fair telecoms campaign **briefing**

'greedy and foolish' Local Authorities using 084 and 087 numbers for payment lines

Public bodies have generally complied with the Cabinet Office Guidance to cease use of 084 and 087 numbers - HMG Guidance - Customer Service Telephone Lines - Use of Number Prefixes - which was originally issued on 26 December 2013.

There are however cases, commonly where services are contracted out, where we have found that the ***'greedy and foolish'*** use of these numbers persists.

Callers to 084 and 087 numbers incur not only the "**Service Charge**" selected by the organisation they are calling, but also the "**Access Charge**" set, at a single rate, by their own phone service provider for access to all services with a premium rate number (also 09 and 118 numbers.)

As explained in our briefing – Now is the time to stop using 084 and 087 telephone numbers – this means that the vast majority of what the caller pays delivers no benefit to the user of the number.

With **Service Charges** of no more than 13p per minute and **Access Charges** from 15p to 65p per minute, we feel justified in characterising all users of these numbers as "***greedy and foolish***".

List of cases

The following table lists, with a link to the relevant web page, examples of local authorities in England found to be still using these numbers for automated payments.

The minimal revenue that is earned from calls may be determined by extracting the VAT from the **Service Charge**, chosen by each Council, in pence per minute. To get the maximum cost of calling add the **Service Charge** to the maximum **Access Charge**. This is currently 58p per minute, but from 19 August 2019 **EE** will be increasing its rate to **65p per minute**, with others expected to follow.

The most egregious example of what the line is used to pay for is given as "USE", but there are commonly. A clue to the contractor operating the line may be gained from the name of a known collections service provider to the Council, shown in the right hand column.

Region	Authority (link to web page)	Number	Service Charge	Max Cost	USE	COLL... ections by
North West	Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council	0845 603 1510	5 ppm	70 ppm	C Tax	Capita
	Burnley Council	0844 5578321	7 ppm	72 ppm	C Tax	Civica
	Lancaster City Council	0845 6017297	5 ppm	70 ppm	C Tax	Civica
	Pendle Borough Council	0845 3723334	3 ppm	68 ppm	C Tax	Civica
	Ribble Valley Borough Council	08453 039484	2 ppm	67 ppm	C Tax	Civica
	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	0845 371 9901	3 ppm	68 ppm	C Tax	Civica
Yorkshire & The Humber	Doncaster Council	0845 130 5910	3 ppm	68 ppm	PCN	Capita
	Richmondshire District Council	0845 078 1191	2 ppm	67 ppm	C Tax	Civica
East Midlands	Amber Valley Borough Council	0845 3723801	3 ppm	68 ppm	C Tax	Civica
	Ashfield District Council	0845 3726173	3 ppm	68 ppm	C Tax	Civica
	Broxtowe Borough Council	0845 835 0144	2 ppm	67 ppm	ALL	Civica
	Chesterfield Borough Council	0845 602 0214	5 ppm	70 ppm	Rent	Capita
	Melton Borough Council	0845 6018609	5 ppm	70 ppm	C Tax	
	Northampton Borough Council	0845 372 1745	3 ppm	68 ppm	C Tax	Civica

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Region	Authority (link to web page)	Number	Service Charge	Max Cost	USE	COLL… ections by
East Midlands (continued)	Northamptonshire County Council	0845 6800153	5 ppm	70 ppm	P'king	
	Nottingham City Council	0845 6580590	3 ppm	68 ppm	PCN	Capita
	South Kesteven District Council	0845 234 0038	2 ppm	67 ppm	C Tax	Capita
West Midlands	Cannock Chase Council	0845 2340080	2 ppm	67 ppm	ALL	Capita
	Lichfield District Council	0845 234 0068	2 ppm	67 ppm	PCN	Capita
	Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	0845 2340069	2 ppm	67 ppm	C Tax	Capita
	Staffordshire County Council	0845 045 0929	2 ppm	67 ppm	ALL	Capita
Eastern	Breckland Council	0845 600 1936	5 ppm	70 ppm	C Tax	Capita
	Broxbourne Borough Council	0845 601 7620	5 ppm	70 ppm	C Tax	
	Castle Point Borough Council	0845 0232 568	4 ppm	69 ppm	C Tax	Civica
	Mid Suffolk / Babergh District Councils	0845 372 4112	3 ppm	68 ppm	Rent	
	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	08702 406650	1 ppm	66 ppm	C Tax	Capita
	St Albans City and District Council	0845 305 2131	2 ppm	67 ppm	PCN	Civica
	Watford Borough Council	0845 452 4530	7 ppm	72 ppm	PCN	
	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council	0844 3718784	7 ppm	72 ppm	PCN	
London	London Borough of Barnet	0845 356 3456	2 ppm	67 ppm	Rent	Capita
	London Borough of Hounslow	0845 30 10 210	2 ppm	67 ppm	Rent	Civica
	London Borough of Southwark	0845 600 0611	5 ppm	70 ppm	C Tax	Capita
	Transport for London - Buses	0844 544 7173	5 ppm	70 ppm	Fare	
	Transport for London - DLR	0844 544 6990	5 ppm	70 ppm	Fare	
	Transport for London - Other	0870 067 1303	13 ppm	78 ppm	Fare	
	Transport for London - Rail	0844 544 7906	5 ppm	70 ppm	Fare	
	Transport for London - Underground	0844 544 8458	5 ppm	70 ppm	Fare	
South East	Arun District Council	0844 557 8321	7 ppm	72 ppm	PCN	NSL
	Chiltern District Council	0845 305 2148	2 ppm	67 ppm	C Tax	
	East Hampshire District Council	0845 023 2576	4 ppm	69 ppm	C Tax	
	Havant Borough Council	0845 241 0600	2 ppm	67 ppm	C Tax	
	Isle of Wight Council	0845 045 0076	2 ppm	67 ppm	C Tax	Capita
	Milton Keynes Council	0845 230 8855	7 ppm	72 ppm	PCN	
	Rother District Council	0845 603 0037	5 ppm	70 ppm	C Tax	Capita
	South Oxfordshire District Council	0845 303 8506	2 ppm	67 ppm	Rent	Capita
	Test Valley Borough Council	0845 6001586	5 ppm	70 ppm	C Tax	Capita
	West Oxfordshire District Council	0845 601 2584	5 ppm	70 ppm	PCN	
South West	Bath & North East Somerset Council	0845 372 3501	3 ppm	68 ppm	C Tax	Civica
	Bristol City Council	0870 707 7776	2 ppm	67 ppm	C Tax	
	Cotswold District Council	0845 3199631	5 ppm	70 ppm	PCN	APCOA
	Swindon Borough Council	0845 6035058	5 ppm	70 ppm	C Tax	
	Tewkesbury Borough Council	0845 319 9631	5 ppm	70 ppm	PCN	APCOA

Extended example of call cost

For example, the cost for someone with **EE** (**Access Charge** 65p per minute from 19 August 2019) paying their Council Rent by telephone in Hounslow (**Service Charge** 2p per minute) is a total of **£2.01** for a three-minute call.

This is broken down as follows:

- **162.5p** to **EE**
- **33.5p** to the Exchequer in VAT
- **5.0p** to the London Borough of Hounslow (or its contractor)

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

A full table of the **Access Charges** levied by the various providers is available at this link.

Further breach of regulations

Ofcom rules, which came into effect on 1 July 2015, demand that the "**Service Charge**" be stated whenever a 084/087/09/118 number is published - see How does UK Calling affect businesses?.

Because the "**Access Charge**" is set by the caller's own telephone service provider, it must be simply referred to - **"Calls cost *x*p per minute plus your phone company's 'Access Charge'"**

In many of the cases listed above, this rule is being breached. Our focus however is on getting use of premium rate numbers halted where no "**Service Charge**" can be justified, stated or not.

History and future

We have been publishing versions of this list since 2015, each linking to its predecessor. See the latest previous version.

Additional research has added cases not previously recognised. The trend however is for authorities to cease use of these numbers as soon as they recognise what the costs are.

There has long been confusion about 084 and 087 numbers. The 2015 **Ofcom** rules introduced greater clarity. This improved understanding led to use of these numbers being prohibited in various situations. It also continues to inform voluntary decisions to abandon them. We are pressing for more such decisions to be taken, to enable closure of these ranges in due course.

We can now see where the money is going, as the **Service Charge** and **Access Charge** components are transparent. No longer can the buck be passed back and forth between the telephone companies and the Service Providers.

Anyone choosing to impose a **Service Charge**, through use of a 084 or 087 number, has to justify both the charge itself and the overhead cost imposed by use of the premium rate mechanism.

The **fair telecoms campaign** clearly states (to all users) -

Now is the time to stop using 084 and 087 telephone numbers