

CORPORATE – 43/13

REQUEST

Citizens Advice is currently undertaking national research into council debt collection and enforcement practices. The aims of the project are:

- to build a national evidence base in this area and identify trends
- to identify and promote good practice across the country
- to inform any future amendments to the 'good practice protocol on the collection of council tax arrears'

Please provide me with the following information

1. Does the council have a corporate debt strategy? If so, please provide a copy.
2. What is the council's complaints procedure for residents who have a grievance over a bailiff's actions, other than referring them to the bailiff company?
3. Does your equality strategy cover debt collection?
4. If no payment arrangement is made how long after sending the final reminder do you usually issue a liability order?
5. How much do you usually charge for a liability order?
6. If no payment arrangement is made how long do you usually leave after issuing a liability order before passing the case to the bailiff?
7. Which bailiff firms do you use, and when were their contracts awarded?
8. Could you also please provide for the financial years 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13 the following information:
 - a. Number of accounts issued with final late payment reminders for
 - i. unpaid council tax
 - ii. unpaid parking penalties
 - iii. any other debts
 - b. Number of liability orders issued for unpaid council tax
 - c. Number of cases passed to bailiffs for:
 - i. unpaid council tax
 - ii. unpaid parking penalties
 - iii. any other debts
 - d. Amount of unpaid council tax revenue collected by bailiffs
 - e. Average council tax collection rate
 - f. Amount of unpaid parking penalties collected by bailiffs
 - g. Number of complaints received about the bailiffs used

RESPONSE

1. Does the council have a corporate debt strategy? If so, please provide a copy. **No.**
2. What is the council's complaints procedure for residents who have a grievance over a bailiff's actions, other than referring them to the bailiff company? - **Copy of the Council's Complaints Procedure attached.**
3. Does your equality strategy cover debt collection? - **Yes**
4. If no payment arrangement is made how long after sending the final reminder do you usually issue a liability order? **A Summons is normally issued 3 weeks after the issue of an unpaid Reminder or final notice.**
5. How much do you usually charge for a liability order? **Costs are £50.00 for the Summons and £45.00 for a Liability Order.**

6. If no payment arrangement is made how long do you usually leave after issuing a liability order before passing the case to the bailiff? **3 weeks**
7. Which bailiff firms do you use, and when were their contracts awarded? **Collect Services 1997 & Hambury Tilmond 2013 for Council Tax/NNDR debt and Marstons, Equita and Collection Services for parking fines. Any other debts, County Court Bailiffs.**
8. Could you also please provide for the financial years 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13 the following information:

a. Number of accounts issued with final late payment reminders for

i. unpaid council tax - **unable to provide**

ii. unpaid parking penalties

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
92	65	144 (all Warrants issued)

iii. any other debts

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
1,573	1,534	1,230

b. Number of liability orders issued for unpaid council tax

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
3716	3569	3638

c. Number of cases passed to bailiffs for:

i. unpaid council tax

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
2638	2875	2537

ii. unpaid parking penalties

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
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As above – all warrants issued by the Traffic Enforcement Centre are passed to Bailiffs

iii. any other debts

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
430	394	348 (Council Tax)
311	285	256 (Housing Benefit Overpayments)
119	109	92 (NNDR)

d. Amount of unpaid council tax revenue collected by bailiffs

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
£573,791	£543,218	£567,203

e. Average council tax collection rate

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
97.90%	97.90%	98% (all as at year end)

f. Amount of unpaid parking penalties collected by bailiffs

2010/11

2011/12

2012/13

£2,156.40

£1,654.96

£2,448.00

g. Number of complaints received about the bailiffs used

2010/11

2011/12

2012/13

1

1

Nil