

RECORD OF OFFICER DECISION

Decision title:	Award of contract for debt enforcement activity
Date of decision:	21 May 2025
Decision maker:	Director for Finance (S151 Officer)
Authority for delegated decision:	It is a council function to recover debt collection and enforcement arrangements for Council Tax/NNDR. Line 116 of the Corporate services Scheme of delegation refers and sets out the authority for the chief finance/S151 officer to take this decision. It is also set out in the Financial Procedure Rules and approved Debt Recovery Policy.
Ward:	All Wards
Consultation:	Cabinet Member for Finance
Decision made:	To award the contract for enforcement agency services (Revenues & Benefits) to Bristow & Sutor for a period of up to 5 years from 11 June 2025
Reasons for decision:	<p>Herefordshire council bills approximately 90,500 dwellings for council tax and approximately 8,400 businesses for business rates. When payment is overdue the council is committed to using the most effective debt recovery methods available whilst ensuring that all debtors, taxpayers and ratepayers are treated fairly, appropriate support is identified, debtor circumstances are taken into consideration and any action that is taken is fair and open.</p> <p>The continued use of debt enforcement agency services, following the exhaustion of all other debt collection opportunities and where considered appropriate, is recommended to ensure the council continues to effectively collect monies owed. This is because the council has both a legal duty and a responsibility to its citizens to ensure that income due is paid.</p> <p>The council uses debt enforcement agencies to collect overdue debtor balances in line with the council's debt recovery policy: Debt Recovery Policy 2022-2026</p> <p>Bristow & Sutor have been delivering this service effectively to the council since 2019 and are the only enforcement agents to submit a tender via the YPO framework when a re-procurement exercise was completed. Award of this contract will ensure continuity of service and collection activity that is in progress.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	There is a risk that income due to the council may not be collected without appropriate and timely enforcement activity in place. This contract mitigates the risk of non-collection and debt write offs.
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	To not award the debt enforcement contract. This is not recommended as it would mean that debt recovery action could not be completed on overdue balances resulting in reduced collection rates and increases in debt write offs. This would have a direct impact on the council's overall budget and create an inequality between those debtors that pay and those that do not. Councils can

	<p>utilise court powers to recover income and to not do so would effectively render the council powerless to collect overdue debt.</p> <p>The council could pursue and recover debt using its own resources without contracting a third party. This is not recommended due to the cost of carrying out such activities associated with debt collection, including the ability to recover monies from debtors living outside the county.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed: Rachael Sanders
Date: 21 May 2025