

Council Tax Arrears – Good Practice Protocol

Purpose of report

For information and agreement.

Summary

This report concerns updating the joint protocol between the LGA and the Citizens Advice Bureau on the collection of council tax arrears.

Recommendation

That Members agree the revised protocol attached at **Appendix A** and note that officers will continue to meet to reach an agreement on a broader protocol covering other local authority debts beyond council tax.

Action

LGA Officers to proceed as directed.

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Council Tax Arrears – Good Practice Protocol

Background

1. A good practice protocol on the collection of council tax arrears was agreed by the LGA and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in 2009.
2. Launched on 1 July 2009 at the LGA annual conference, the document has been in various Government documents as an example of protecting vulnerable consumers. The latest DCLG guidance on the collection endorses it as an example of good practice.
3. The protocol offers practical steps aimed at preventing people from getting into arrears in the first place and advises on procedures for ensuring that bailiffs act within existing law and guidelines.
4. The CAB have recently suggested to the LGA updating the document so that it makes reference to council tax support instead of council tax benefit. Apart from that the document is unchanged.
5. The suggested update is attached at **Appendix A**.
6. Members are recommended to agree the update and at the same time to note that discussions will continue to reach an agreement on a broader protocol covering the Panel in due course.

Financial Implications

7. This work will be contained within existing programme budgets.