

PAPERLESS DIRECT DEBIT
(Report by the Head of Revenue Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council wishes to extend its Direct Debit operations, and to introduce Paperless Direct Debit for Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates. The Direct Debit rules require that the Council's application to be an Originator of Paperless Direct Debit instructions is supported by a certified copy of the Cabinet report and minutes that approve this facility.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council already operates Direct Debit services using forms that must be sent to the customer, returned to the Council for entry on to the computer system, and then sent on to the bank to be held on their records.
- 2.2 Paperless Direct Debit allows the whole transaction to be conducted over the phone with the customer and by electronic transfer of data with the bank. The service is cheaper and more efficient using these methods.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Expenditure Item	£
Software	500
BACS fees	400
Conversion fees	900
Total	1,800

There is no specific budget for this expenditure, but the costs can be met from existing budgets. There will be a minimal saving on the postage budget and opportunity cost savings in the time taken to administer Direct Debit requests from customers.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is therefore

RECOMMENDED

that the Application to be an Originator of Paperless Direct Debit instructions be approved.

Items for consideration	Comment or paragraph no.
Disability Discrimination Act	This is a commercial transaction between the Council and BACS. There are no direct DDA issues, however, telephone services within the local taxation department do not include a facility to handle calls from deaf customers.
Racial issues	This is a commercial transaction between the Council and BACS. There are no direct racial issues. Telephone services within the local taxation department do include a facility to handle calls from customers whose first language is not English.
Social Inclusion issues	This is a commercial transaction between the Council and BACS. There are no direct Social Inclusion issues. The issue of access to bank accounts for some members of the community is a larger issue, and cannot be tackled here.
Legal implications	New BACS agreement required. DO will sign when we have Cabinet approval
S17 mainstreaming – community safety	This is a commercial transaction between the Council and BACS. There are no Community Safety issues. Staff will follow BACS procedures when setting up PDD's, and it's unlikely that we will be more susceptible to fraud using this method.
Financial implications	Fairly small set up costs, met from existing budgets. In the medium term, there will be economies due to faster service and reduced postage (no need to send everything on to the banks)
Property implications	None
IT/IM issues	IT are involved in the procurement of the new software, and will take care of installation / housekeeping
Risk	This is an opportunity rather than a risk. Telephone direct debit will be quicker and cheaper. Possible risk of failure of software – this would only delay implementation. Software is up and running elsewhere.
Customer First	An excellent opportunity for CF. Contact centre and Customer Service Centre would both easily be able to handle paperless DD enquiries. Could also be rolled out to other departments in due course.