

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:

Could you confirm how much Leicester City Council have paid to the Leicester Magistrates' Court to hire a room to process council tax cases for the last three years.

No amounts have been paid for the hire of a room to process council tax cases at any time.

Does the amount cover the magistrates and the clerk of the Court?

N/A

If it does, I require a breakdown of the costs.

N/A

Furthermore, can you confirm the costs involved in council tax recovery for the last three years?

This breakdown is not held. Therefore, this part of the letter acts as a refusal notice under section 17.1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 because, in accordance with section 1.1 of the Act, this information is not held by Leicester City Council.

The Revenues & Benefits Service is responsible for payment for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction plus the billing, collection and enforcement of Council Tax and Business Rates.

Our budget for 2013/14 is made up as follows:

Employee Costs	£5,581,400
Running Costs	£1,343,400
Income (Grants etc.)	<u>£4,107,100</u>
Net Budget	£2,817,700

There is no specific budget or breakdown of actual costs attributed specifically to council tax recovery.

How much have you spent on envelopes, printing summonses! And staff time?

Breakdown of costs of envelopes and printing of summonses is not held and similarly staff time spent on recovery. Therefore, this part of the letter acts as a refusal notice under section 17.1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 because, in accordance with section 1.1 of the Act, this information is not held by Leicester City Council.

You also involve other businesses in the council tax game. How much do you pay to other agencies to regain council tax? Information for the last three years is required.

Assumption is you are referring to bailiff companies – we currently engage with two bailiff companies at nil cost. The names of the two companies are Bristow & Sutor and Rossendales.

Do you sell the alleged debt to these companies?

No

How much money Leicester City Council spends on obtaining money that they think is owed to them each year.

Please see details given above regarding our budget.

How many man hours are spent on recovery each year, again information for the last three years is required.

This information is not held. Therefore, this part of the letter acts as a refusal notice under section 17.1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 because, in accordance with section 1.1 of the Act, this information is not held by the Council.

How many council tax cases have been heard by a magistrate in the last three years?

Interpreted as the number of liability orders granted by the Court over the last three full years:

14,040 (2010/11), 15,628 (2011/12), 14,315 (2012/13) and 13,657 (2013/14 to date).

Number of physical appearances: 11 (2010/11), 24 (2011/12), 26 (2012/13) and 26 (2013/14 to date).

How many have been passed to a judge?

There has only been one full hearing.

What are the costs of hiring a judge to do your work? Information for the last three years is required.

No cost involved.

I require the total outlay made by Leicester City Council to recover council tax for the last three years.

Please see details given above regarding our budget.

I would also like to see the amount of money that Leicester City Council claims to have been outstanding for the last three years.

Our in-year outstanding Council Tax debt for 2013/14 to 4th October 2013 is £42.674m (£55.820m has been paid). The amount outstanding for prior years is £7.322m.

Over the last three years how many individuals have contacted the Revenues & Benefits Service in circumstances similar to my own? How many people have woken up to what you are doing?

None

Can you confirm where your authority to do what you do, that being to hire a court and print your own summonses comes from?

Billing, recovery and enforcement of Council Tax is covered by Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992.

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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: info.requests@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.