

I am writing to politely request the following information under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA):

- *For the last financial year for which data is available, how much is owed overall in council tax arrears, broken down by year?*

- *For the last financial year for which data is available, how many households are in council tax arrears, broken down by year?*

- *For the last financial year for which data is available, how many applications for a special repayment plan to pay council tax have the council received, broken down by year?*

- 1) Please see attached excel spreadsheet Tab1 named 'Q1'. This is overall Council Tax arrears owed. Please note:

*These are the net balances owed for each year comprising all arrears/credits each year.
The amounts quoted are subject to active collection processes and collection through affordable repayment arrangements, which have been negotiated with customers over time and are expected to be repaid over the life of the debt, subject to the current financial circumstances of each customer on an individual basis.*

- 2) The number of households is not recorded.

- 3) This information is not recorded and would require a manual search on each Council Tax Account. We do not hold the information that you have requested in an easily retrievable format. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) relieves a public authority from the obligation to comply with a request for information where the estimated time required to locate, review and extract the information exceeds a certain threshold set out in Regulations.

The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/3244) set out the rules in relation to the cost limit (otherwise called the "appropriate limit"). These Regulations are published by the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) and are viewable on their web site from this link:

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2004/uksi_20043244_en.pdf

The Regulations set out the cost limit for Government departments and for other public authorities. For local government, Regulation 3 states that the cost limit is £450 and Regulation 4(4) states that the prescribed hourly rate is £25. Regulation 4(4) further provides that where the local authority estimates the time taken to gather the information would exceed this limit (which based on the prescribed hourly rate, equates to 18 officer hours), it may refuse the request under section 12 of FoIA.

I am satisfied the cost limit applies to your request would exceed the 18 hours.

- *For the last financial year for which data is available, how many referrals have the council made to bailiffs in order to collect unpaid council tax, broken down by year?*

If possible, I would like to receive this information in a spreadsheet format.

4) Please see attached excel spreadsheet Tab 2 named 'Q4'. Please note:

These are numbers of Liability Orders referred to our external enforcement agents for the periods we have data recorded.

The figures do not include cases that have been through our internal enforcement agents as we cannot accurately report on this data.

The above figures reflect the suspension on recovery due to Covid and the resumption process. The figures sent to enforcement agents for 21/22 and 22/23 reflect the resumption of action through enforcement agents and the way we had to resume action on cases that were with enforcement agents pre Covid.

These numbers may contain duplicate liability orders i.e. where a liability order is returned due to a debtor absconding, the case may be referred again at a later date if a forwarding address is found and attempts to contact the debtor/collect the monies due are unsuccessful.