

Council Tax Service Improvement Plan (Version 1.0)

APPENDIX 3

The Revenue and Benefit Team have scored the Council Tax Service against the Institute of Public Finance Best Practice model and have identified the following area where improvements can be made.

		Ranking	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	Comments
1.0	Compilation/Maintenance of the Valuation List					
1.3	Schedules are processed automatically	L				Not possible with existing system
1.7	The Council tax property database is annually matched with Business Rates records maintained by the Authority, and discrepancies investigated	L				
2.0	Billing					
2.1	The Billing Authority operates an incentive scheme for early lump sum payments	L				
2.5	Bulk issues of bills, which achieve the minimum level of penetration are passed to the Royal Mail in walksort order	H				
2.6	The Authority funds the cost of the statutory explanatory notes leaflet through advertising or sponsorship	L				
2.7	Proof of postage is obtained from the Royal Mail for the issue of all bills	H				
2.11	Refunds are paid by direct credit into bank accounts where bank details are known	M				
3.0	Payment Methods					
3.2	DD forms/information are issued with any other demand for payment (reminder/final/notice/summons)	H				
3.4	New DDs are processed automatically through AUDDIS	H				
3.5	DDs are amended/cancelled automatically through the use of ADDACS	H				
3.6	The Authority uses paperless DDs through AUDDIS	H				
3.7	Customers can pay by debit card over the counter	L				No counter services available
3.13	Customers can pay at the post office using a swipe card	M				
3.14	Customers can pay by PayPoint	M				
5.0	Reductions, Reliefs, Exemptions					
5.4	Entitlement to single person discount is reviewed annually	M				Exercise has not proved cost effective in the
6.0	Benefit System Links					

Council Tax Service Improvement Plan (Version 1.0)

APPENDIX 3

		Ranking	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	Comments
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	M				

Council Tax Service Improvement Plan (Version 1.0)

APPENDIX 3

		Ranking	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	Comments
7.0	Anti-poverty					
7.1	The Revenues division incorporates the corporate anti-poverty/social inclusion policy into service delivery.	M				
7.3	The Authority has a corporate debt recovery policy	H				
7.4	Revenues staff are trained on anti-poverty/social inclusion awareness issues	M				
7.6	Revenues staff liaise with and utilise the services of the Welfare Rights /Debt Counselling/Money Advice units, where appropriate	M				Important links with HBPS
8.0	Pre Liability Order Recovery					
8.1	Reminder notices are issued within 15 working days of the instalment becoming overdue	M				All recovery action is programmed into availability of court dates
8.2	A summons is issued within 15 working days of the first reminder if the account has not been brought up to date	M				All recovery action is programmed into availability of court dates
8.5	A remote computer link has been established for the use of staff attending Magistrates Court	L				
8.8	Employer details are recorded when making arrangements to pay after a summons has been issued	M				
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	H				
9.0	Post Liability Order Recovery					
9.2	The Authority prosecutes if the request for information notice is not returned	L				
9.5	Employers who fail to set up attachments are prosecuted	L				
9.6	The database is marked to show potentially violent cases and this information is made available before recovery visits are scheduled	M				
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)	L				Expected legislation will prevent this
10.7	At least quarterly monitoring of the costs and benefits of the bailiff operation is undertaken	M				

Council Tax Service Improvement Plan (Version 1.0)

APPENDIX 3

		Ranking	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	Comments
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	M				
10.14	Authorities have access to external bailiff's systems via a modem link in order to make enquiries	M				
10.15	Cases are transferred to external bailiffs electronically	M				
11.0 Committals						
11.2	The Authority applies for charging orders prior to committal if these are appropriate	L				
11.5	If no contact has been made committal summonses are issued within 20 working days of the warning letter	M				
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	M				
11.11	Committal case with warrants outstanding are "flagged" on the cash receipting system to ensure that payments made are appropriately notified	L				Not possible with existing system
12.0 Write Offs						
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	H				
12.7	Checks are made with other systems within the authority prior to debts being written off	H				
13.0 Customer Care						
13.6	The Customer Care policy is advertised on leaflets that go out with demand notices	H				
13.7	The Customer Care policy contains specific targets for council tax	H				
13.9	The Authority has implemented a customer forum to obtain the views of council tax payers	M				
13.15	Staff dealing with personal callers wear an identification badge (though this may not necessarily give full names, or could use pseudonyms)	H				
13.16	The Authority provides enquiry facilities (either by telephone and/or personal visits) beyond the hours of 9 - 5 Mondays to Fridays	L				

Council Tax Service Improvement Plan (Version 1.0)

APPENDIX 3

		Ranking	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	Comments
13.21	Main CT bills and leaflets are accredited with the Crystal Mark	M				

Council Tax Service Improvement Plan (Version 1.0)

APPENDIX 3

		Ranking	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	Comments
14.0	Inspections					
14.7	Inspection visit schedules are produced in walksort order by the system to minimise preparation, travel time and	L				
14.10	The Authority operates formal performance review systems to monitor both the number and quality of visits made	M				
14.11	Inspectors wards/districts are rotated as part of the internal checking process	L				Only one inspector used at present
14.14	Inspectors carry out spot checks on cases with SPD	M				Insufficient resources at present
15.0	Staff					
15.1	Monthly targets exist for quantity of work processed by individuals and teams	M				
15.2	At least monthly performance monitoring exists for quantity of work processed, for individual staff and teams	M				
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	H				
15.13	All staff are subjected to Investor in People (or similar) accreditation	M				Being processed
15.14	All staff accounts are periodically checked	H				
16.0	Quality					
16.3	5% of Bailiff visits should be checked ongoing by a suitably experienced officer & the results evaluated by that officer	L				
16.4	A sample of incoming telephone calls should be recorded and checked by suitably experienced officers & used for training purposes	L				No provision within telephone system at present
16.5	The section has been awarded ISO 9000	L				
16.6	The section has been awarded Chartermark	L				
16.7	The revenues division should have independent quality officers	L				
18.0	Systems					
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	H				System does not permit but see 15.12 (subject to audit)

Council Tax Service Improvement Plan (Version 1.0)

APPENDIX 3

		Ranking	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	Comments
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	H				
18.21	The authority has a Document Management/Image system which is used to record incoming correspondence and is available to council tax staff	L				Corporate issue
18.22	The Document Management /Image system provides a facility to direct and re-direct incoming work	L				Corporate issue
18.23	The Document Management/Image system provides management information on performance and productivity	L				Corporate issue
19.00 e-Government						
19.1	Inspectors have access to information "on the road" through a remote computer link	L				
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	L				
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	N/A				No in-house bailiffs
19.4	The authority has an autodial system to enable easier contact with customers	L				Corporate issue
19.9	On-line forms for changes of circumstances are available on the internet	H				Available from June 2003
19.12	Kiosks are provided in satalite centres	M				Funds avialable from HBPS
19.15	Home working facilities are available	L				Corporate issue