

LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY

Job Description

POST TITLE:	Service Charge Officer
DIRECTORATE:	Climate, Homes and Economy
SERVICE:	Homeownership Services
GRADE:	SO1
LOCATION:	Within the London Borough of Hackney
RESPONSIBLE TO:	Service Charge Team Leader
RESPONSIBLE FOR:	N/A

MAIN PURPOSE OF THE JOB:

To work as part of the Service Charge Team responsible for; the calculation of service charges; reserve fund; shared ownership rent and ground rent; the production of the estimated and actual invoices; and, the billing of service charge and rent payers.

To ensure the provision of a high quality customer services to the Council's residents.

To effectively maintain the service charge database, including making accurate changes to customer accounts, as well as additional databases in response to changing legislation that impact service charges, to ensure accurate and compliant recharging.

To carry out a range of financial administrative functions to ensure the successful delivery of Homeownership Services and compliance with legislative requirements.

MAIN AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY:

1. In collaboration with Service Charge and Finance colleagues, calculate annual service charges to produce estimated and actual invoices which are accurate, reasonable, and in accordance with legislation and local procedures and policies.

2. To collate all financial records pertaining to communal and structural expenditure in relation to property service charges, and be responsible for the high level of accuracy and maintenance of financial information provided for the calculation of service charges.
3. Ensure service charges contributions are calculated in compliance with contractual and legislative provisions.
4. To carry out necessary accountancy functions for the production of service charges, reserve fund, ground rent and shared ownership rent.
5. To issue Section 20B Notice's to protect the financial position of the landlord.
6. To maintain and update electronic and manual records, including supporting documentation, in relation to properties receiving annual service charges.
7. Provide supporting information to substantiate leaseholder charges in response to enquiries, complaints, disputes, legal challenges and S21 and S22 requests.
8. To provide clear and timely reports for investigations, as and when required, to leaseholders and/or representatives, LBH colleagues and other stakeholders.
9. To record and report any errors or inaccuracies within the accounting processes and financial recording systems, and to implement any appropriate improvements to ensure an efficient service.
10. To liaise with appropriate Council departments, sections, regulatory bodies, auditors and partners to encourage good practice and effective service charge accounting.
11. To provide appropriate background information and to perform necessary calculations for all service charge enquiries, including Section 125 offer notice information.
12. To prepare and compile Homeownership Services monthly performance reports, distributing necessary information to appropriate parties throughout London Borough of Hackney (LBH).
13. To assist the Service Charge Team Leader with reviewing and benchmarking key performance strategies and effective working practices for managing a successful Homeownership Services, focusing particularly on local and national housing organisations.
14. To verify all payments made by the Service Area, both externally and internally, ensuring that they are correctly authorised and coded.
15. To liaise with internal and external auditors (or any other similar group, person or body) providing required information and to assist with implementing agreed recommendations as directed by Homeownership Services Managers.

16. To provide accurate and timely advice and information to colleagues within Homeownership Services about service charges in order to facilitate the decision making process.
17. To assist with budget monitoring coordination and day-to-day transaction processing functions within Homeownership Services to ensure that all regular budgetary returns are undertaken accurately and within set deadlines to the Housing Finance Team.
18. To assist with producing accurate reconciliation's of all income and expenditure in respect of; service charges;; shared ownership; buy backs; Right to Buy sales; and, mortgage accounts.
19. To provide accurate financial information, advice, and statistics as required by the Homeownership Services Managers.
20. To keep abreast of financial reports and information relative to the work of the Service Charge Team, to be able to contribute and provide recommendations where policy decisions are involved.
21. To contribute towards the production and upkeep of good practice manuals and guidance notes, and where appropriate, changes to local procedures and policies used to assist the team's daily work.
22. To attend meetings and to participate in the development of the service.
23. To respond to requests made by Homeownership Services teams for background and calculation information to facilitate responses to general enquiries from leaseholders, freeholders and shared owners.
24. To undertake a range of financial administrative duties to enable the Service Charge team to carry out its key functions and meet its targets, within the required deadlines.
25. To arrange any adjustments due to service charge payers, ensuring that the correct calculations are carried out and that accurate records are maintained with any supporting documentation.
26. To assist in special projects as directed by the Service Charge Team Leader, Service Charge Manager and Head of Homeownership Services (Service Charges, Consultation, Income) .
27. To attend any Neighbourhood, Estate Committee and residents meetings, or any similar meeting, as and when required to address concerns or support colleagues or stakeholders.
28. Keep abreast of changes in the homeownership landscape, including case law and legislation, that impact leaseholder recharges to ensure compliance.
29. Attend Court or FTT as and when required to support colleagues and provide expert testimony.

30. Provide expert advice to colleagues, residents and other stakeholders.
31. To liaise with appropriate Council departments, sections, regulatory bodies, auditors and partners to encourage good practice and effective service charge accounting.
32. To undertake visits/inspections of Council blocks and estates to clarify leaseholder charging related matters and liaise with colleagues from other teams and departments, as appropriate, for any other matters that may be identified.
33. To assist colleagues with providing background information and calculations for all service charge enquiries, including Section 125 offer notice information.
34. To assist Solicitor enquiries, providing necessary information in time of deadlines relating to service charges and rent.
35. To carry out any other duty, as requested by the Head of Homeownership Services (Service Charges, Consultation, Income), that is commensurate with this post.
36. To attend work at times required by the needs of the service which may include working evenings and/or weekend.

OTHER DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To actively promote customer care, value for money and performance management in own role.
- To demonstrate a whole hearted commitment to the organisational values and culture.
- To positively promote and represent Hackney Council
- To promote an environment of continuous learning and improvement.
- The post holder will be expected to undertake such additional duties or responsibilities, consistent with the role and grade, as may be allocated.

NB: All employees are expected to adhere to the Council's Diversity and Equality and Health and Safety Policies.

SIGNATURES : JOB DESCRIPTION DISCUSSED AND AGREED
SIGNATURE OF POST HOLDER:..... DATE:.....
SIGNATURE OF MANAGER:..... DATE:.....

PERSON SPECIFICATION	
POST TITLE:	Service Charge Officer
GRADE:	SO1
DATE LAST REVIEWED:	July 2023

CRITERIA :	TO BE TESTED AT: (Shortlisting, Interview, Test)
Qualifications, Knowledge & Experience Requirements:	
A broad level of knowledge and understanding of the processes and legislation governing service charges.	S/I/T
Extensive knowledge and experience of financial aspects of leasehold management.	S/I/T
Experience of preparation of annual property accounts, service charge, shared ownership and adjustment calculation.	S/I/T
Experience of working in a financial environment carrying out a range of financial administrative functions.	S/I/T
An understanding of S20 consultation processes and the impact on service charges.	S/I/T
Knowledge of accountancy principles and internal controls relating to income and expenditure accounts	S/I/T
Experience identifying, collating and providing relevant information to successfully deal with queries and complaints from customers	S/I
Skills and Abilities:	
Excellent analytical and data manipulation skills to be able to review, interpret and present financial and statistical data.	T
A high level of attention to detail to ensure the maintenance of accurate records and accounts.	S/I/T
Ability to perform accurate arithmetical calculations in accordance with financial regulations.	
Excellent oral and written communication skills, with an ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of people of different levels of seniority.	S/I
Excellent IT skills, proficient in Microsoft packages and Google Suite, especially Excel, Access and Google Sheets.	T
Ability to prioritise work tasks to meet conflicting deadlines on own initiative.	S/I/T

Ability to follow procedures, instructions and legal requirements.	S/I/T
Budget Monitoring Skills	S/T
London Borough of Hackney Requirements:	
Commitment to London Borough of Hackney's core vision and values.	I
Commitment to a culture of learning, development and empowerment across the organisation.	I
Wholehearted commitment to the principle of achieving equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity.	I
Committed to team working.	I
Other Special Requirements:	
Willingness and ability to work flexible hours on occasions including during some weekends and evenings.	I

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