



Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 0615113
Date 19 June 2015

Private Bailiffs

Request and response in 'blue':

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we would like to request the following information.

- 1) The number of times between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2015, or the nearest available twelve month period, that private bailiffs have been instructed to enforce debts to the local authority relating to each of the following;
 - a. Council Tax - 8158 cases
 - b. Parking - 2214.
 - c. Housing Benefit overpayments - Nil
 - d. Business Rates - 954 cases
 - e. Commercial Rents - Nil
 - f. Any other debt types, including any other overpayments. One case

By "private bailiffs" we mean those who are self-employed or who work for private companies, including as high court enforcement officers. Please include cases where local authority employees have visited a property to execute a warrant. One

- 2) The total amount of money spent between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2015, or the nearest available twelve month period, by the local authority on instructing private bailiffs to enforce debts owed to the local authority. Please include cases where local authority employees have visited a property to execute a warrant.
 - £72.00 in respect of 'any other debts'
 - No charges are payable to enforcement agents under the Council's contract in respect of council tax and business rates debts.
 - Parking Services do not pay Enforcement Agents to recover outstanding Penalty Charge Notice debts, Enforcement Agency costs/fees are charged direct to the debtors.
- 3) The number of
 - a. Residential properties = 107,694
 - b. Business properties = 8,300that fall within this local authority area.

We would also like to add that in response to Q1(f) - *any other debt types* and Q2 - *The total amount of money spent between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2015, or the nearest available twelve month period, by the local authority on instructing private bailiffs to enforce debts owed to the local authority*, we can confirm that the Council holds information falling within the description specified in your request. However, Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 allows a public authority to refuse a request if the cost of providing the information to the applicant would exceed the 'appropriate limit' as defined by the Freedom of Information.

The Regulations provide that the appropriate limit to be applied to requests received by local authorities is £450 (equivalent to 18 hours of work). In estimating the cost of complying with a request for information, an authority can only take into account any reasonable costs incurred in:

- (a) Determining whether it holds the information,*
- (b) Locating the information, or a document which may contain the information,*
- (c) Retrieving the information, or a document which may contain the information,*
- and*
- (d) Extracting the information from a document containing it.*

For the purposes of the estimate the costs of performing these activities should be estimated at a rate of £25 per hour.

The information appertaining to this information is not separately identifiable in our ledger. To clarify further, this type of expenditure does not have a specific code or other identifier on our systems in which we can conduct a search. In order to determine this information, we would need to contact each service area, ask them to identify each incidence of this type of action, determine which companies have been contracted to enforce bailiff action, retrieve and extract the information from each payment type in order to comply with the request. This would be a manual exercise and as such we believe that the aggregated time it would take to collate the information would be in excess of 18 hours (equivalent to a notional cost of £450).