

CROYDON COUNCIL

ROLE PROFILE AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

DIRECTORATE: Resources

DIVISION: Finance

JOB TITLE: **Principal Accountant**

ROLE PROFILE

Job Title:	Principal Accountant
Directorate:	Resources
Division:	Finance
Grade:	Grade 14
Hours (per week):	36
Reports to:	Finance Manager
Responsible for:	Trainees and apprentices when necessary, they may also allocate tasks to Accountants when necessary
Role Purpose and Role Dimensions:	<p>The post holder will have overall responsibility for overseeing financial planning, management and coordination of financial arrangements for a given area across both revenue and capital finance and/or cross cutting areas such as corporate and statutory reporting, and technical finance.</p> <p>The post holder will be expected to lead on a number of processes to ensure that internal and external deadlines are met.</p> <p>The post holder will maintain a proactive relationship with key stakeholders across the council, providing valuable finance support and effective challenge. They will play a key role in delivering an integrated approach to the development of financial strategy across the council.</p> <p>The post holder will be expected to maintain up to date technical knowledge and develop processes and procedures to ensure compliance with new requirements and legislation.</p> <p>The post holder will provide high quality, responsive, effective and timely advice, to the Council, its committees and officers, Government Departments, external auditors and external bodies, partnerships, on all matters of financial significance.</p> <p>The post holder will be expected to act as an effective task manager (and line manager where necessary) by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• providing regular honest feedback and coaching

- delegating work appropriately

The post holder will be expected to provide support to the relevant Finance Manager and Head of Strategic Finance, deputising when required.

Commitment to Diversity:

The council has a strong commitment to achieving equality of opportunity in its services to the community and in the employment of people. It expects all employees to understand, comply with and promote its policies in their own work, undertake any appropriate training to help them to challenge prejudice or discrimination.

Key External Contacts:

- Finance and operational staff at all levels in other local authorities.
- Finance and operational staff at all levels in other public bodies (e.g. government departments/NHS, London Councils, GLA).
- External audit.

Key Internal Contacts:

As this post is central to the financial management and accounting processes across the Council, the post holder will deal with:

- Directors, Heads of Service, Heads of Strategic Finance and Principal Accountants
- Service managers
- Operational staff
- Internal Auditors
- Other staff at all levels, both within and outside the finance team

Financial Dimensions:

No direct budgets under the post-holder's control.

Key Areas for Decision Making:

- Prioritising workload for themselves and others.
- Identification of areas of risk to be highlighted and action proposed.
- Identifying best practice in financial management.
- Ensuring financial information is accurate, timely and highlights key issues.
- Understand and interpret legislation and relevant accounting standards.

Other Considerations:

- This is a generic post and post holders will be expected to transfer between equivalent jobs within the Finance division from time to time as required by the Director of Finance.
- Duties and responsibilities are intended to be a guide to

the range and level of work expected of the post holder. This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list of tasks that may fall to the post holder and employees will be expected to carry out such other reasonable duties which may be required from time to time.

- The Council reserves the right to update your role profile, from time to time, to reflect changes in, or to, your job. You will be consulted about any proposed changes.

Is a satisfactory disclosure and barring check required?

[\(click here for guidance on DBS\)](#)

Standard DBS check

What level of check is required?

Is the post politically restricted
[\(Click here for guidance on political restriction\)](#)

No

Is the post exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974
[\(Click here for guidance on ROA \)](#)

No

Key Accountabilities and Result Areas:

Key Elements:

People management

This will involve:

- Acting as task manager for individual team members.
- Acting as line manager for individuals when necessary.
- Providing regular coaching and feedback to improve performance and provide support.
- Active and timely review of team members' work.

To deliver financial and management accounting services for a specific service (or services).

The services may include, for revenue and capital:

- **Budget preparation**
- **Budget monitoring**
- **Accounting record maintenance and completion of final accounts, grant claims and statistical returns**
- **Support for key projects and contracts including business cases**
- **Financial analysis**

This will involve:

- Being responsible for the financial support and financial processes for specific service(s) covering both capital and revenue, ensuring these are delivered through the year;
- Taking active ownership for delivering the key outputs during the year. This includes ensuring that deadlines are met and that outputs are of a high quality to support effective financial management;
- Managing team members to deliver to key outputs, where relevant. This will include setting clear expectations for tasks and reviewing work to ensure it is of sufficient quality;
- Establishing a strong working relationship with budget holders, with regular meetings, to help support them with their financial management accountabilities. This includes adopting a robust approach when necessary;
- Main point of contact for budget holders, providing a high standard of service with regular meetings, to help support them with their financial management accountabilities;
- Using IT software to produce financial reports and information on a timely basis and to a high standard, to ensure that key timetables are met;
- Using information from directorates, produce regular, accurate and up to

date forecasts based on financial analysis to aid budget preparation and monitoring purposes;

- Ensuring that proper accounting records are maintained during the year to support financial management and ensure an efficient financial close at the year end. This will include carrying out any relevant administrative tasks or delegating when able to;
- Using regular monitoring, proactively respond to financial risks (such as overspending) and opportunities, advising on action and escalating issues where appropriate;
- Regularly perform reconciliations of balance sheet and income accounts and expenditure accounts where appropriate. Investigate and variances on a timely basis and take necessary action, escalating when necessary;
- Helping services to develop robust and achievable savings options and provide support to ensure that these are met
- Supporting key projects with robust financial advice and analysis

To lead on key areas of corporate and technical accountancy.

These duties involve contributing to all or part of any of the following corporate functions, within legally defined timescales:

- Preparation of financial strategies, budgets, annual accounts and reports
- Monitoring of corporate financial performance,

ensuring that timely and relevant information is available for management action, including revenue, capital and balance sheet areas

- Completion of statutory returns
- Preparation of capital accounting, including associated registers
- Provide planning and advice on financial process changes arising from the change in applicable accounting standards
- Financial analysis and evaluation of 3rd parties
- Complete the accounting for tax for example Council Tax, Collection Fund, VAT and SDLT and provide tax guidance across the council.
- Liaise regularly with internal and external audit and co-ordinate responses to their queries.

To support the improvement of financial processes and the adoption of best practice in financial management. This includes maintaining professional skills to be able to remain effective in role.

This will involve:

- Working with finance colleagues to ensure a consistent approach in financial management, which will contribute to the need to provide a high quality responsive service to support the Council's change agenda
- Work with budget holders and finance colleagues to ensure that they are able to carry out their role effectively e.g. identify any training needs or provide advice on best practice
- Taking responsibility for maintaining professional skills, for example new accounting standards, in

using IT software, financial modelling and wider sector developments Identify and take advantage of any training opportunities in order to maintain CPD.

To provide financial advice and support to the service.

This includes ensuring that all managers maintain an up to date knowledge of the financial framework and their role within it and that they have the skills to fulfil their financial management roles effectively.

This will involve:

- Maintaining a strong understanding of specific services and associated issues
- Establishing and maintaining a strong collaborative relationship with budget holders and finance colleagues using a range of communication methods
- Actively meet with key contacts in the service directorates to gain insight and provide financial advice when necessary;
- Adopting an inquisitive mind-set and use this to identify and challenge key financial issues, and help come up with solutions;
- Promoting the importance of strong financial control and how it can be achieved by directorate services.
- Providing guidance and training to budget holders within your assigned area.
- Produce high quality written work: for example, briefing notes for non-finance and contributing to corporate outputs or other ad hoc pieces of work
- Provide detailed technical financial guidance
- Ensure compliance with accounting policies and practices that meet current and proposed accounting standards and reflect current

best practice.

**To contribute to the wider agenda
This includes ensuring that the wider
objectives of the Directorate and Council
overall are met**

This will involve:

- Having an understanding of the Directorate service plan and working to these objectives.
- Taking part in and contributing to directorate or council wide projects when the opportunity arises
- Acting as a professional ambassador of the Finance Team. This will include deputising when necessary.

Confidentiality

- Treating all information acquired through employment, both formally and informally, in confidence. There are strict rules and protocols defining employee access to and use of the council's databases. Any breach of these rules and protocols will be subject to disciplinary investigation. There are internal procedures in place for employees to raise matters of concern regarding such issues as bad practice or mismanagement.

Data Protection

- Being aware of the council's legal obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 (the "2018 Act") and the EU General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR") for the security, accuracy and relevance of personal data held, ensuring that all administrative and financial processes also comply.
- Maintaining customer records and archive systems in accordance with directorate procedures and policies as well as statutory requirements.
- Treating all information acquired through employment, both formally and informally, in accordance with the Workforce Data Protection Policy.
- There are strict rules and protocols defining employee access to and use of the council's databases. Any breach of these rules and protocols will be subject to disciplinary investigation. There are internal procedures in place for employees to raise matters of concern regarding such issues as bad practice or mismanagement.

Contribute as an effective and collaborative team member

This will involve:

- Participating in training to demonstrate competence.
- Undertaking training as required for the role.
- Participating in the development, implementation and monitoring of service plans.
- Championing the professional integrity of the service.

Equalities and Diversity

- The council has a strong commitment to achieving equality of opportunity in its services to the community and in the employment of people. It expects all employees to understand, comply with and promote its policies in their own work, undertake any appropriate training to help them to challenge prejudice or discrimination.

Health and Safety

- Being responsible for own Health & Safety, as well as that of colleagues, service users and the public.
- Employees should co-operate with management, follow established systems of work, use protective equipment and report defects and hazards to management.
- Managers should carry out, monitor and review risk assessments, providing robust induction and training packages for new and transferring staff, to ensure they receive relevant H&S training, including refresher training, report all accidents in a timely manner on council accident forms, ensure H&S is a standing item in team meetings, liaise with trade union safety representatives about local safety matters and induct and monitor any visiting contractors etc, as appropriate.

Person Specification

Job Title:

Principal Accountant

Essential knowledge and experience:

- A CCAB/CIMA accountancy qualification or senior finance relevant accounting experience.
- Experience or knowledge of the work of a public authority Finance Department at a similar level.
- Knowledge and application of local government finance and an understanding of relevant financial legislation, professional accountancy codes and financial best practice.
- Evidence of successfully managing key financial processes (budgeting, monitoring, forecasting, closing of accounts, completion of grants and statistical returns)
- The application of VFM principles to ensure the most cost effective outcomes are achieved within limited resources
- Experience of working successfully as part of a professional team to deliver strong financial management advice to managers, ideally if within an environment of change.
- Experience of using accounting software packages and other IT software
- Experience of financial analysis and forecasting to support decision making with an awareness and understanding of service delivery as well as financial implications.
- Management experience including evidence of motivating staff to achieve objectives and overcoming barriers to progress.
- Experience of partnership working (internal or external).
- Evidence of successfully building customer-focused relationships.
- Experience of contributing to strategy and developing and implementing policy.
- Understanding of the issues relating to effective service delivery at a time of budgetary constraints.
- Experience of developing and implementing financial systems which have enhanced services.
- Experience of working with outsourced services.
- Track record of promoting equality of opportunity

Essential skills and abilities:

- Strong written and verbal communication skills and the ability to explain complex matters (financial and non-financial information) effectively in a variety of formats to different audiences
- Confidence and ability to challenge budget holders or auditors in a constructive, assertive, and professional way
- Highly IT literate including use of Excel (including pivot tables and use of formulae) and accounting systems
- Ability to form strong working relationships within and across teams

- Strong analytical skills and lateral thinking to develop creative and innovative service or accounting solutions
- Excellent interpersonal skills and ability to operate in a political environment
- Highly organised and able to prioritise and meet deadlines
- Demonstrable team working skills.
- Personal and professional credibility and integrity
- Influencing and negotiating skills.
- Ability to contribute to developing, evaluating, implementing and monitoring council policies/strategies relevant to financial issues.
- Ability to establish and maintain good relationships with external organisations and people and develop a responsive, client centred service.
- Takes responsibility for professional and personal development.

Special conditions:

None.