

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	8 March 2012
Subject:	Scrutiny Review – Debt Recovery Process – Response
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Julie Alderson, Interim Corporate Director Resources
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Bill Stephenson, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance & Business Transformation
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Response

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides a draft response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny review, for consideration and endorsement by Cabinet.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to endorse the responses recommended by officers.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To provide an appropriate response to the Scrutiny recommendations and to improve the effectiveness of the handling of exceptional cases.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

Cabinet received the report from Overview and Scrutiny Committee following their review of how the recovery process works in relation to vulnerable debtors and their examination of 3 key case studies.

The recommendations of the review and their implementation are aimed at improving the way our vulnerable debtors are dealt with and at ensuring early bespoke action occurs to stop recovery action escalating. Additionally it would bring more of a balance between safeguarding the council's income and safeguarding the wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents.

Some of the recommendations are shown as requiring further consideration and discussion to identify specific actions to implement them. These will be discussed as appropriate with relevant Portfolio Holders, Corporate Directors and their teams and Scrutiny leads to agree ways forward.

Options considered

Not applicable.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Where additional resource is involved in implementing recommendations this will be contained within existing provision.

Performance Issues

The recommendations of the review and their implementation are aimed at securing improved income collection whilst safeguarding the well being of our vulnerable residents. Introducing more sophistication into income collection should improve collection performance whilst reducing complaints.

Environmental Impact

None.

Risk Management Implications

None.

Equalities implications

In performing its role as local authority the council is required to have due regard to the public sector equality duty, which is a continuing duty. It is recognised that debt collection has implications for everyone who pays monies to the council, but that it has the potential to affect some sections of the community more than others, including those with low incomes, mental health problems or those that simply do not understand English or are confused by the process. If the recommendations of this report are accepted

for action then further consideration of the equality implications will be undertaken where appropriate in respect of particular proposed actions."

Corporate Priorities

The Scrutiny review and the response to it aim to enhance reporting on and monitoring of the delivery of all Council Priorities.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:	Jenny Hydari	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	17 February 2012		
Name:	Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	17 February 2012		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name:	Martin Randall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date:	17 February 2012		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name:	John Edwards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date:	21 February 2012		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Fern Silverio – Divisional Director, Collections & Housing Benefits. Tel 020 8736 6818

Background Papers:

Scrutiny review report presented to Cabinet 13 December 2011 available

Appendix 1

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

[Call-in applies]