

## Folkestone & Hythe District Council Job Description

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Job Title</b>                   | Customer Service Advisor                                   |
| <b>Service Area / Team</b>         | Customer Services  |
| <b>Reports to</b>                  | Customer Service Team Leaders                              |
| <b>Grade &amp; Annual Salary</b>   | Grade C (£20,435 - £22,450)<br>Grade D (£23,278 - £26,222) |
| <b>Politically Restricted Post</b> | No   |
| <b>DBS Requirement</b>             | Basic  |

### JOB PURPOSE

- To work as part of a team to provide a professional and efficient first point of contact for council services across all access channels (online, web chat, social media, phone, email, written correspondence and meet & greet at the Customer Access Point – “CAP”).
- To encourage, support and enable customers to transact online.

### MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- To ensure customers are encouraged and supported to self-serve through the Council’s and other organisations websites.
- To adhere to statutory requirements and council policies/procedures, including the Customer Contact Personal and Third party Information Policy.
- To ensure all transactions and customer enquiries are processed efficiently and accurately in line with current legislation and operating procedures, with a particular focus on delivering services digitally.
- To monitor and respond to enquiries via web chat, online, social media, email, meet & greet (CAP), appointments, and incoming calls in a professional courteous and prompt manner, whilst adhering to the Customer Charter and providing excellent customer service.
- To build a picture of a customer’s circumstances by using listening/questioning techniques and referring to a variety of back office systems for background information and previous decisions made in order to respond to the customer’s enquiry appropriately.
- Provide support, advice and navigation tips to customers accessing the Council’s website.
- Assist customer’s to process payments through the automated payment line / pay.net.

- Signpost customers to other organisations or agencies websites for assistance where relevant.
- Liaise with other agencies and partners to provide guidance and advice on homelessness and the housing list to enable them to help their clients.
- Respond to customer's feedback and resolve complaints at the first point of contact where possible, adhering to the Corporate Complaints procedure for any formal complaints.
- Keep up to date with daily changes to processes and procedures.
- Identify opportunities to streamline procedures to improve the service to the customer.
- Build and maintain effective working relationships with all staff, service areas, members and other stakeholders
- To maintain a high level of understanding of Council policies and procedures and statutory legislation by keeping up to date with any alterations or amendments to the Government and Councils operations.
- Undertake relevant training and demonstrate an on-going commitment to personal development. Participate in regular individual and team performance reviews.
- Take responsibility for managing own workloads and meeting deadlines.
- To have a flexible approach in assisting the Customer Services Management team to manage resources throughout the day.
- To share information, knowledge and best practice with other team members in order to promote an ethic of continual improvement within the team.
- To promote a positive team spirit by working well with other team members, sharing responsibility of common goals and understanding different roles and responsibilities.
- Provide switchboard cover, directing customer enquiries to the correct officer or service area.
- Provide a Customer Access Point (face to face) for signposting & self-serve at a satellite office (on a rota basis).
- Assist with user testing of new e-forms and Election duties etc.
- To report and discuss safeguarding issues with a designated safeguarding officer and complete the safeguarding form.

**All Customer Service Officers cover all or one of the following specialist areas:**

- Council Tax, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction and Housing Option (including Homelessness) enquiries

**Or**

- \*Other services – Recycling & Waste, Licensing, HR, Parking, Planning, Building Control, Environmental Health, Street Cleansing, Antisocial Behaviour, Sports Pitch bookings etc enquiries

\*Officers who cover other services can also be trained to cover Council Tax enquiries.

The following service enquiries are covered by all officers:

- Electoral Services

- Payments
- Direct Debits (Council Tax)

**Housing Option enquiries:**

- Complete an Initial Interview for vulnerable / potentially homeless customers.
- Provide help, advice and guidance to assist customers to complete the online application to register for the Housing List or notify of a change of circumstances. Advise what evidence the customer will need to supply and how they can bid for vacant properties.
- Raise call back enquiries for Housing Officers to provide specialist information and advice.
- To confirm the customers enquiry with a summary of action(s) via letter or email when necessary i.e. appointment letter.
- Book appointments for Homelessness applications on behalf of the Housing Options officers.

**Council Tax enquiries:**

- To assist and encourage customers to use the e-forms.
- To collate relevant information (for processes that are not available online at the moment) to enable the back office to amend and update customer's accounts. This includes such areas as Sale of Property, Change of Household, Deceased, and Change of Tenancies for Landlord Properties.
- To identify and give advice on the variety of Discounts and Exemptions available to meet the individual customers needs.
- To provide advice on the role of the Valuation Office and how bandings are set and signpost customers to their website.
- To negotiate payment of council tax accounts i.e. requests to spread instalments from 10 months to 12 months.
- To negotiate arrangements of accounts in the recovery stage (reminders, final notice's, Court Summons and Liability orders) to ensure a suitable collection rate is agreed.
- To deal sensitively with cases of hardship and agree appropriate methods of collection.
- To set up Direct Debits for customers who have no internet access.
- To access Enforcement Agency sites to inform customers of any outstanding balances.
- To process changes and updates to customers accounts (from the back office tray), during quieter periods. i.e. Change of Address referred by Gov Tech, Sale of Properties, deceased etc.
- To identify potential cases of Fraud and refer to the Fraud Officer for further investigation.
- To identify when an account has been processed incorrectly. For example, when the charge payer does not have correct discount / exemption applied to their account.
- Book appointments for the Corporate Debt team where a more in depth investigation of income and expenditure is required.
- Book appointments for complex enquiries that require a face to face explanation.
- Identify where customers may be entitled to Council Tax Reduction and other welfare benefits.

- To respond to email enquiries and import the information into the customer's account in Civica.
- Book a Visiting Officer appointment if required (i.e. for cases that need onsite investigation).

### **Housing Benefit enquiries**

- To assist customers to use the online forms.
- To explain Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction entitlements and overpayments.
- To provide customers with a manual (trial) calculation for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction based on the customers circumstances.
- To complete the customers enquiry with a summary of action(s) and evidence required (if necessary).
- To process changes or updates to customers claims (from the back office tray) during quieter periods. i.e. Changes to circumstances reported by the Department of Work & Pensions electronically.
- To have a good understanding and knowledge of the different welfare benefits to provide advice and guidance to customers.
- To encourage and support landlords to use the Landlord Portal.
- To identify Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction applications where a processing error has resulted in the entitlement being calculated incorrectly.
- To suspend Housing Benefit claims when notified of a change of income or address to avoid overpayments.
- Access Department of Work and Pensions site (secure access via CIS token) to confirm welfare benefit entitlements are in payment.
- Book appointments for complex enquiries that require face to face explanation.
- To identify potential cases of fraud and complete referrals for the Fraud Officer for further investigation.
- Identify the criteria where Discretionary Housing Payments may be applicable.
- To respond to email enquiries and import the information to customers claims in Civica.

### **Recycling & Waste**

- To assist, encourage and support customers to complete requests for the Recycling and Waste services online
  - Missed bins (collection schedule); Bulky waste collections;
  - New or replacement bin requests including taking payment via pay.net where applicable;
  - Garden Waste Scheme (including new and renewals);
  - Fly-tipping and Fly-posting;
  - Full or damaged litter bins;
  - Street cleansing issues such as dog fouling, leaves, weeds and general detritus
  - Abandoned cars;
  - Reports of dead animals.
  - Used needles

Respond to enquiries for:

- Purple sacks / garden waste sacks requests;
- Bin investigations i.e. for bin storage, size of bin, educational visits;
- Assisted collections requests, referring to the Contracts team as necessary;
- Contaminated bin enquiries;
- Requests for additional bins for larger Households and medical circumstances;
- Clinical waste collections and disposal of sharps (needles);

### **Parking Services**

- To assist, encourage and support customers to use the council's website for Parking Services, including:
  - Penalty Charge Notices – appeals and payments enquiries.
  - On street parking permits and visitor vouchers, information on various controlled parking zones within the district.
  - Car park and season ticket enquiries.

Respond to enquiries of

- Notice to owners enquiries
- Faulty parking machines and inform Parking Services;
- Illegally parked vehicles (double yellow lines/ disabled bays) and inform NSL – Civil Enforcement Officer Team;
- Disabled Bays/Blue Badges and dropped kerbs, provide information and signpost customers to the website or relevant bodies.

### **Planning and Building Control**

- To provide general advice to Builders, Homeowners, Planning Agents, Solicitors, Property Developers, Prospective Buyers on Planning and / or Building Control.
- Signpost customers to the Planning Portal (and provide advice where appropriate) for basic enquiries regarding extensions and loft conversions, removal of internal walls, building new dwellings, removal of windows, listed buildings, completion certificate.
- To have an understanding of the Planning and Building Control policies and procedures and up and coming major developments in the district.
- To provide verbal assistance for filling out application forms and appropriate fees and sending out documents.
- To raise call back requests for more in-depth technical enquiries for the Duty Planning Officer or Building Control Officer.
- Book site visits for Building Control Officers to attend.
- Record details of enforcement issues such as a property being developed that does not have planning permission and passing on to the Enforcement Officer.
- Record reports of dangerous structures and inform Building control officers immediately.
- Attend Planning and Building Control liaison meetings

### **Environmental Health**

To assist, encourage and support customers to report the following online:

- Fly tipping
  - Dog fouling
  - Street cleaning
  - Nuisance and noisy neighbours
  - Lost , stray and dangerous dogs
- Respond to enquiries regarding Fly-tipping on Private Land, nuisance issues (such as pollution, smoke, noise, lost/stray dogs, dangerous dogs, drainage Issues, flooding calls) and either direct customer to the website for further information or raise a job for Environmental Health officers to investigate and give advice as needed.
  - Record reports from customers regarding Food Safety issues in establishments in relation to illness, unsafe work area or unsatisfactory premises etc.
  - Provide advice on new business start-ups serving food to the public on how to obtain Food Hygiene Certificate.
  - Respond to Pest Control issues on public land and direct householders to private contractor for pest control issues within their property.

### **Community Safety**

- To record details of anti-social behaviour and neighbour disputes via the risk assessment form and advise the customer when a member of the Community Safety Team will be in touch (based on the risk score).

### **Private Sector Housing**

To assist, encourage and support customers to report problems with private rented accommodation online:

- Signpost customers to the Councils' website to get advice and guidance on private rented accommodation.
- Take details of any health and safety issues (i.e. damp, mould and lack of electric/hot water) for the customer if they have no internet access.
- Take relevant details and payment for an Immigration Inspection.

### **Licensing**

- To provide advice to new and existing Taxi drivers (Private Hire or Hackney Drivers) on how to apply, licensing requirements, fees and general enquiries on the process, and direct customers to the Councils website for further information.
- Take relevant details, payments and book knowledge tests for prospective taxi drivers.
- Book appointments for visual inspections for taxis.
- To signpost and provide advice on general licensing i.e. Street Traders / Street Collection Permits and fees etc, directing customers to the website to complete applications.
- To provide advice on Premises and Personal Licences, how to apply, the requirements, fees signposting customers to the Councils website for further information.
- To respond to enquiries relating to Canoe Licences (Annual and Seasonal).

### **Human Resources (HR)**

- First point of contact for providing assistance on how to apply for jobs advertised on-line.
- Raise call backs for the HR Officers if they are not available to take an immediate call i.e. from a recruitment agency.
- Have a general understanding of where to find HR policies in order to direct the customer to the appropriate page on the intranet and website.

### **Ground Maintenance**

- Respond to a wide range of enquiries taking appropriate information and logging it on the relevant systems for the following areas:  
Private Maintenance Works;  
Sports Pitch Bookings;  
Tennis and Pitch and Putt;  
Public Open Spaces such as Play areas, Parks, Grass Verges with regards to maintenance and cleansing;  
Royal Military Canal - compliments, maintenance and cleansing.

### **Electoral Services**

- Respond to Election enquiries including new registrations, checking the database for existing registered occupants, directing to online registration and voting results.
- Provide advice on upcoming elections taking place including where and how to vote and who is standing.
- Send out Certificates of Residency to confirmed electors.
- Provide advice on the process of applying for postal or proxy votes and directing to online forms or sending out forms as requested.
- Respond to enquiries regarding Poll Cards and Household Enquiry Forms
- To work additional hours in the Contact Centre on Election Day to respond customer enquiries from 7am to 10pm.

### **Administrative duties**

In addition to dealing with web chat, social media, calls and face to face enquiries the post holder (on a rota basis) will complete the following administrative tasks ;

- Monitor mailboxes, respond to enquiries and keep statistics of emails received for the following;  
Environmental Services  
Folkestone & Hythe Customer Services
- Monitor voicemail boxes and action accordingly for the following;  
Electoral Services  
Human Resources  
Planning & Building Control

## **CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES**

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|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adhere to the council's safeguarding policies and procedures and undertake relevant training in order to help protect children and vulnerable adults within the district</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To comply with legislation, council policies and procedures including the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, Information Security Policy, the Code of Conduct for Officers and to participate in any Emergency Planning activities as required</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To actively demonstrate the values and behaviours of the council</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To ensure our customers are valued by taking into account their views and needs in all that we do</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To contribute to the development and achievement of relevant corporate and service objectives by suggesting ideas for service improvements</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To communicate openly and honestly with colleagues, members and customers</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To undergo any training necessary to be able to fulfil the requirements of the job.<br/>Participate in training programs as required</li></ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To carry out other duties commensurate with the grade, skills, experience and qualifications of the post holder as directed and as may be required from time to time</li></ul>   |



## Folkestone & Hythe District Council Person Specification

### Post Title: Customer Services Advisor

| <b>Important Information for Applicants:</b>   |  |                     |             |      |
|--|--|---------------------|-------------|------|
| The criteria listed in this person specification are the requirements for the post. Where the method of assessment is stated to be the application form, your application needs to demonstrate clearly and concisely how you meet each of the criteria, even if other methods of assessment are also shown. If you do not address these criteria fully, you may not be shortlisted. Please give specific examples wherever possible. |  |                     |             |      |
| Factors  | Criteria   | Means of Assessment |             |      |
|  |  | Application         | Interview   | Test |
| Qualifications   | <b>Essential</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good basic education to GCSE A-C standard or equivalent (including maths &amp; English), or recent and relevant experience that demonstrates proficiency in English and maths</li> </ul>   | ✓                   |             |      |
|  | <b>Desirable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educated to A Level Standard or equivalent Level 3 qualification</li> <li>NVQ Level 2/3 in Customer Services, Administration, Revenues or Benefits</li> <li>IRRV Award</li> </ul>  | ✓<br>✓<br>✓         |             |      |
| Experience and Knowledge   | <b>Essential</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recent and relevant experience in a Customer Service environment</li> <li>Experience of utilising internet systems effectively and accessing online services</li> <li>Experience of operating MS Office systems such as Microsoft Word, Excel and Outlook</li> </ul> | ✓<br>✓<br>✓         | ✓<br>✓<br>✓ |      |
|  | <b>Desirable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A well-developed knowledge and experience of working with Revenues or Benefits systems</li> <li>Previous experience of working in Local Government</li> </ul>  | ✓<br>✓              | ✓           |      |

