Billing and Collection Officer

Reports to:	Revenue & Debt Team Leader		
Department:	Billing and Collection Team (Council Tax)	**Grade:**	Scale 6/SO1
DBS Status:	Basic	**Politically restricted:**	No

Job Purpose:

1. Ensure that all Council Tax, Business Rates, Adult Social Care Debt, Parking and Road Traffic, Sundry Debt and Housing Benefit Overpayments is billed, collected and recovered in accordance with prevailing legislation, case law, local policy and procedures. Billing activities include for all lines of debt; identification of the correct liable parties and liability dates, nature of service provided, assessing entitlement to discounts exemptions, reduction and refunds, the maintenance of accurate billing and invoicing records for all customers, database management across all lines of revenue and debt.

2. To effectively resolve customer and stakeholder enquiries related to the administration, billing and recovery of all debts to a consistently high quality and so as to maximise collection and recovery of outstanding liabilities.

3. To ensure that all debts progress through the appropriate recovery process to maximise collection and minimise arrears outstanding for previous years. Carry out collection of all revenue and debt in an efficient and objective manner, taking account of customers' individual circumstances and ability to pay but at the same time paying attention to the financial interests of the Council in terms of maximising collection.

4. To carry out all duties in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance, Council policies, procedures and standards to ensure the delivery of excellent services to customers.

oValues

Collaborate proactively.
Lead inclusively.
Embrace change.
Be bold and curious.
Celebrate and share our success.

Job specific roles and responsibilities

1. To establish correct liabilities, obtaining relevant information to validate this from customers and other stakeholders. Where required this includes identification and award of discounts and exemptions, identification of Houses in Multiple Occupation and identification of the correct liable person.

2. Maintain accurate, appropriate and comprehensive records of all customer contact and decisions taken to amend liability details. Effectively search, utilise and update related databases and IT systems accurately to resolve customer enquiries, log complaints and handle transactions in accordance with protocols for data entry and compliance.

3. To take ownership and appropriate action to resolve enquiries within agreed levels of empowerment across a range of channels including phone, face to face, correspondence, email, online services and social media. Responses should consistently demonstrate a high degree of customer care and accuracy and should support maximisation of collection and recovery.

4. To promote, encourage, educate and support customers to confidently access services via alternative channels to reduce service demand and support channel migration.

5. Use a variety of techniques to enable successful collection and minimise financial and/or loss to the Council, demonstrating sensitivity to the financial constraints customers may face balanced with the financial interests of the Council.

6. Seek to negotiate arrangements with liable persons that facilitate repayment of debts within the current financial year wherever possible, regularly reviewing compliance with agreed arrangements, making arrangements and taking cases through the relevant recovery process.

7. To respect and understand the individual needs of customers and arrange appropriate support in order to ensure fair and equal access to services, including necessary translations or interpretation skills. Respond to Service Requests as required and delegated by team leader and assist in responding to Subject Access Requests (SARs), FOI requests and complaints.

8. Maintain positive relationships with all internal and external stakeholders to ensure the councils overall collections strategy is being achieved.

9. Liaise with Audit and Investigations and National Fraud Initiative on cases, when necessary.

10. To report changes to properties to the Valuation Office Agency. To liaise with the VOA about any discrepancies or enquiries about reports or changes to the Valuation Lists.

11. Consider appropriate cases for hardship awards under section 13A (for Council Tax) or for write off in line with Council policy and procedures and make recommendations accordingly.

12. Proactively contribute to the continuous improvement of the Service, identifying and suggesting improvements and helping to implement these.

13. Responsible for maintaining a detailed knowledge of legislation affecting taking control of goods, including commercial rents recovery, Council Tax and Business Rates, County Court remedies relating to Sundry debts, Housing Benefit overpayments and parking and road traffic, insolvency legislation and the rights of enforcement agents in debt recovery.

14. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and all employees are required to act in such a way that at all times safeguards the health and well-being of children and vulnerable adults.

15. Carry out duties with due regard to the Council's Customer Care, Equal Opportunities, Information Governance, Data Protection, Health and Safety and Emergency Planning & Awareness (including to provide assistance where available) policies and procedures.

16. Employees should embed environmental sustainability into their work, actively contributing to Brent becoming a carbon-neutral borough in 2030.

17. Undertake any other duties commensurate with the general level of responsibility of this post.

Additional Responsibilities at SO1

18. Liaise with and work closely with Enforcement Agents to ensure the maximum return on the recovery of debts approving enforcement action including removals.

19. Liaise with internal & external stakeholders in respect of the recovery of debt through bankruptcy, charging orders and committal proceedings, including the approval of enforcement action including removals.

20. Investigate complex enquiries, member enquiries, complaints and audit of accounts including the drafting of responses.

21. To liaise with the VOA on complex issues relating to enquiries or changes.

22. Enforce recovery of debt through bankruptcy, charging orders and committal proceedings.

23. Support more junior staff through buddying and 1-1 coaching and training.

24. To review and action all housekeeping reports, such as BACs rejections, exception lists, online exceptions, suspense accounts and payment methods for all debts to keep databases accurate and up to date. Carry out bank and system reconciliations.
Respond to customer member enquiries, service requests and customer complaints.

Essential Requirements (key skills & qualifications)

Knowledge and Qualifications

1. Proficient in Maths & English
2. Knowledge and experience of providing a customer focussed advice, information, enquiry, transactions and complaints handling in a demanding customer facing environment across various access channels (face to face, telephone, post and online)
3. A broad understanding of Council Tax and Debt recovery
4. Good knowledge of Microsoft Outlook, Excel and Word packages and the ability to effectively use a range of IT systems and applications

Experience

1.Experience of providing customer focused advice, information, dealing with enquiries, transactions and complaints.
2. Experience of following and adapting administrative processes to meet service needs.
3. Experience of data management ensuring accuracy and where appropriate confidentiality.

Skills and Abilities

1. Ability to understand the needs of a diverse range of customers, and a commitment to securing the best possible outcomes for them.
2. Ability to remain customer focused whilst objectively dealing with distressed, agitated, confused or irate customers and resolve enquiries, requests, complaints to meet the individual needs of the customer and achieve effective resolution of the enquiry.
3. Well organised, systematic and calm in approach, and able to work flexibly and effectively as part of a team by co-operating and supporting colleagues in the workplace.
4. Ability to effectively understand a range of different legislation, policies and procedures and clearly explain the information to customers.
5.Excellent decision-making skills and an ability to analyse problems to find solutions at the first point of contact
6. Excellent interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills.
7. Strong numerical, analytical, problem solving and decision-making skills.
8. Ability to work independently as well as being able to contribute to a “total team” culture where there is a shared responsibility to achieve team objectives.
9. Well organised, systematic and calm in approach, and able to work flexibly and effectively as part of a team by co-operating and supporting colleagues in the workplace
10. Ability to take responsibility for own workload and decisions, work on own initiative and consistently meet deadlines while working under pressure (including deadlines and interruptions)
11. Ability to effectively use a range of IT systems and applications including MS Excel and Word.
12. Ability to identify and manage confidential and sensitive information and to operate with professionalism, probity, and integrity.
13. Ability to work effectively across service areas.
14. Influencing and negotiating skills, e.g., the ability to influence without authority.
15. Ability to understand and adhere to Equal Opportunities and Customer Care polices.

Budget Responsibility N/A
Overall Headcount N/A

Within reason these key deliverables may evolve to meet service need and it is expected that the postholder will be flexible and adaptable in their delivery to meet both service and council wide needs