



Leicester
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Held: THURSDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2010 at 5.30pm

P.R.E.S.E.N.T.

Councillor Grant – Chair
Councillor Bhavsar – Vice-Chair

Councillor Aqbany
Councillor Clair
Councillor Newcombe

Councillor Bajaj
Councillor Newcombe
Councillor Suleman

Also In Attendance

Councillor Wann

Cabinet Member for Culture

52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Scuplak.

62. REVIEW OF FAIR DEBT COLLECTION POLICY AND DISCRETIONARY HOUSING POLICY FUNDING REVIEW

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report that updated and simplified the provisions of the Fair Debt Collection Policy and asked the Board to consider a policy in respect of discretionary housing payment.

An Officer from Revenue and Benefits introduced the report and stated that the revised approach had been undertaken following recent government guidelines and would offer a more flexible approach in relation to debt collection.

The report was generally welcomed by the Board. Members heard that the collections covered many payments owed to the City Council including parking fines, Council Tax arrears and rent arrears.

Members heard that the point at which the policy is triggered is when the Council were informed that an individual was experiencing problems in paying their debts.

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Following a query that related to how the scheme was publicised, the Board were informed that it was intended to increase public awareness of the Fair Debt Policy, and that people who experienced payment problems would be made fully aware of the policy and the expectations from themselves.

A question was asked in relation to the point at which the Council instructed bailiffs to collect debts. Officers stated that prior to instructing a bailiff to visit a property, there would be extensive attempts to make contact with the customer. Customers received reminders of outstanding debts by letter before receiving a court summons. It was further stated that on the first visit, a bailiff would make a visit without bringing a van.

A Member of the Board stated that he was aware of cases where bailiffs were exercising misconduct. The officers present agreed to speak with the Member concerned privately, and reminded the Board that bailiffs should ordinarily make visits to properties in daytime hours. It was also agreed by officers to arrange a meeting with appropriate partners to discuss the general conduct of bailiffs when collecting debts, and that those attending this meeting would include Councillors.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and the recommendations contained within it be endorsed.