

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

Your request for information has now been considered and the Council's response to your questions is shown below.

You asked:

Please provide me with the following information

Does the council have a corporate debt strategy? If so, please provide a copy.

ANSWER

No, however the Council has a Fair Debt Collection Policy. Please see attached copy.

What is the council's complaints procedure for residents who have a grievance over a bailiff's actions, other than referring them to the bailiff company?

Residents can contact the Council with their complaint. This will be investigated under the Council's complaints procedure.

The Council's Complaints Procedure can be found at <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/council-and-democracy/comments-compliments-and-complaints/>

Does your equality strategy cover debt collection?

No, but equality matters are covered under the Fair Debt Collection Policy.

If no payment arrangement is made how long after sending the final reminder do you usually issue a liability order?

On average after 45 days.

How much do you usually charge for a liability order?

£67.50 summons costs are charged for arrears over £250.00 and £40.00 summons costs for arrears between £40.00 and £249.99. £0.00 for a liability order.

If no payment arrangement is made how long do you usually leave after issuing a liability order before passing the case to the bailiff?

Within 7 days.

Which bailiff firms do you use, and when were their contracts awarded?

Rossendales, Bristow, Sutor and Equita.

The contract runs for a period of four years from 1st November 2011, with an option to extend for a further two years.

24 Hour Bailiffs Limited are used for Distress Warrants for other debt.

Could you also please provide for the financial years 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13 the following information:

a. Number of accounts issued with final late payment reminders for

i. unpaid council tax

2010/11	- 56,751
2011/12	- 62,080
2012/13	- 59,909

ii. unpaid parking penalties

Pre Debt Letter

2010/11	- 7329
2011/12	- 6934
2012/13	- 6169

iii. any other debts

2010/11 -	1200 letters before claim
2011/12 -	1000 letters before claim
2012/13 -	1100 letters before claim

To give a precise answer would require a manual process as this information is not recorded in any one place.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for local government is set at £450. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending more than 18 hours in determining whether the department holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

This is therefore a Refusal Notice under section 17.1 of the Freedom of Information Act, because under the provisions of section 12.1 of the Act, the Council estimates that to comply with your request in its current form will exceed the appropriate limit.

You may wish to refine your request by narrowing its scope by being more specific about what information you particularly wish to obtain, including any dates or period of time relevant to the information required. We do have a duty to advise and assist you in refining your request under s16 of the Act so please don't hesitate to contact us if you need help in refining your request.

b. Number of liability orders issued for unpaid council tax

13,679 (2010/11)
15,949 (2011/12)
13,880 (2012/13)

c. Number of cases passed to bailiffs for:

i. unpaid council tax

2010/11 - 9,828
2011/12 - 9,291
2012/13 - 9,631

ii. unpaid parking penalties

2010/11 - 5487
2011/12 - 4492
2012/13 - 3941

iii. any other debts

4 cases on occasions during the period 2012/13.

d. Amount of unpaid council tax revenue collected by bailiffs

£1,457,600.79 (2010/11)
£1,411,471.42 (2011/12)
£1,271,900.99 (2012/13)

e. Council tax collection rate,

96.2% (2010/11)
96.4% (2011/12)
96.0% (2012/13)

f. Amount of unpaid parking penalties collected by bailiffs

19 Upheld 5 17/11/10 – 31/03/11
57 Upheld 23 01/04/11 – 31/03/12
71 Upheld 24 01/04/12 – 31/03/13
12 Upheld 3 01/04/13 – to date

g. Number of complaints received about the bailiffs used

2010/2011 - 1
2011/2012 - 7
2012/2013 - 18

Have you received a copy of the recent 'Council Tax: guidance to local councils on good practice in the collection of Council Tax arrears' from the Department for Communities and Local Government?

Yes

The legislation allows you to use the information supplied for your own personal use. Please be aware that any commercial or other use, for example publication, sale, or redistribution may be a breach of copyright under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 as amended unless you obtain the copyright holder's prior permission.

Not all the information that is supplied which is covered by copyright will be the Council's copyright, for example it may be the copyright of a government department or another Council. You should seek either the Council's consent or their consent as appropriate. The Council is willing to advise you of any such potential issues on request. In order to make a request to re-use the information please contact the Information Governance Manager using the details below.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request please write to:

Information Governance Manager
Information and Support
Leicester City Council
FREEPOST (LE985/33)
New Walk Centre
LEICESTER LE1 6ZG
e-mail: FOIA@leicester.gov.uk

Your request for internal review should be submitted to the above address within 40 (forty) working days of receipt by you of this response. Any such request received after this time will only be considered at the Council's absolute discretion.

You can also complain to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow SK9 5AF
Telephone: 01625 545 700
www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Please be aware that the Information Commissioner does not normally consider appeals or complaints until the internal appeals and complaints processes of the public authority which is answering the request have been exhausted. You are therefore advised to complain or appeal to the Information Governance Manager before contacting the Commissioner.