

Job Description

Post Title	Principal Accountant (Financial Accounting and Systems)
Service Area	Finance
Team	Corporate Finance
Grade	G (£42,821 - £45,857)
Reports to	Head of Financial Reporting
Date prepared	5 August 2021

Job Purpose

1. As Principal Accountant, you will work closely with the Head of Financial Reporting in providing proactive advice on financial accounting and control across the Lewes and Eastbourne Councils.
2. Delivering efficient and robust Financial Accounting support to the wider Councils and be a key part in producing the annual statement of accounts, working papers and supporting the external audit process.
3. Reviewing and enhancing financial controls; driving forward continuous improvement to processes; managing ad hoc change projects as required, as the organisation moves to a more agile business.
4. Developing the relationship with the wider finance team and communicating financial information across both Councils and maintain the integrity underpinning chart of accounts, balances and transactions to facilitate all aspects of statutory and management reporting.
5. Maintenance of the Council's primary financial management systems including General Ledger, feeder systems and relevant reconciliations, take responsibility for improving financial systems and processes across the council so that they operate in compliance with financial policy and statute and any necessary amendments are designed and implemented promptly in response to framework changes or to any identified exceptions to governance and control standards.

Key Tasks

6. Coordinate the production of the statement of accounts - closure timetable, production of the main accounts document, collation of working papers, liaising with key parties within the Council's finance team, and external parties including external auditors as necessary.
7. Capital Accounting and monitoring - carrying out regular reviews and update of the capital strategy and programme and to provide a detailed resources analysis. Manage the work of the Capital group and initiate and implement suitable option appraisal and business analysis methodology for proposed new initiatives.
8. To deputise for the Head of Financial Reporting, as may be reasonably required from time to time in relation to day to day accountancy, controls, strategic treasury management activities, banking and cash management.
9. Work routinely with senior managers across both Councils, providing specialist professional, technical expertise and reports to support and influence financial accounting, management and operational decision making.
10. Contribute the Corporate Finance Team supervision, training and support and ensure that tasks are allocated in line with current priorities and deadlines, and work is planned and carried out in accordance with deadlines.
11. Maintain expert technical financial knowledge (including financial legislation, accounting policies and standards, comparative benchmarks, grant funding regimes, financing and costing methodologies and regulatory compliance) to support the Councils' financial accounting, financial planning and decision making.
12. To review financial processes, recommend improvements, implement change and provide appropriate training as necessary to other Council staff members. Ensuring that there is an effective quality control and compliance monitoring framework to allow early identification of financial issues and risks and their communication to senior managers as appropriate, for example, overseeing the balance sheet and group accounts reconciliations process.
13. Liaise with external partners and organisations to ensure that relevant financial and non-financial information is provided to support consolidation and reporting.
14. Ensure the continuous and smooth efficient running of Council's primary financial management systems, in particular the General Ledger System, including regular system reconciliations and report writing.
15. Deliver new developments and upgrades on finance related software and applications, including testing of new software and liaising with external

consultants and providers and provide associated training where appropriate to other staff.

16. Plan and provide effective training to users of the General Ledger System on any software developments that are adopted, ensuring procedures and policies are updated accordingly.
17. To maintain and control the asset register, chart of accounts, etc. to facilitate production of accurate and consistent financial information covering both statutory and non-statutory returns.
18. To implement the procedures that the Councils have in place to maintain control over accounting activities such as balance sheet reconciliations, group accounts, grant registers, and the Council's asset register.
19. To assist in the management of treasury management activity, such as investments or borrowing, including attending monthly meetings to develop and formulate the Council's treasury strategy.
20. Lead and manage staff including setting clear targets and objectives and proactively managing workflow, priorities and performance; and carrying out effective recruitment, induction, coaching and ongoing staff management and development.
21. To ensure there is a business continuity process and adequate strategy for handling the loss of key individuals by cross-training and providing individuals with the opportunity for greater development.
22. To represent the Councils' interests as required at appropriate working groups as well as in negotiations with external partners, regulatory bodies or commercial suppliers.
23. To represent the Finance service when required at Working Parties and Project Teams. Take responsibility for the financial aspects on allocated projects and work in partnership with services and third-party consultants in the assessment and review of business plans and identify the financial implications and benefit realisations. Ensure the Service and Financial Plans or the relevant company business plan includes all associated costs or savings.
24. To ensure that all statistical, government returns, and FOI requests allocated to the team are completed within deadlines. Carry out ad-hoc accounting or other projects as required to meet the demands of the service.
25. Responsible to the Head of Financial Reporting and be capable of delivering the following work required in these areas;
 - Capital/Fixed asset accounting.
 - Final Accounts for EBC and LDC

- VAT
- Treasury Management and Cash Flow
- Income Management and Banking
- All reconciliations including Bank, control accounts, council tax, NNDR, and rents cash and refunds.
- Council's primary financial management systems
- Collection Fund Accounting
- Financial advice to services
- Charity Accounts
- Initiatives to develop both the Finance Function and financial processes.

Corporate Accountabilities

26. To promote equality of opportunity in service delivery in line with strategic commitment and corporate policies.
27. To promote a culture that is supportive of the Councils' purpose, aims and values, and to take all reasonable steps to maintain good employee relations.
28. Staff are encouraged to participate fully in promoting a safety culture to protect the safety and health of themselves, colleagues and other people affected by the Councils' activities.
29. To understand and apply the Councils' Data Protection and Data Quality policy and procedures.
30. Any other duties commensurate with the nature of the post.
31. Deputise for the Head of Financial Reporting and cover absence of other team leaders as appropriate.
32. You will be required to support the Councils' corporate priorities and to ensure business continuity e.g. emergency response, elections, deployment to critical services.
33. Lewes District and Eastbourne Borough Councils' are committed to Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk. The Corporate Safeguarding Policy and Procedures provides a framework within the Councils, setting out responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk. The policy applies to all employees, councillors, volunteers and service providers that are commissioned by the council.
34. To work within the Councils' Management and Core Competencies Framework(s). Central to the delivery of the role are the values and behaviours set out below. These are shared by all employees and applied to everything we do. The bullet points for each competency are examples of performance required:

Core Competencies

Sharing the Vision - Shaping the Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the Councils' purpose, context, goals, objectives and values, and is willing to behave consistently with them. • Knows the strategic direction of the Councils and acts in support of it.
Communicating Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to and participates in an organisation where high quality information flows smoothly both internally and externally. • Works positively to gain understanding from others.
Driving Improvement Performance &Results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes responsibility and ownership for decisions, actions and results. • Takes actions to improve skills, knowledge and level of contribution. • Seeks and delivers high standards for self, team and Council
Self Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-motivated and professional. • Is organised and uses time and technology efficiently. • Adopts a flexible approach to change
Delivering for our Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a desire to identify and give priority to meeting and exceeding the needs of internal and external customers, generating high levels of customer satisfaction
Working Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively contributes to team working, sharing information, valuing the input of others. • Works co-operatively and is committed to building, productive, positive relationships. • Demonstrates commitment to achieving overall team objectives

Management Competencies

Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspires and engenders commitment in others. • Leads from the front and by example. • Presents a united corporate view.
Managing and Developing Performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches and supports individuals and teams to perform at their best, motivating and developing them to achieve high performance.
Managing Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures the Councils' priorities are achieved through planned action programmes. • Makes best use of resources, ensuring value for money

Managing change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embraces, facilitates, implements and manages change to improve and develop services
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This job description sets out the duties of the post at the time it was drawn up. Such details will vary from time to time without changing the general character of the duties or the level of responsibility involved.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

QUALIFICATIONS

<p>Essential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership of appropriate professional body e.g. CIPFA, or other CCAB accountancy qualification / finalist. Evidence of continuing professional development (CPD). Local Authority Accounting knowledge and intelligence. 	<p>Desirable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management qualification IFRS qualification
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TRAINING

<p>Essential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial systems Microsoft Outlook, Excel, Word and Microsoft PowerPoint Financial reporting systems 	<p>Desirable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civica Financials Business Objects
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SKILLS & ABILITIES

<p>Essential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to analyse complex information, focussing on the key financial drivers Highly advanced financial modeller Ability to explain financial information effectively to staff with a non-financial background. Ability to influence, persuade and negotiate at a high level in order to facilitate critical decisions being reached. Ability to understand and translate complex issues into timely and innovative solutions. A flexible and challenging disposition. 	<p>Desirable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Politically aware and sensitive A creative and innovative approach Strong motivational abilities Experience of managing staff members.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent communication skills • Very high financial and management accounting skills • Strong Team player • Ability to build positive relationships with colleagues at all levels. • Initiative • Ability to deal with personnel and sensitive work confidentially. • Ability to prioritise, meet deadlines and work effectively under pressure, without direct supervision. • Very good written and verbal communication skills, including report writing and presentation skills • To act with dignity when representing the Council • Resourceful, innovative organised and IT literate 	
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KNOWLEDGE

<p>Essential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding of accounting concepts and rules • Knowledge of the local authority accounting code of practice including main IFRS or UKGAP rules • Understanding of CIPFA's Service Expenditure Code of Practice • Use of computerised financial information systems and tools • External audit requirements • Data protection 	<p>Desirable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of corporate structures and extensive knowledge of UK tax law • Knowledge of Taxation
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EXPERIENCE

<p>Essential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in a local authority accounting with experience in producing the Statutory Accounts, as appropriate • Strong experience in reconciliations, financial modelling and end of year reporting • Proven ability to manage and deliver a demanding workload 	<p>Desirable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong post qualification experience • Political awareness • Change management awareness • Management of finance staff
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority exposure and experience • Successful delivery of a governance and a control framework in support of performance improvements • Proven ability to manage and deliver a demanding workload. 	
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PHYSICAL, LEGAL AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

<p>Essential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works within the Councils’ Core Competency and Management Frameworks • An engaging, enthusiastic and positive manner with a strong “can do” approach • Be occasionally available to work additional hours outside of normal working hours • Ability to travel to Lewes and Eastbourne including Hybrid working. • Willingness to develop skills and knowledge in other areas to provide flexibility within the service • Flexible approach to work by responding to the needs of the services including, at times, requirements to work beyond normal working hours • Commitment to own continuous personal and professional development • Strong team player, committed to an ethos of continuous improvement 	<p>Desirable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full driving license • Evidence of own continuous personal and professional development
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All staff must be prepared to have an understanding of the Equal Opportunities, Customer Care and Health and Safety policies. Managers in particular, must have a commitment to implement and abide by these policies.