ISSUES RAISED BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEES



Minutes of the Meeting of the FINANCE, RESOURCES AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: Thursday 4 July at 5.00pm

<u>PRESENT:</u>

<u>Councillor Blackmore - Chair</u> <u>Councillor Mrs. Middleton - Conservative Spokesperson</u> <u>Councillor Connelly - Labour Spokesperson</u>

Councillor Subedar

Councillor Gajjar

Councillor Coley

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1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were requested to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

No declarations were made.

11. COLLECTION OF INCOME 1 APRIL 2001 TO 31 MARCH 2002

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report providing the Committee with details of progress made on the collection of income due to the Council for the period 1 April 2001 to 31 March 2002.

The Committee was informed that the increases shown in council tax and rent arrears had been anticipated, and were caused in the main by the ongoing problems in housing benefits. These problems had meant that it had been impossible to establish the true debts of many benefit claimants and therefore impossible to pursue unpaid bills, resulting in a misleadingly high number of people being shown to be in arrears. The Committee noted that residents falling behind in payments of council tax and rent due to faults in the system would be treated sympathetically. It was noted that the situation was now progressing, and that the Chief Finance Officer was confident that the situation would be remedied by September as a result of this. The Council's position in the league table in terms of its collection of income should soon increase.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet be informed of the Committee's concern regarding the situation,
- that Cabinet be asked why the Council's problems seem to be deeper and more prolonged than other similar authorities and;
- (3) that the Committee seek reassurance from Cabinet that a similar problem will not occur in the future.