

Request:

- 1) In relation to your collection of council tax for the 2022/2023 council tax period please provide the total number of referrals/debts passed to enforcement agents.

- 2) Please confirm the name of the enforcement company used by the council for the recovery of council tax debt.

- 3) Please confirm if accounts which are part of the council tax reduction/support scheme are passed to enforcement companies and if so how many such cases were passed on for the 2022/23 council tax period.

- 4) Please confirm if accounts of people on health/disability related benefits such as Disability Living Allowance, Employment Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment are passed to enforcement companies and if so how many such cases were passed on for the 2022/23 council tax period.

Response:

For 2022/23 8636 Council Tax Liability Orders were passed to external Enforcement Agents.

Please note, cases are recorded in the form of Liability Orders issued and not based on Council Tax accounts. It is possible for an account to have multiple Liability Orders so the above figures do not reflect the true number of accounts passed to enforcement agencies for the periods stated.

The figures quoted may also contain a duplicate count of some Liability Orders, i.e. where a Liability Order is issued to an Enforcement Agent but returned for reasons such as a debtor absconding, the same Liability Order may be re-referred to an Enforcement Agent (if necessary) at a later date (if traced and there was no engagement from the debtor) and therefore would appear twice in the figures.

Also, the above figures do not include the cases that have been through our Internal Enforcement team.

Marstons, Rundles and Bristow Sutor.

We also have internal Enforcement Agents who perform duties under the same Taking Control of Goods regulations.

Referrals for Enforcement Action are not segregated in this way therefore accounts which benefit from Council Tax reductions could be passed for Enforcement however we do all we can to avoid this, see below.

Numbers not recorded

Referrals for Enforcement Action are not segregated in this way therefore accounts where customers are in receipt of health/disability benefits could be passed for Enforcement however we do all we can to avoid this, see below.

Numbers not recorded

The billing and recovery of Council Tax is largely prescribed by legislation and regulations, however we have introduced a Welfare Collections Framework to run alongside the prescribed stages as our local approach to maximise support and engagement with our residents.

This includes issuing additional non-statutory letters and outbound contact campaigns to encourage engagement as early as possible.

We take a holistic approach to offer support, to maximise a customer's income and enable payment. To enable this, we work collaboratively with our Welfare and Assessments teams to ensure customers are in receipt of any benefits, reductions, discounts, or exemptions they may be entitled to.

If a customer does not engage with us, we also have an internal enforcement team who will further attempt engagement by doorstep visits to offer support and repayment arrangements. All designed at unearthing any potential vulnerabilities, generating engagement, and preventing further fees or the need for additional recovery action to take place.

5) Please confirm if an assessment of vulnerability is done prior to a debt being passed to an enforcement company and if so provide a brief description of what the assessment involves. Please also confirm how many cases of people assessed as being vulnerable or potentially vulnerable were passed on to an enforcement company for the 2022/23 council tax period.

See above

Numbers not recorded

6) Please confirm what protocols are in place between the local authority and enforcement companies regarding the approach that should be taken when someone is assessed as being vulnerable as per the assessment referred to in Q5. Please also confirm the kinds of cases which should be raised with, or referred back to, local authorities for further consideration when encountered.

All contracted Enforcement Agencies have trained Welfare teams to support all individuals. They will also liaise with us if they feel that a case needs to be reviewed due to the nature of vulnerabilities.

Where necessary, cases are reviewed on a case by case bases, taking into account the needs and circumstances of the individuals.

7) Please confirm A) how many requests the council received to bring a council tax debt back from an enforcement agent due to vulnerability reasons during the 2022/23 period and B) How many times the council agreed to bring an account back due to vulnerability reasons during the 2022/23 period.

Numbers not recorded