

Audit Committee

23 Nov 2021



Report of: Director of Finance

Title: Corporate Debt Management Policy

Ward: City Wide

Officer Presenting Report: Kevin Smith (Operations Manager Revenues)

Recommendations:

1. That Audit Committee note the draft corporate debt management policy and provide comments for consideration by Cabinet for its meeting on 18 January 2022.

Summary:

1. The attached draft corporate debt management policy sets out the framework to be followed by the Council when undertaking collection activity. It recognises the financial impact suffered by many citizens as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and seeks to enhance the ethical work already commenced in the Revenues service and expands to other areas of debt management within the Council.

Significant Issues:

1. Increased focus on early engagement, communication and local outreach work that will dovetail with the work of third sector advice agencies to deliver an improved experience for the citizen, assisting them to plan their finances and thereby increasing available funds for payment of debt whilst helping to break the circle of debt.



Policy

Not applicable

Consultation

a. Internal

Executive and Service Directors, Deputy Mayor - City Economy, Finance and Performance and Cabinet Member for Housing Delivery and Homes

b. External

None

Background and Context

Bristol ranked 82 out of 317 local authorities in the Indices of Deprivation 2019 dataset, with 1 being the most and 317 the least deprived (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019).

The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the mental and financial wellbeing of citizens (Mental Health Foundation, 2020). The Council recognises that it has a responsibility to minimise the impact of debt and collection activity on its citizens and this draft policy looks to continue and expand the work which has already commenced in the Revenues service.

Other Options Considered

Not applicable

Risk Assessment

Not necessary for this report

Public Sector Equality Duties

Not necessary for this report

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

None arising from this report

Financial

None arising from this report.

Land

Not applicable

Personnel

Not Applicable

Appendices:

Draft Corporate Debt Management Policy

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None

References

Mental Health Foundation. (2020). *The COVID-19 pandemic, financial inequality and mental health*. Retrieved from Mental Health Foundation: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/coronavirus-mental-health-pandemic/covid-19-inequality-briefing>

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. (2019). *Indices of Deprivation*. London: Great Britain.