



Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee

Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

15 April 2024

Dear Michael,

Response to the Committee's Report on Council Tax Collection

I write in relation to the Government's response¹ to the Committee's Report on *Council Tax Collection*, published in December 2023.²

We are pleased that the Government has accepted a number of our recommendations, including the commitment to start collecting the necessary data in preparation for the Enforcement Conduct Board (ECB) review; reviewing the memorandum of understanding between the HMRC and DWP and rolling out the Digital Economy Act pilots more widely.

However, we seek further clarification on some of the issues raised by the Report which we do not feel have been fully addressed. As such, please could you write back to the Committee on the following points:

1. The Government said it would write to councils on the two following matters in response to the Committee's recommendations:
 - a. To stress that councils have the discretion to provide a more flexible timeline than those set out in regulations, before requiring repayment of the full unpaid balance, and to encourage councils to offer an affordable repayment plan.³
 - b. To encourage councils to use enforcement firms who are accredited, prior to the review of the ECB.⁴

Please could you provide the Committee with a timeline of when the two below pieces of correspondence will be circulated to councils?

2. The Government said in its response to our recommendation on allowing for virtual applications as part of the process of obtaining a liability order, that virtual

¹ GOV.UK, [Government response to the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee report on Council Tax Collection](#), CP 1018

² Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, Second Report of Session 2023-24, [Council Tax Collection](#), HC 57

³ [Government response](#), "The full balance becoming payable", p.5

⁴ [Ibid.](#), "Enforcement Conduct Board", p.8



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proceedings are already lawful in magistrates' courts for civil proceedings.⁵ The Committee is therefore interested in finding out how common virtual proceedings are in practice. If they are uncommon, it suggests that more could be done to enable or encourage virtual proceedings, to help address the often inefficient process of obtaining a liability order which we identified in our Report.⁶

As such, please could you confirm whether the Government has any data it can share on how common virtual proceedings are in courts dealing with liability order applications, compared to in-person proceedings?

3. The Government said it will write to us once it has determined whether the role of permanent Chair of Oflog meets the criteria for pre-appointment scrutiny.⁷ **When does the Government plan on completing this determination, and writing to the Committee accordingly?**

I would be grateful if you could write to the Committee with responses to the above questions by Friday 3 May 2024.

Best wishes,

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee

⁵ [Government response](#), "Liability orders", p.6

⁶ [Council Tax Collection](#), para 21.

⁷ [Ibid.](#), "Office for Local Government", p.12