

**Executive Scrutiny Committee**  
**“Reporting In” Review – Debt Write Offs**

**Outline Scope**

<b>Scrutiny Chair (Project Director):</b> Councillor David Harrington
<b>Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager):</b> Judy Trainer
<b>Departmental Link Officer:</b> Garry Cummings
<b>Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</b>  Council Plan Objective – Delivering a balanced and sustainable medium term financial plan that delivers value for money
<b>What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?</b>  There are a number of areas of our business where processes are in place to allow in year debt write offs.  It is suggested that as good practice, criteria/ process and permissions are reviewed in the areas of sundry type/ one off debts, to ensure procedures remain fit for purpose and write off values are monitored and process/debt recovery issues are understood.  Areas such as Council Tax and Business Rates would be excluded from the scope as benchmarking shows that our write-offs and long term collection rates compare very well with others.
<b>What are the key lines of enquiry:</b>  It is suggested that the scope of this review focuses on sundry type/one-off debts i.e. the process and how much effort goes into recovering these debts before they are submitted for write-off and explore opportunities of where it might be more appropriate to insist on up-front payment before a service is provided or other precautions that could be put in place to reduce write - off levels.
<b>Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?</b>  Cabinet, Council Services
<b>Expected duration of review and key milestones:</b>  Scope – 28 July 2015 Baseline – 15 September 2015 Options and Recommendations – 27 October 2015 Cabinet – 12 November 2015

**What information do we need?**

**(Background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):**

The review could include understanding the :

- numbers of write offs
- financial value of time spent on recovery
- monetary values,
- different categories of write off,
- benchmarking data,
- good practice
- current practices,
- approval levels etc.

**How will this information be gathered? (eg. Financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)**

Desk Top Analysis, benchmarking

**Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:**

Monetary values of write off sundry / one off debt vary annually but over a period of time could be considered significant. Time spent on debt recovery can also be significant. Monitoring of sundry / one off debt is not something routinely reported and monitored but has been the subject of FOI requests in the past.

Budget cuts, ensuring value for money, efficiency saving programmes ; all provide a context in which reviewing this areas of work could inform a review of procedures and criteria used in determining debt write offs. Could lead to a reduction in financial loss to the council.