from the Valuation Office Agency, including reconciliation of the list against our database. Determining the calculation of Interest where appropriate for NDR. Ensuring that we have maximised our tax base and are monitoring for new growth .

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- Working in conjunction with the other Revenues and Welfare services to reduce Business Rates arrears, increase in-year collection and prevent / reduce cases being taken through the recovery route by the Recovery Team. Work with the Recovery Team will also be required to support cases through the liability order/ recovery route.

Recovery

- Making independent decisions in relation to the enforcement of, Council Tax arrears Business Rate debt due, in accordance with legislation and the councils corporate debt policy. This includes negotiating and making effective repayment agreements for cases that are subject to a Liability Order and the issue of reminders, final notices, and summonses; prepare cases for court and attend Magistrates' Court as required.
- The active monitoring of cases post Liability Order and making decisions about appropriate enforcement action i.e. referral to enforcement agents, insolvency etc. Liaising with Enforcement agents who are acting on our behalf to collect the debt due. This will include maintaining accurate records of recovery actions and outcomes using the council's revenues systems.
- Identifying overpayments of Housing Benefit, determining whether these are recoverable and, if so, the most appropriate means of recovery, dealing with individual debtors to agree repayment arrangements.

General

- Often dealing with and supporting vulnerable & potentially challenging customers in difficult or complex situations, identifying safeguarding concerns and referring appropriately. Ensuring that engagement is made with third party organisations where required e.g. DWP, Citizens Advice, Age Concern, solicitors & internal stakeholders, such as Housing, working together to find solutions in individual cases.
- Dealing with customers personal details such as Bank account information to set up Direct Debits, make Bacs payments for Housing Benefit and credits due to back to the customer, with adherence to the relevant processing policies and regulations. This will include being pro-active and vigilant for fraudulent applications, and to refer any suspect cases through the correct process. This will include working through initiatives such as the National Fraud Initiative (NFI.) This will also involve ensuring data integrity across multiple systems, reconciling discrepancies and maintaining audit trails.
- Dealing with all types of insolvency cases and where applicable identifying amounts to claim on behalf of the Council. Helping customers who are subject to insolvency understand what is due.
- Dealing with complaints in a timely, professional manner, to achieve the right outcome for the Customer and the Council.

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Stakeholder Engagement

- The post holder will interact with Council Tax payers, benefit claimants, Business Rate payers, landlords, advice agencies, the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP), The Rent Service, solicitors, letting agents, the Valuation Office Agency, the Magistrates Courts, Enforcement Agents, tracing agencies, charities and the voluntary sector and other council services to obtain information, enforce payment, assess claims and / or resolve individual cases.

Team

- To assist with training and day to day support for new members of the team. By doing so, a need to remain aware of the welfare system in general and its links to the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction schemes, keeping abreast of changing Revenues, Welfare and Benefit regulations, by participating in all relevant training.

Project Work

- Assist in one off projects, liaise with team leaders, managers, and stakeholders, working in partnership to achieve specific objectives, eg contribute to process solutions and technical input to initiatives and changes in legislation.

Regulation/Statutory Compliance

- Whilst making decisions on individual cases balance compliance with the different areas of legislation, case law and local policy, the wider interests of Council Tax and Business Rate payers in general against those of the individual claimant, Council Tax or Business Rate payer.

Knowledge / Experience / Skills

	Essential	Desirable
Knowledge		
Extensive knowledge and understanding of Revenues and /or Benefits legislation, Financial and Recovery Legislation, regulations & processes, their context and impact within local government.	X	
A broad and detailed knowledge of Council services systems and procedures.		X
In-depth understanding of property valuation principles and their impact on Council Tax and NDR liability.	X	
Experience		
Worked within a fast-paced customer facing environment dealing with complex and/or sensitive enquiries.		

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Extensive experience in Revenues, Welfare and Benefits within a local authority setting, interpreting and applying complex legislation.	X	
Managing conflicting priorities.	X	
Experience of working with external agencies, including government agencies, solicitors etc.		X
Demonstrable experience of providing advice and support to others, including through coaching and/or mentoring.		X
Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications		
5 GCSE (or equivalent) at Grade 4/C or above including English and Maths, qualified by strong relevant experience.	X	
IRRV qualification or equivalent.		X
Skills		
Ability to manage competing priorities and deliver outcomes in a fast-paced environment.	X	
Responds to written, oral, and telephone contact courteously and helpfully, providing relevant information and advice, referring on or progressing as appropriate.	X	
Excellent analytical, problem-solving, and communication skills.	X	
Actively listens, seeks clarification as necessary and checks understanding.	X	
Has empathy and due regard to the needs of the customer.	X	
Confident IT Skills.	X	
Communicates effectively, both orally and in writing, with people at all levels, respecting confidentiality.	X	
Demonstrates working knowledge of relevant software packages e.g. The Revenues & Welfare (Benefits) database, Electronic Data Management system and workflow, communicating technical advice in an appropriate manner for the recipient.	X	
Can demonstrate a high level of accuracy in their work.	X	
Able to work effectively as part of a team and on own initiative.	X	
Willing to learn from others and seek assistance as appropriate, whilst taking responsibility for own work.	X	

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Managing a demanding workload and meeting deadlines.		X
Adopts a systematic approach when solving problems – suggests and/or implements straightforward solutions.		X
Ability to identify and initiate areas of work requiring service improvement.		X
Working Conditions		
<p>This role involves working within a dynamic and supportive local authority environment. Candidates should be prepared for the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Hours: Standard working hours are 37, with occasional requirements for evening or weekend work to meet project deadlines or attend community events. • Location: The work location will be based at one of Somerset Council's offices, to be decided upon offer of position, with opportunities for remote working as per organisational policies. The position will also require off-site working. • Travel: Travel within the local area will be required for site visits, residential visits and ad-hoc meetings and community engagement activities. • Work Environment: The role involves working both independently and as part of a team, with access to modern office facilities and resources. • Health and Safety: Adherence to all health and safety regulations is mandatory, ensuring a safe working environment for all employees and adhering to Somerset Council's Lone Working policy. 		
Dimensions of the role		
Working Arrangements		
<i>Somerset Council's Dynamic Working Strategy will be applied to this position.</i>		
Corporate Accountabilities		
<p>Understand, uphold, and promote the aims of the council's equality, diversity, and inclusion policies; health, safety and wellbeing of self and others; and Organisational values in everything you do. Equality and Diversity practice covers both interaction with staff, service users and communities and includes challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all.</p>		

Date: