fair telecoms campaign **briefing**

'greedy and foolish' Local Authority telephone payment lines

The list below gives premium rate "Payment Lines" operated for English local authorities.

Many others, listed previously, have since changed their numbers.

See overleaf for details and explanation of the latter columns. Further examples are appended.

Authority	Number	SC	Use	Coll
Amber Valley Borough Council	0845 3723801	3	CT	Civ
Arun District Council	0844 557 8321	7	PCN	NSL
Ashfield District Council	0845 3726173	3	CT	Civ
Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council	0845 603 1510	5	CT	Cap
Bath & North East Somerset Council	0845 372 3501	3	CT	Civ
Breckland Council	0845 600 1936	5	CT	Cap
Castle Point Borough Council	0845 0232 568	4	CT	Civ
Chiltern District Council	0845 305 2148	2	CT	
Fareham Borough Council	0845 6066876	5	ALL	Cap
Gloucester City Council	0845 155 6000	2	CT	Cap
Isle of Wight Council	0845 045 0076	2	CT	Cap
Lancaster City Council	0845 6017297	5	CT	Civ
London (TFL) - Buses	0844 544 7173	5	Fare	
London (TFL) - DLR	0844 544 6990	5	Fare	
London (TFL) - Rail	0844 544 7906	5	Fare	
London (TFL) - Underground	0844 544 8458	5	Fare	
London (TFL) - Other	0870 067 1303	13	Fare	
London Borough of Hounslow	0845 30 10 210	2	Rent	Civ
London Borough of Southwark	0845 600 0611	5	CT	Cap
Mid Suffolk District Council	0845 372 4112	3	PCN	
Milton Keynes Council	0845 230 8855	7	Park	
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	0845 2340069	2	CT	Cap
Northamptonshire County Council	0845 6800153	5	Park	
Nottingham City Council	0845 6580590	3	PCN	Cap
Pendle Borough Council	0845 3723334	3	CT	Civ
Ribble Valley Borough Council	08453 039484	2	CT	Civ
Richmondshire District Council	0845 078 1191	2	CT	Civ
Rother District Council	0845 603 0037	5	CT	Cap
South Kesteven District Council	0845 234 0038	2	CT	Cap
South Oxfordshire District Council	0845 303 8506	2	CT	
Suffolk Coastal District Council	0845 880 1312	5	CT	Cap
Swindon Borough Council	0845 6035058	5	CT	
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	0845 371 9901	3	CT	Civ
Vale of White Horse District Council	0845 3723201	3	PCN	
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council	0845 6041064	5	ALL	Cap

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Table Columns

SC The “**Service Charge**” (including VAT) paid to the user of the line, as pence per minute

Use The most egregious use of the Payment Line is shown, based on the following sequence:

Rent	Council Rent
CT	Council Tax
Park	All Parking
PCN	Parking Penalty Charge
Fare	Penalty Fares

Coll The name of the organisation seen to be contracted to collect payments for the Council

Cap	Capita
Civ	Civica
NSL	NSL

In many cases, it will be the contractor which operates the Payment Line, on behalf of the Council and in accordance with its instructions.

(The absence of a name only indicates that no collections contractor has been identified.)

Cost of Calling

In addition to the **Service Charge**, callers also pay the premium rate **Access Charge** set by their own telephone service provider (see the list of rates given here). In almost every case this is well in excess of the benefit derived by the local authority.

For example, someone with a Vodafone (Access Charge 55p per minute) paying their Council Rent by telephone in Hounslow (Service Charge 2p per minute) would pay **£1.14** for a two-minute call. This is broken down as follows:

- £ **91.67p** to Vodafone
- £ **19.00p** to the Exchequer in VAT
- £ **3.33p** to the London Borough of Hounslow (or its contractor)

Even with the lesser BT Access Charge of 15p per minute and the maximum 084 Service Charge of 7p per minute, the same principle is seen to apply.

This is why we see all use of 084 (and 087) numbers as “**greedy and foolish**” – see “insanity”

Breach of Regulations / Guidance

In many cases, the web page (viewed by the link) is in breach of regulations - see “ukcalling”.

These require clear declaration of the **Service Charge** applied to the cost of calling these numbers and reference to the fact that an Access Charge is also paid.

Where this information is not provided, Ofcom regulations are being breached.

In December 2013, the Cabinet Office published HMG Guidance - Customer Service Telephone Lines - Use of Number Prefixes. Compliance was mandatory for central government departments and agencies and has been achieved.

It was strongly commended to other public bodies. All of the authorities listed here are in breach of that Guidance.

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Appendix- out of hours and emergency numbers

The following cases, from a wider selection, sit alongside the Payment Lines listed above.

Happily, these may be seen as exceptional cases for the authorities listed. The nature of the particular service covered does however cause concern.

Authority	Service	Number	SC
Blaby District Council	Emergency outside office hours	0844 736 9545	6
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Lifeline alarms enquiries out of hours	0845 056 8035	2
Cambridge City Council	Housing - out-of-hours emergency	0844 335 3944	7
Ceredigion County Council	Social Services - out of hours	0845 601 5392	5
Copeland Borough Council	Sandbags and flooding hazards	0845 054 8600	2
Dartford Borough Council	All Emergency Out of Hours Services	0845 634 1212	2
Hartlepool Borough Council	Safeguarding out of hours	0870 240 2994	1
Highland Council	Health & social care emergency	08457 697284	5
Luton Borough Council	Environmental services - out of hours	0844 847 6648	7
Mid Sussex District Council	Out of hours emergencies	0845 602 1035	5
Moray Council	Out of hours emergency service	0845 756 5656	5
Pembrokeshire County Council	Emergency out of hours	0845 601 5522	5
Peterborough City Council	Highway / street lighting emergencies	0845 604 3127	5
South Cambridgeshire District Council	Environmental Health Emergency	0845 609 5437	5
South Lakeland District Council	Out of hours services	0870 428 6905/6	3
South Staffs Council	Safeguarding	0845 604 2886	5
Tewkesbury Town Council	Emergency out of hours Caretaker	0845 548 5808	7
West Dumbartonshire Council	Adult Mental Health out of hours	0845 650 1730	2
West Lancashire Borough Council	Homelessness emergencies	0845 371 0898	3
Worcestershire County Council	Social Services - Safeguarding adults	0845 607 2000	5