



Oadby & Wigston Borough Council Collection Rates Improvement Plan 2022/23

Final Review – March 2024

Update on Collection Rate Improvement Plan 2022/23

1. Processes

	Activity	Date	Responsibility	Impact	Progress	Update comments March 2024
P1	Review and improve payment on account processes/provisions.	Mar 23	Senior Council Tax Officer	Ability to take payments immediately improves collection rates. Customer contact and complaints reduce because payments can be arranged at the first point of contact regardless of the status of the property.	Complete	Process has been reviewed and additional training delivered in November 2023.
P2	Review and improve procedures for holding bills and recovery, including a review of all currently held accounts.	Oct 22	Senior Recovery Officer	Holds are kept to a minimum increasing the speed of collection. Faster progression through debt recovery stages improves collection rates.	Complete	Procedure reviewed and task included on the workplan to regularly check held accounts.
P3	Review and improve procedures for tracing customers that leave no forwarding address.	Dec 22	Senior Recovery Officer	Collection costs increases as enforcement agent are used. Enforcement agent fees are less likely to be incurred if customers are identified through routine tracing at the earliest opportunity. Routine tracing at the earliest opportunity increases the likelihood of successful recovery without the need for paying external enforcement agents.	Complete	Tracing procedure are now in place.

OWBC Collection Rate Improvement Plan 2022-23

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P4	Scheduling and delivery of quarterly small balance reviews.	Oct 22	Senior Recovery Officer	<p>Collection increases through early contact on small balances when the liability is fresh in the mind.</p> <p>Customer contact reduces as more pay immediately without wanting to discuss the debt first.</p>	Complete	This is now included on the Recovery Teams workplan.
P5	Review and update the forms and letters used in Revenues and Benefits for consistency, efficiency, and best use of digital channels.	Dec 23	Senior Revenues and Benefits Officer	<p>Efficient data gathering allows fast and accurate billing, which leads to increased collection and more efficient recovery.</p> <p>Forms will capture all information first time reducing time spent on repeat contact, resulting in a better service for customers and more efficient handling of accounts.</p>	Ongoing	Carried forward onto the new Collection Rate Improvement plan as an ongoing activity.
P6	Review and improve the processes for high value debtors in Council Tax and Business Rates, including stronger links with the Economic Regeneration team.	Dec 22	Senior Recovery Officer	Recovery increases with a streamlined process and a defined schedule of works allowing faster conclusion of cases, whether through arrangement or execution of further action.	Complete	Review undertaken and links with the Economic Regeneration Team have been forged.

2. Inspections

	Activity	Date	Responsibility	Impact	Progress	Update comments March 2024
I1	Implement a risk-based visiting schedule	Dec 22	Senior Business Rates Officer	Collection increases as OWBC becomes more quickly aware of changes to liable parties allowing faster billing and collection. Rates avoidance becomes more difficult.	Reviewed and Revised	Following a review, this has not been carried forward onto the new plan. Alternative rates avoidance activities could be more effective.
I2	Implement mandatory visits for new businesses, owners and leaseholders, including liaison with the Economic Regeneration team to utilise and strengthen their relationship with business owners.	Jun 23	Senior Business Rates Officer	OWBC can more quickly establish the identity of the liable party for business rates, resulting in faster and more efficient collection.	Reviewed and Revised	Following a review and taking into consideration our limited resources, this has not been carried forward onto the new plan. Joint working and regular meetings have been established with the Economic Regeneration Team.
I3(a)	Reintroduce reviews for mandatory and discretionary charitable exemptions, Small Business Rates Relief, and empty properties for business rates.	Mar 23	Senior Business Rates Officer	An accurate picture of liability and liable parties enables efficient billing and increases collection and recovery.	Ongoing	Work is continuing to review the different reliefs.
I3(b)	The discretionary relief policy will be checked and updated	Mar 23	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Up to date policy for staff and customers to follow	Under review	The Policy is under review.

OWBC Collection Rate Improvement Plan 2022-23

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14	Reintroduce completion notices for residential properties.	Mar 23	Senior Council Tax Officer	<p>Collection rates increase as builders are liable from the point the completion notice is served.</p> <p>Increased collection is either directly from the builders or from tenants/owners being found and becoming liable more quickly to reduce the builders' liability.</p>	Complete	Established links with the Leicestershire Building Control Partnership. We are now being proactive in recognising stages of the builds so completion notices could be issued.

3. Systems

	Activity	Date	Responsible	Impact	Progress	Update comments March 2024
S1(a)	Review Academy usage to ensure best use is being made of the system including consideration of previously unused elements.	Mar 23	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Streamlined processes and account insights improve collection and recovery through more efficient use of time and data.	Complete	System review has been completed.
S1(b)	Implement development fund modules monthly to maximise system functionality.	Dec 23	Senior Revenues and Benefits Officer	Streamlined processes and account insights improve collection and recovery through more efficient use of time and data.	Reviewed and revised	Following a review, this has not been carried forward onto the new plan due to costs and resources limitations.
S2	Engage a third party to deliver the outgoing post for the department.		Revenues and Benefits Manager	Collection and recovery increase as officers can focus on their customers and reports.	Complete	New provider CFH appointed.
S3	Procure and deliver Revs and Bens workflow system	Mar 24	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Collection and recovery increase as work management is taken care of by the system. Accurate management information at the touch of a button allows performance management, demand profiling, and instant reprioritisation when necessary.	Reviewed and revised	Alternative options are currently being considered with systems already available within the Council.
S4	Review and evaluation of existing systems for suitability and best practice through visits to other authorities and system health checks with software providers.	Mar 23	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Streamlined processes improve collection and recovery through more efficient use of time.	Ongoing	Reviews ongoing with Service Transformation