

Council Report

Ward(s) affected: n/a

Report of Director of Resources

Author: John Armstrong, Democratic Services and Elections Manager

Tel: 01483 444102

Email: john.armstrong@guildford.gov.uk

Date: 28 July 2020

## **Notice of Motion dated 10 July 2020: Revised Collection of Council Tax Arrears Good Practice Protocol**

### **Executive Summary**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, Councillor Angela Gunning to propose, and Councillor James Walsh to second, the following motion:

“At a time of increasing financial pressure and rising unemployment, it is important that safeguards are in place to protect and support residents facing the possibility of falling into debt.

The inability to pay council tax is something that can affect us all: from residents dealing with the stress and uncertainty of not being able to pay their bills, to councils increasingly dependent on local income following a decade of central government cuts.

The Citizens’ Advice Bureau has worked with the Local Government Association to create a “Revised Collection of Council Tax Arrears Good Practice Protocol” which calls for councils to improve existing practices for offering advice, support and payment options for residents facing difficulties in paying their council tax. A copy is attached as **Appendix 1**.

While Guildford Borough Council has a good record in the collection of council tax arrears, the Labour Group believes that adopting the protocol will strengthen the process by linking debt advice to repayment schemes and enabling early intervention before a crisis point is reached. This will benefit both our residents and the council, which is under increasing pressure to collect as much income as possible to support local services.

To date, 61 councils of all political stripes across England have already adopted the policy and the Labour Group calls on Guildford Borough Council to adopt the protocol as soon as is practical.

This Council resolves to request the Executive:

(1) to adopt the CAB/LGA “Revised Collection of Council Tax Arrears Good Practice

Protocol” as set out in **Appendix 1**; and

- (2) to authorise the Director of Resources to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the impact of the protocol on council tax collection rates and customer satisfaction one year following its implementation”.

**Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication? No**