

Dear Mr Tyes

Policy on Collection of Council Tax Arrears

I apologise for the delay in getting back to you in relation to your request.

The reason for that delay has been my need to determine the time and resources required to provide the more detailed information that you have requested.

The manner in which Cambridge City Council carries out its duties in relation to the collection of Council Tax arrears are prescribed within the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992 Statutory Instrument 613 of 1992, as amended by subsequent legislation. The Council undertakes actions to recover unpaid Council Tax in accordance with these regulations.

These statutory regulations are supplemented by a range of local procedures designed to ensure that, when recovering arrears of Council Tax, the Authority is compliant with locally agreed processes and procedures.

As an example, the Authority operates what is known as an Anti-Poverty Strategy. This strategy was approved in 1988 and updated in 2002. There are two key principles, which have had particular importance in formulating the Council's approach to the collection of Local Taxes [**Council Tax & Business Rates, Residual Poll Tax**] and in the recovery of overpaid **Housing & Council Tax Benefit**.

- To maximise individual income levels through the provision of welfare rights information and advice and the prompt, sensitive and accurate administration of Housing and Council Tax Benefit.
- To collect outstanding debts and charges in as sensitive a manner as possible, to ensure that further hardship, distress or financial difficulties are not created.

The approach advocated by the City Council is one which seeks to strike a balance between the need to maximise income to the Council and the desire not to cause further hardship to the poorest within the community.

The Council's **Anti-Poverty Strategy** acknowledges that many individuals and whole households in Cambridge are living in poverty - some in absolute poverty and many more in relative poverty.

We also have other local policies that deal with such issues as timescales for issuing Council Tax reminders and summons, as well as those that provide guidance in relation to the imposition of attachment of earnings.

I have attached a copy our Anti-Poverty Strategy, an extract of the Statutory Instrument 1992 No 613 [The Council Tax (Administration & Enforcement) Regulations 1992], as well as a copy of the Guide to Bankruptcy.

These, along with a number of other policy and procedural documents, are used within our Service Area as references for us to carry out our functions.

Further to your request for details on:

How many people were in arrears of over £750, of these, how many have:

- Liability Orders
- Statutory Demands
- Bankruptcy Petitions (applied for by Council)
- Attachment of Earnings Orders
- Attachment of Benefits Orders and
- The breakdown between homeowners and tenants for each of the above
- What is the average amount owed by people you have made bankrupt for a) owner occupiers b) tenants?

This is a significant request in terms of additional workload for our staff to gather and compile this information.

I am of the view that gathering this additional information in the format you have requested will have resource and cost implications for the Authority. Therefore, before providing such a detailed return, I will require an undertaking from you that you will be willing to pay for this in advance, should the Authority seek to levy a charge for this detailed information.

The public notices in respect of all bankruptcy petitions and bankruptcy orders must, by law, be published in the London Gazette. This information is, therefore, in the public realm and available to you via the London Gazette should you require to view it. <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/>

John Frost

Head of Revenue & Benefit Services

Cambridge City Council

01223-457701

xxxx.xxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx