



# **Oadby & Wigston Borough Council Collection Rates Improvement Plan March 2024**

**Developed, March 2024**

## New Collection Rate Improvement Plan March 2024

### 1. Improve the Council Tax Collection Rate

	Activity	Date	Measurement	Responsibility	Impact	Progress	Update comments March 2024
1.1	Review and update the forms and letters used in Revenues for consistency, efficiency and best use of digital channels.	Ongoing	Increased collection rates and customer satisfaction.	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Efficient data gathering allows fast and accurate billing, which leads to increased collection and more efficient recovery.  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.	Ongoing	Work has started to review letter templates and update forms. The Severe Mental Impairment and Disabled Band Reductions forms have already been updated.
1.2	Review different schemes of Local Council Tax Support to see how this could affect collection rates.	September 24	Reduction in the amount of CTS assessments resulting from Universal Credit changes. Increase in collection rates.	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Reduces the frequency of amendments to Council Tax bills for our customers. Improves collection rate.	Ongoing	Ongoing discussions with other Leicestershire authorities about a banded scheme.
1.3	Implement a new method for identifying missing or altered properties.	March 2024	Increase number of properties in ratings lists.	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Identifying rateable properties or adjusting current ratings increases our income and ensures our records are accurate.	On target	Through sourced funding and working with our Enforcement Agents work has started in this area.

OWBC Collection Rate Improvement Plan 2024/25

	Activity	Date	Measurement	Responsibility	Impact	Progress	Update comments March 2024
1.4	Additional payment date added for Direct Debit customers – 25 <sup>th</sup> month	February 2024	Increase DD uptake.	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Increasing the direct debit dates gives customers more flexibility to be able to pay later in the month.	Complete	Annual bills amended to include the 25 <sup>th</sup> month DD to increase up take.
1.5	Review and improve our use of the Academy system by setting up the 'tasks' module.	September 2024	Fewer reports needing to be manually created.	Senior Revenues and Benefits Officer	Assess volumes of work outstanding from reports and reviews. Allows easier allocation of tasks and monitoring.	Work yet to begin	Work to start after end of year process has been completed.
1.6	Utilise the Money Advisor Network to provide free debt advice referrals to customers.	April 2024	Monitor the volume of customers being referred for money advice on a monthly basis.	Revenues and Benefits Manager and Financial Inclusion Officer	Understanding our customers' journey into debt and offering advice allows customers to priorities debts like Council Tax which increases collection rates.	On target	Discussions held with Money Advisor Network and the Cost of Living Working Group. SLT approval received rollout plan being created
1.7	Engage with local agents e.g. Age UK and Citizens Advice Bureau to further understand what local support is available for our customers.	Ongoing	Regular meetings with local service providers and partners to build a strong working relationship.	Revenues and Benefits Manager and Financial Inclusion Officer	Customers feel supported and can access help through their local council.	Ongoing	Schedule initial meeting with local partners after end of year process has been completed.
1.8	Review the process and letters sent following failed direct debit payments.	June 2024	Increase in collection rates.	Revenues and Benefits Manager and Senior Council Tax Officer	Consistency with our process and clear messaging for customers will increase collection of unpaid instalments.	Ongoing	A review of the direct debit process has been completed. The next stage is to review how we respond to failed direct debit instalments.

**2. Improve Business Rates Collection rates**

	Activity	Date	Measurement	Responsibility	Impact	Progress	Update comments March 2024
2.1	Additional payment date added for Direct Debit customers – 25 <sup>th</sup> month	February 2024	Monitor the volume of uptake for the 25 <sup>th</sup> Month DD.	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Increasing the direct debit dates gives customers more flexibility to be able to pay later in the month.	Complete	Annual bills amended to include the 25 <sup>th</sup> month DD to encourage take up.
2.2	Review and update the Ratings letters and forms for consistency, efficiency and best use of digital channels.	February 2025	Measure volume of online forms being received and reduction in call volumes.	Senior Business Rates Officer	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.	Ongoing	Website updates are already underway and online forms to be developed.
2.3	Review the Discretionary Relief Policy to ascertain any changes needed.	March 2024	Review undertaken and decision taken as to whether a revised policy is needed.	Senior Business Rates Officer	Up to date policy for staff and customers to follow	On target	Policy being reviewed by the Senior Business Rates Officer.
2.4	Increase Inspections and the issue of completion notices.	March 2025	Number of inspections and completions notices increased by 10%	Senior Business Rates Officer	Reduces risk of rates avoidance and allows accurate billing and collection.	Ongoing	Work is ongoing to make improvements to our Visiting arrangements.

### 3. Improve Housing Benefit Overpayment rates

	Activity	Date	Measurement	Responsible	Impact	Progress	Update comments March 2024
3.1	Housing Benefit overpayment arrangements to be collected by DD, this is currently not an option available to customers.	December 2024	Measure the uptake of this method and monitor improvements to the recovery of HBOP's.	Senior Recovery Officer	Increased recovery of Housing Benefit Overpayments.	On target	Initial contact with the Finance and IT Teams made.
3.2	Implement an online arrangement offer form for customer to use.	June 2024	Reduction in the volume of calls. Increased arrangements.	Senior Recovery Officer and Financial Inclusion Officer	Assist customers to make an online payment arrangement offer without having to contact us by phone.	On target	Discussions about how this should look and work are ongoing.
3.3	Explore other contact methods for payment reminders to increase proactive customer contacts.	September 2024	Increase collection rates of Housing Benefit overpayment recovery.	Senior Recovery Officer	Customers reminded of missed or late payments through channels which are tailored to them.	On target	Commenced with calling customers and will explore text messaging and email reminders.