

CO-OPERATIVE REVIEW PROJECT PLAN

COUNCIL TAX (ATTACHMENT OF EARNINGS)



Background	
Chair:	Councillor James
Lead Officer:	Giles Perritt (Head of Policy, Performance and Partnerships)
Democratic Support Officer:	Helen Wright
Membership:	Councillor James, Chair. Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair. Councillors Bowyer, Casey and Tuffin.
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance)
Date review approved by the Co-operative Scrutiny Board:	7 August 2013
Summary of subject to be reviewed:	A review is required to assess the financial impact on people in employment and those receiving welfare benefits of going into debt in order to pay Council Tax arrears and the issuing of a Council Tax Attachment of Earnings via a Magistrates' Liability Order; the review will also consider the financial impact on the Council.
Reason(s) and rationale for the review:	This issue has been identified as an area of concern for residents and has also received local and national media coverage with the introduction of Welfare Reform in April 2013.
Objectives of the review:	To identify the impact on residents and the Council; To analyse the reasons why people are going into arrears (was this due to poor financial management); To identify the support that the Council provides and also the voluntary sector; To have a better understanding of the process.
What will the review look at?	The review will look at the - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current process adopted by the Council for Council Tax arrears for people in employment and those receiving welfare benefits including the Attachment of Earnings; • financial impact of residents going into debt and the impact on the Council's budget; • support and advice provided by Plymouth City Council and the

	voluntary sector.
Which areas will be excluded from the review?	The broader impact of welfare reform including the implementation of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit changes.
What City and Council Priorities does the review relate to:	The review relates to the following city and council priorities – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring Plymouth • Confident Plymouth
Identify links to other Council policies, projects or strategies:	Council Tax billing and collection procedures.
Who will benefit from the review:	Residents, Council, Councillors and partners.

Methodology

The method and approach of the review:	It is proposed that one meeting will be required in order to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review current procedures • talk to witnesses • identify areas for improvement
Witnesses and experts:	Witnesses will include – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax Service Manager • Court Officer • Advice Plymouth •
Co-opted representatives:	Co-opted representative(s) will not be required to attend this review.
Documents and/or reports for analysis e.g. internal/external reports or legislation):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government guidance and legislation • Council's policy/procedures • Financial information
Site visits:	There will be no requirement to hold site visits.
Consultations/Research:	No additional research will be required for this review.
Publicity:	This meeting will be open to members of the public and press to attend.
Evaluation method	Update(s) will be provided to the Cooperative Scrutiny Board.
Resource Requirements:	There are no additional resources required for this review.
Barriers and Risks:	No barriers or risks have been identified in relation to this review.

Timetable

Activity	Timescale / Date(s)	Intended Outcome(s)
Meeting 1:	15 November 2013	To hold the meeting, evaluate the evidence provided and formulate recommendations.
Meeting 2:	n/a	
Meeting 3:	n/a	
Meeting 4:	n/a	
Draft report:	Late November/ early December 2013	
Meeting 5 (approve report):	December 2013	
Submit report to the Co-operative Scrutiny Board Meeting:		
Submit to Cabinet Meeting:		
Submit to other bodies/organisations:		
Scrutiny Panel to evaluate and track the outcomes of the Co-operative Review:		