

POST TITLE	PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTANT
DIRECTORATE	CORPORATE SERVICES
SERVICE	FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT
RESPONSIBLE TO	HEAD OF BUSINESS PARTNERING / HEAD OF CORPORATE FINANCE / HEAD OF FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BEST VALUE
NUMBER OF POST HOLDERS	7 TO 10
ACTING UP/ SECONDMENT	NO

PURPOSE OF JOB

To act as a Principal Accountant in providing professional accountancy and financial advice to support the Council (and associated bodies) with a particular focus on complex accountancy and financial advice in a specialist field or business area and also to provide and co-ordinate advice within other specialist areas across the Principal Accountants' peer group and others across the Council.

The post is a key senior management position within the Finance Division and is a member of the Financial Services Senior Management Team and will be responsible for the performance, efficiency and development of a team of professionally qualified, part-qualified and non-qualified finance staff operating within a specialist finance field (Corporate Accounts, Capital and Projects, Financial Systems, Business Partnering) including:

- Securing financial stewardship and systems security, safeguarding public money and promoting the delivery of best value
- Financial strategy, accounting and planning, budget development and monitoring
- Preparation of annual statutory financial statements
- Major projects, commercial advice and transformational change
- Policy, design, management and control of financial systems

The post holder will work closely with service areas to ensure that the specialist team and the wider financial service as a whole are delivering excellent client service.

The post holder will have the ability to rotate across Principal Accountant roles and lead complex work across a variety of professional disciplines including management accounting; business partnering; financial accounting; project accounting; capital accounting; and financial systems accounting.

The post has significant responsibility in supporting the Head of Finance / Chief Financial Officer to discharge his / her S95 duties and is required to deputise for them.

To provide direct advice to the Head of Corporate Finance, Head of Finance Business Partnering and the Head of Financial Strategy and Best Value in the management of the Finance team as required.

To promote initiatives which have a Council wide impact, to continuously improve the performance of the Finance team and to represent the Council in a positive manner both internally and externally.

THE WHAT - MAJOR TASKS/JOB ACTIVITIES

- Take personal responsibility for the development of specialist finance teams and professional and non-professional staff within the wider Finance team, delivery of excellent client service and development of initiatives and processes to foster continuous improvement. The post holder will also take responsibility for the development of finance skills within the wider organisation.

Be responsible for the development of the Council's financial strategy in key service areas to support the delivery of best value and supporting deliver of the business plan.

- Lead and manages up to three specialist teams of professionally qualified, part-qualified and non-qualified finance staff with each team carrying out specialist areas of work e.g. Capital Accounting, Major Projects, etc. Some posts in the structure have no management responsibility.
- Set standards, policies and procedures which ensure that specialist financial advice fully complies with professional standards, Council policies, aims and objectives.
- Lead on identifying and establishing effective management arrangements for key risks within the service, compliant with the Council's risk management policy and framework.
- Lead the preparation of the statutory accounts and associated audit papers for the Council, Joint Boards and Edinburgh Integration Joint Board, liaising with internal and external audit as required.
- Lead the development and monitoring of the long-term financial plan, annual revenue and capital budgets, ensuring that expenditure plans are affordable, sustainable and aligned to Council priorities whilst addressing all financial requirements.
- Lead and contribute professional and managerial expertise to the development of multi-million-pound complex initiatives and projects, strategic plans and policy development.
- Procure, manage and monitor external consultants and contractors to deliver planned outcomes and secure best value.
- Deputises for the Service Director, Heads of Service and other senior service managers, representing the Executive Director and Council to a range of internal and external stakeholders, and presents a positive impression of the Council.
- The post holder will represent the Council on a range of external bodies and will provide critical financial and regulatory advice with major implications.
- Works closely with and provides expert strategic financial advice to Senior Councillors, Chief Officers, Senior Managers, Elected Members and external agencies to represent and promote the Council's interests providing critical financial and regulatory advice with major implications.
- Creatively seeks out opportunities, secures funding packages, ensuring delivery to budget and timescale.

- Responsible for the content and preparation of contracts, financial reports, strategic plans, briefings and presentations for Council meetings, external agencies, senior officers, including the Corporate Leadership Team, relevant committees as well as business and stakeholder groups, all potentially with wide-ranging political, reputational and financial impacts.
- Lead on the development of Council strategies, standards, policies and procedures which ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities, national legislation, Council aims and objectives, ensuring and demonstrating the services under his/her control provide Best Value.
- Lead on the development of best practice and continuous improvement and demonstrates effective management of change within a complex internal and external environment, particularly during a time of restructure.
- Present expert financial evidence and opinion at Public Inquiries, Planning Inquiries, VAT Tribunals and court proceedings including testifying when required.
- To advise and support the Council's democratic process, including scrutiny, local development committees, Council meetings and liaison with Elected Members.
- Responsible for supporting the delivery and improvement of outcomes for customers, working in close partnership with service managers in both directorates and localities.
- Responsible at a strategic level, for the Council's Financial ERP systems (c. £1 billion of transactions / up to 4,000 users).

THE HOW - KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (E.G. CREATIVITY & INNOVATION, CONTACTS & RELATIONSHIPS, DECISION MAKING)

- The post holder will require sound financial and accounting knowledge in relation to core Council business and extensive knowledge and skills in relevant specialist professional financial disciplines.
- The post holder requires a full Professional Accountancy qualification which is recognised by the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies, or an equivalent qualification, however relevant experience may be taken into account in exceptional circumstances.
- The post holder will have an additional management qualification or extensive management experience.
- The post holder will build, develop and manage excellent stakeholder relations at all levels, internally and externally, with a highly developed ability to influence and negotiate in order to deliver agreed strategic outcomes.
- The post holder will be a creative and innovative thinker and will be expected to design and develop complex financial proposals across diverse subjects set in a strategic context, impacting across the Council and the city.
- The post holder will be responsible for the Financial ERP System ensuring it operates at a minimal risk of fraud and / or GDPR non-compliance.
- The post holder will have excellent leadership skills coupled with demonstrable values which are in line with our organisational Values, supporting the development of our organisational culture.

- The post holder will have highly developed emotional intelligence with the ability to build effective relationships, gain trust of others and demonstrate a collaborative approach, working constructively in partnership with other departments and a range of external bodies to achieve agreed outcomes
- Contacts will relate to the delivery of expert financial advice on high level complex matters with major implications and wide ranging impact
- Provides formal professional financial advice, recommendations and proposals to Chief Officials, Elected Members, committees and external organisations relating to policy, service practice and provision for a range of major services across the Council and city.
- Representing and acting on behalf of the Council, committing the authority to a course of action. Expert advice on highly complex matters with substantial impact on Council resources.
- The postholder will make strategic complex decisions on projects and issues covering the entire Council and city.
- They will work with other departments and a range of external bodies representing the Council with substantial implications for all parties including preparing submissions that could influence government policy.
- The ability to interpret a range of complex information, both financial and non-financial, to ensure that strategic decisions are properly informed by technical expertise as well as wider policy considerations.
- The post holder has a major role to play in the Council's governance and financial processes.

ENVIRONMENT (WORK DEMANDS, PHYSICAL DEMANDS, WORKING CONDITIONS, WORK CONTEXT)

The post holder will have autonomy to allocate their own time and that of a team to set, design, manage and provide the service, working in a state of constant change arising from decisions of Elected Members; CLT, SMTs, Project Boards, etc. and managing conflicting priorities and deadlines.

Operational matters requiring an immediate response by the relevant specialist finance team will be co-ordinated by the relevant Principal Accountant.

Occasional weekend and / or out of hours working may be required.

Although the post may be exposed to some physical demands these will be predominantly within the range of normal office-based activities.

Although the post may be exposed to some adverse working conditions these will be predominantly within the range of normal office-based activities.

The post will have a general requirement to take care in relation to the working environment, work activities and dealing with people. More specifically, the role will require careful handling and storage of highly confidential and sensitive information in line with legislation and Council policies. Mishandling of sensitive information could have severe financial, reputational and potentially criminal implications for the Council and its officers.

SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE (NUMBERS AND TYPE OF STAFF)

The post holder is responsible for managing multiple teams of professionally qualified, part-qualified and non-qualified finance staff, covering a range of diverse specialist areas. This includes the management of workflow amongst team members and all required HR activities.

The finance staff are in turn are responsible for delivering financial advice with major service impacts.

The post is required to take on responsibility for the leadership and development of professional and non-professional staff, including consideration of succession planning and resilience to ensure business continuity.

There will be up to 15 professional and non-professional finance staff members in each specialist team. The post will also be required to manage service delivery in relation to advice and support provided by external financial firms.

RESOURCES

The post will be responsible for overseeing the proper use of financial resources of service budgets, projects and capital programmes totalling up to £1bn including making appropriate recommendations / providing effective financial advice.

The post will have responsibility for one or more of the following:

- Financial reporting and control in relation to the Council's revenue budget of up to £1bn and reserves of £100m
- Financial reporting and control of a capital investment programme of £1bn.
- Managing budgets of up to £200k per annum.
- Protecting Council's investment in companies to a balance sheet value of circa £20m.
- Managing the Council wide financial ERP system and ancillary systems, including security and maintenance.
- Financial reporting and control in relation to the Council's service revenue budgets of up to £500m
- Managing indirect taxation implications of Council including VAT (reclaims of up to £90m per annum) and Council company tax group relief scheme.
- Managing a specialist team's documentation and records retention processes.
- Authorising and assuming responsibility for high level payments (up to £500,000 per transaction)
- Deliver best value reviews, change programme and financial strategy support for the Council.

HEALTH AND SAFETY (DO NOT ALTER THE WORDING OF THIS SECTION)

Protecting the health and safety and welfare of our employees, and our third parties including members of the public, contractors, service users and pupils, is the starting point for a forward-thinking Council.

All employees are responsible for:

- Taking care of their own health and safety and welfare, and that of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions;
- Co-operating with management and following instructions, safe systems and procedures;
- Reporting any hazards, damage or defects immediately to their line manager; and
- Reporting any personal injury and work related ill health, and accident or incident (including 'near misses') immediately to their line manager, and assist with any subsequent investigation, including

co-operating fully with the provision of witness statements and any other evidence that may be required.

Line managers have additional responsibilities for ensuring all health and safety risks under their management are identified, assessed and controlled, with specialist input from H&S Advisers and others including Occupational Health where required. Where the risks cannot be adequately controlled the activity should not proceed.

Additional information can be found in the [Council Health and Safety Policy](#).