

I.P.F.(sub-group) – Council Tax Best Practice Scoring

How to Score - 1 = comply, 0 = don't comply		Score	Weighting	Total
1.0	Compilation /Maintenance of the Valuation List.			
1.1	The Authority will inform the Valuation Office of any relevant changes within 10 working days.	1	2	2
1.2	All schedules are processed by the Billing Authority within 10 working days of receipt.	1	2	2
1.3	Schedules are processed automatically	0	2	0
1.4	Completion notices are issued for new properties as building work is nearing completion / copies are sent within 10 days	1	2	2
1.5	The response times of the Listing Officer to notifications should be monitored at 3 monthly intervals and where no response is received within 13 weeks the Listing Officer is pursued to ensure urgent action	1	1	1
1.6	The Billing Authority undertakes a monthly banding balance to identify any discrepancies between Billing and Valuation office records.	1	3	3
1.7	The Council tax property database is annually matched with Business Rates records maintained by the Authority, and discrepancies investigated.	0	1	0
1.8	The Authority provides the taxpayer with a temporary account for the property pending assessment by the Listing Officer	1	2	2
2.0	Billing			
2.1	The Billing Authority operates an incentive scheme for early lump sum payments.	0	2	0
2.2	On annual billing the default instalment date is the first of the month from April	1	3	3
2.3	For demand notices issued during the year, instalments are made due 14 days after the issue of the bill.	1	2	2
2.4	No bills are issued in the name of 'The Council Tax Payer'	1	1	1

2.5	Bulk issues of bills, which achieve the minimum level of penetration are passed to the Royal Mail in walksort order.	0	3	0
2.6	The Authority funds the cost of the statutory explanatory notes leaflet through advertising or sponsorship	0	2	0
2.7	Proof of postage is obtained from the Royal Mail for the issue of all bills.	0	2	0
2.8	The Authority issues amended bills daily	1	2	2
2.9	An individual taxpayers total council tax indebtedness to the Authority is also advised with the annual bill (i.e. the statement will advise upon previous years and current years debit).	1	2	2
2.10	Where appropriate the authority generates a refund cheque within 10 working days of the request	1	2	2
2.11	Refunds are paid by direct credit into bank accounts where bank details are known	0	2	0
3.0	Payment Methods			
3.1	DD forms and pre-paid envelopes are issued with all new and amended bills, if not already paying by this method.	1	2	2
3.2	DD forms/information are issued with any other demand for payment (reminder/final/notice/summons).	0	2	0
3.3	The Authority offers variable direct debit instalment dates.	1	3	3
3.4	New DDs are processed automatically through AUDDIS	0	2	0
3.5	DDs are amended / cancelled automatically through the use of ADDACS	0	2	0
3.6	The Authority uses paperless DDs through AUDDIS	0	2	0
3.7	Customers can pay by debit card over the counter	0	2	0
3.8	Customers can pay by credit card over the counter	1	2	2
3.9	Customers can pay by debit card over the telephone	1	2	2
3.10	Customers can pay by credit card over the telephone	1	2	2
3.11	Customers can pay by debit card over the internet	1	2	2
3.12	Customers can pay by credit card over the internet	1	2	2
3.13	Customers can pay at the post office using a swipe card	0	2	0
3.14	Customers can pay by PayPoint	0	2	0
3.15	Customers can pay using Automated Payment Machines	1	2	2

4.0	Maintenance of Accounts			
4.1	Amendments are made to a taxpayers account and response letters sent within 10 working days of notification of the amendment.	1	2	2
4.2	Liaison has been established with the Registrar of Deaths for the provision of weekly lists of deaths in the area	1	2	2
4.3	Council tax amendments are actioned in accordance with the list supplied by the Registrar of deaths within 5 working days.	1	2	2
4.4	Links have been established with other departments within the Authority: Housing Department - weekly tenancy list , Environmental Services/Tech Services - demolition lists, new properties , planning applications	1	2	2
4.5	The Authority issues letters of condolence following death.	1	3	3
5.0	Reductions, Reliefs, Exemptions			
5.1	The Billing Authority proactively (i.e. at a level above the statutory minimum) publicises the availability of relief, discounts, benefits, and exemptions over and above including information with bills and notices.	1	2	2
5.2	Claims for any discount, exemption, relief etc. are processed within 10 working days of receipt provided that it is accompanied by all the relevant supporting information and notifies taxpayers of a disallowed claim within 10 working days.	1	2	2
5.3	Chargeable accounts for the 50% empty charge are issued within 10 working days of the expiry of the 6 month exemption period, (except where entitlement to an exemption other than the statutory 6 month statutory period has already been established).	1	2	2
5.4	Entitlement to single person discount is reviewed annually.	0	2	0
5.5	Entitlement to discounts (other than SPD) are reviewed annually.	1	2	2
5.6	Entitlement to exemptions are reviewed annually.	1	2	2
5.7	When the actual or provisional dates for expiry of exemptions and discounts are set the review takes place within 10 working date of the expiry date.	1	2	2

6.0	Benefit System Links			
6.1	CTB awarded are posted on-line to the CT system.	1	2	2
6.2	An automatic “mismatch” facility exists to match information on the CT and HB systems (e.g. SPD with any non dependants) and “mismatches” are resolved within 5 working days.	0	2	0
6.3	Procedures are laid down for the staff to follow if fraud is suspected (procedures will specify to whom reported and provide examples).	1	2	2
6.4	Information held on the HB system is utilised to assist in the maintenance of CT records.	1	2	2
6.5	At main billing CT bills and HB notifications are posted in the same envelope.	1	3	3
6.6	During the year CTB notifications and amended CT bills are posted in the same envelope.	1	3	3
7.0	Anti-poverty			
7.1	The Revenues division incorporates the corporate anti-poverty/social inclusion policy into service delivery.	0	2	0
7.2	The Revenues division has a written code of practice for debt recovery.	1	2	2
7.3	The Authority has a corporate debt recovery policy.	0	2	0
7.4	Revenues staff are trained on anti-poverty/social inclusion awareness issues.	0	2	0
7.5	Revenues staff are trained on benefit awareness issues for people on low incomes or having difficulty paying.	1	2	2
7.6	Revenues staff liaise with and utilise the services of the Welfare Rights /Debt Counselling/Money Advice units ,where appropriate.	0	2	0
8.0	Pre Liability Order Recovery			
8.1	Reminder notices are issued within 15 working days of the instalment becoming overdue.	0	2	0
8.2	A summons is issued within 15 working days of the first reminder if the account has not been brought up to date.	0	3	0

8.3	Information regarding the availability of discounts, exemptions and benefit are issued with all demands for payment.	1	2	2
8.4	The Authority has a written policy for the withdrawal of summons costs.	1	2	2
8.5	A remote computer link has been established for the use of staff attending Magistrates Court.	0	3	0
8.6	Staff attending Court take with them a supply of Benefit / SPD forms etc. and are sufficiently trained to be able to help taxpayers to complete the form, and assess potential entitlement to benefit.	1	2	2
8.7	The Authority has written guidelines and criteria for the making of special arrangements.	1	2	2
8.8	Employer details are recorded when making arrangements to pay after a summons has been issued.	0	2	0
8.9	The Authority has a written policy on the tracing of absconded debtors, which incorporates guidance upon information sources and when accounts should be ended.	0	2	0
9.0	Post Liability Order Recovery			
9.1	An information request, which also advises the taxpayer about the possibility of bailiff action is issued within 3 working days of the Court hearing.	1	2	2
9.2	The Authority prosecutes if the request for information notice is not returned.	0	2	0
9.3	Information on attachments (both benefits and earnings) is retained for use in future years (subject to the constraints of the Data Protection Act's requirements).	1	2	2
9.4	Two attachments to earnings orders (within the maximum prescribed by Regulations) should be set up if more than one years debt is outstanding.	1	2	2
9.5	Employers who fail to set up attachments are prosecuted.	0	2	0
9.6	The database is marked to show potentially violent cases and this information is made available before recovery visits are scheduled.	0	2	0
10.0	Bailiff and External Agency Recovery (unless stated refers to both internal and external bailiffs)			
10.1	External Bailiffs operate on a fee basis only (i.e. no commission).	0	2	0
10.2	The initial bailiff visit is within 10 working days of the receipt of a case.	1	2	2

10.3	A formal written procedure / contract exists which specifies the standard of service to be provided and specifically deals with the matters detailed below.	1	3	3
10.4	Permission to "van" visits is only granted by an "authorised" officer, after that officer has considered the written notes of guidance.	1	1	1
10.5	Where no contact has been made within office hours at least one visit takes place outside of normal hours before a case is returned for committal.	1	2	2
10.6	Cases are only returned by bailiffs after at least 3 unsuccessful visits have been made.	1	2	2
10.7	At least quarterly monitoring of the costs and benefits of the bailiff operation is undertaken.	0	1	0
10.8	In cases where the bailiff has not made an arrangement the maximum time the case can be retained by the bailiff is 90 days.	1	2	2
10.9	Contracts with external bailiffs and debt collection agencies provide for the security of money collected in the form of bond or client accounts.	1	2	2
10.10	External bailiffs pay money collected to the authority on a weekly basis.	1	2	2
10.11	The Authority has a policy for the use of an external collection agency in the collection process, and this specifies which cases are appropriate for this type of action.	0	2	0
10.12	Copies of current bailiffs certificates are kept by the authority	1	2	2
10.13	Authorities obtain copies of external bailiff's annual accounts, insurance certificates and monthly bank statements of client accounts.	1	2	2
10.14	Authorities have access to external bailiff's systems via a modem link in order to make enquiries.	0	3	0
10.15	Cases are transferred to external bailiffs electronically	0	2	0
11.0	Committals			
11.1	Costs up to the statutory maximum, at the time of issue of the committal summons, are charged (N.B. currently £55 Authority and £10 to Courts).	1	2	2
11.2	The Authority applies for charging orders prior to committal if these are appropriate.	0	2	0
11.3	The Authority petitions for bankruptcy prior to committal if these are appropriate.	1	2	2

11.4	Pre-committal warning letters are sent prior to the commencement of proceedings, which will give the taxpayer the opportunity to make payments by other methods.	1	2	2
11.5	If no contact has been made committal summonses are issued within 20 working days of the warning letter.	0	2	0
11.6	The Authority has a written policy on cases to be listed for committal and this specifies a minimum value below which it is considered uneconomic to pursue.	0	2	0
11.7	An annual timetable has been agreed with the Court which specifies the dates of committal courts, number of courts and an agreed maximum of how many cases the court can accommodate at any one hearing.	1	2	2
11.8	An agreed policy is in operation for the way in which evidence/cases are presented at court.	1	2	2
11.9	The Authority has a written policy about how committal summonses are to be served (i.e. hand delivered , recorded delivery).	1	2	2
11.10	Committal summonses are issued at least 10 working days prior to the court hearing.	1	2	2
11.11	Committal case with warrants outstanding are “flagged” on the cash receipting system to ensure that payments made are appropriately notified	0	2	0
11.12	In cases when an arrangement is made at Court or payment is made on the day (by cheque) cases are adjourned and not withdrawn.	1	2	2
11.13	Warrants of arrest are sought for taxpayers who fail to attend.	1	2	2
11.14	We still need to add some best practice points around service of warrants.			
12.0	Write Offs			
12.1	Items identified for write off under a specified value are approved for write off by an officer under delegated powers and the rest are submitted to Members for approval.	1	2	2
12.2	The billing Authority has a written policy on the write off of council tax accounts which specifies what action should be taken before a write off recommendation is made.	0	2	0

12.3	The process of write off provides for adequate internal checks, and segregation of duties. Adequate operation of these is reviewed by senior staff through sample checking and balancing of write off totals.	1	2	2
12.4	Annual write off of small balances are done automatically up to an agreed amount that is considered uneconomical to collect.	1	2	2
12.5	Annual write off of small credits are done automatically up to an agreed amount.	1	2	2
12.6	Outside tracing agencies are used prior to debts being written off.	1	2	2
12.7	Checks are made with other systems within the authority prior to debts being written off.	0	2	0
13.0	Customer Care			
13.1	Staff on main enquiry counters are generic (Tax & Benefits)	1	3	3
13.2	Telephone lines are direct (i.e. not through a switchboard).	1	3	3
13.3	Staff dealing with telephone queries are generic (Tax & Benefits).	1	3	3
13.4	The Authority has a published copy of Customer Care, in which staff have been trained and all have a personal copy.	1	3	3
13.5	The Customer Care policy is prominently displayed at all enquiry points.	1	3	3
13.6	The Customer Care policy is advertised on leaflets that go out with demand notices.	0	3	0
13.7	The Customer Care policy contains specific targets for council tax.	0	2	0
13.8	The Authority proactively encourages and seeks comment and opinion from council taxpayers through the use of annual customer surveys.	1	3	3
13.9	The Authority has implemented a customer forum to obtain the views of council tax payers.	0	3	0
13.10	The Authority answers 95% of its telephone calls within 15 seconds	1	3	3
13.11	There is a system that monitors engaged telephone calls.	1	3	3
13.12	The Authority sees at least 90% of its personal callers to the public counter within 10 minutes.	1	3	3
13.13	The Customer Care policy contains details of the Authority's complaint procedure, and gives instructions on how to complain.	1	3	3

13.14	The billing Authority regularly monitors performance to ensure that targets are being met. Monitoring/ results should be reported to Senior Managers and Members at least quarterly.	1	3	3
13.15	Staff dealing with personal callers wear an identification badge (though this may not necessarily give full names, or could use pseudonyms)	0	2	0
13.16	The Authority provides enquiry facilities (either by telephone and /or personal visits) beyond the hours of 9 - 5 Mondays to Fridays.	0	3	0
13.17	A corporate interpreter service is available	1	2	2
13.18	Where there is a high ethnic population the Tax & Benefits section provides its own interpreter service.	1	3	3
13.19	The Authority operates satellite centres where the public are able to have access to trained staff.	1	2	2
13.20	Satellite centres incorporate payment facilities.	1	2	2
13.21	Main CT bills and leaflets are accredited with the Crystal Mark.	0	3	0
14.0	Inspections			
14.1	A minimum of 3 inspections cycles per year are carried out	1	2	2
14.2	All properties, not monitored under building control regulations, are physically inspected where planning permission for structural alteration has been granted. (to be reviewed with VO)	1	2	2
14.3	Properties for which an application for a Class A exemption is received are physically inspected within 10 working days.	1	2	2
14.4	Where no further details are received Class C properties are inspected within one month of being informed about the vacation.	1	2	2
14.5	Inspectors are trained to give advice regarding all aspects of discounts and benefits, and should endeavour to maximise benefit and discount take up whenever possible.	1	2	2
14.6	Inspectors are issued with appropriate protective clothing and equipment (i.e. compliance with minimum health and safety requirements).	1	2	2
14.7	Inspection visit schedules are produced in walksort order by the system to minimise preparation, travel time and milage.	0	2	0

14.8	Where an internal inspection of a property is required an appointment is made beforehand with the customer	1	2	2
14.9	Inspection staff are backed by clerical support staff to ensure that they maximise their time spent on inspections.	1	2	2
14.10	The Authority operates formal performance review systems to monitor both the number and quality of visits made.	0	2	0
14.11	Inspectors wards/districts are rotated as part of the internal checking process.	0	2	0
14.12	Inspectors carry official identification at all times in order that customers can identify the person with whom they are dealing.	1	2	2
14.13	When inspecting a district inspections for CT and NNDR are merged together.	1	3	3
14.14	Inspectors carry out spot checks on cases with SPD.	0	3	0
15.0	Staff			
15.1	Monthly targets exist for quantity of work processed by individuals and teams	0	2	0
15.2	At least monthly performance monitoring exists for quantity of work processed, for individual staff and teams.	0	2	0
15.3	Staff are subject to annual performance/development appraisals.	1	2	2
15.4	Appraisals are reviewed periodically during the year to take stock on how things are progressing.	1	2	2
15.5	An annual training plan is in place for the section.	1	2	2
15.6	Staff are trained on a rolling basis and constantly kept up to date on any legislation or system changes.	1	2	2
15.7	Facilities are available for staff to study for a recognised qualification that is appropriate to their grade (e.g. IRRV).	1	1	1
15.8	Successful completion and attainment of a recognised qualification (e.g. IRRV) is rewarded with an incremental award.	1	1	1
15.9	All staff on the same scale have a generic job description to allow staff to be moved where required within the Revenues Department	1	1	1
15.10	There is managing absence/sickness policy in place.	1	2	2

15.11	Sickness is monitored and action is taken in accordance with the policy	1	2	2
15.12	All staff are required to complete a declaration that they will not amend details on their own or any colleagues account or any other account in which they have an interest.	0	2	0
15.13	All staff are subjected to Investor in People (or similar) accreditation.	0	3	0
15.14	All staff accounts are periodically checked.	0	1	0
15.15	Any arrangements to pay staff accounts have been approved by their line manager.	1	1	1
15.16	Team Briefings/meetings should take place at least monthly.	1	2	2
16.0	Quality			
16.1	On an ongoing basis quality checks are carried out on a minimum of 5% of work processed.	1	2	2
16.2	A sample of outgoing non-standard correspondence of 10% should be checked by a suitably experienced officer other than the originator.	1	2	2
16.3	5% of Bailiff visits should be checked ongoing by a suitably experienced officer & the results evaluated by that officer.	0	2	0
16.4	A sample of incoming telephone calls should be recorded and checked by suitably experienced officers & used for training purposes.	0	2	0
16.5	The section has been awarded ISO 9000	0	3	0
16.6	The section has been awarded Chartermark	0	3	0
16.7	The revenues division should have independent quality officers.	0	2	0
16.8	The section carries out continuous reviews of all processes	1	2	2
16.9	The section carries out continuous reviews of all documentation	1	2	2
17.0	Appeals (Under Section 16)			
17.1	The Authority supplies information to the Valuation Tribunal within 10 working days of request.	1	2	2

17.2	The Authority is represented at any appeal hearing by a suitably experienced officer.	1	2	2
18.0	Systems			
18.1	There is an SLA/contract with the service provider.	1	2	2
18.2	The SLA/contract specifies that the system is available for at least 98% of the time between 8am and 6pm every working day.	1	2	2
18.3	Minimum & maximum response times for the operation are set out.	1	2	2
18.4	Availability and response times are monitored by the user and reported monthly to the IT manager.	1	2	2
18.5	Immediate helpdesk support is available from the system supplier 100% of the time between 8am and 6pm every working day.	1	2	2
18.6	User training and/or guidance is provided by the supplier on any changes to the operation of the system.	1	2	2
18.7	A full test environment is available which is sufficient to allow testing to take place on a copy of the live system.	1	2	2
18.8	The SLA/contract allows for prompt development to the system to cater for any legislative changes.	1	2	2
18.9	There is a correspondence generator facility, which allows the user to set up standard letters and to produce them with personalised taxpayer's information.	1	2	2
	Interfaces exist with the following systems			
18.10	Cash daily	1	2	2
18.11	Benefits daily	1	2	2
18.12	Council rents system weekly	1	3	3
18.13	Financial Controls daily	1	2	2
18.14	Creditors weekly	1	3	3
18.15	The system allows users to customise the operation by means of parameter tables.	1	2	2
18.16	Selected reports can be viewed on line prior to being printed.	1	2	2
18.17	The system is secure from access by unauthorised users.	1	2	2

18.18	There is a formal written policy on the administration of system security, which specifies which officer can authorise the level of access for a specific user.	0	2	0
18.19	The access of an individual user can be restricted so that it is not possible for that user to update their own personal records.	0	2	0
18.20	An audit trail of the transaction entered by the user is maintained and can be produced on request.	1	2	2
18.21	The authority has a Document Management/Image system which is used to record incoming correspondence and is available to council tax staff.	0	2	0
18.22	The Document Management /Image system provides a facility to direct and re-direct incoming work.	0	2	0
18.23	The Document Management/Image system provides management information on performance and productivity.	0	2	0
19.00	e-Government			
19.1	Inspectors have access to information "on the road" through a remote computer link.	0	3	0
19.2	Inspectors are given information in an electronic format and information returned by them is also in electronic format and is uploaded to the council tax system.	0	3	0
19.3	In-house Bailiffs are given information in an electronic format and information returned by them is also in electronic format and is uploaded to the council tax system.	0	3	0
19.4	The authority has an autodial system to enable easier contact with customers.	0	3	0
19.5	Communications with external agencies are carried out electronically	1	3	3
19.6	All staff have access to email.	1	3	3
19.7	In internet site is provided that contains general information about CT.	1	3	3
19.8	Relevant internal information is held on an intranet.	1	3	3
19.9	On-line forms for changes of circumstances are available on the internet.	0	3	0
19.10	Selected staff have access to the internet.	1	3	3
19.11	Generic email addresses are available for customer enquiries.	1	3	3

19.12	Kiosks are provided in satalite centres.	0	3	0
19.13	Balance enquiries are available over the internet.	1	3	3
19.14	There is access to other authorities systems via the internet.	1	3	3
19.15	Home working facilities are available.	0	3	0
20.0	Data Protection			
20.1	The Authority has set a (annually reviewed) fee for the provision of personal information requested by a taxpayer under the provisions of the Act.	1	2	2
20.2	Revenues staff have received training on Data Protection.	1	2	2
20.3	Revenues staff have been given guideance notes on Data Protection.	1	2	2
	Total Score	128	461	303

211
questi
ons in
total

Less Not
Applicab
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3

Net
available
points

458

Points
Scored

303

%age
score

66.16%