

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

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Net tightening on Council Tax fraudsters

The net is tightening on Council Tax fraudsters in Fenland thanks to a new initiative that has produced £138,000 savings in the district in its first three months.

A new taskforce has been created to root out people who are incorrectly claiming support with Council Tax payments and discounts for living alone.

From the launch of the service in April to end of June, £122,000 in savings were made in Fenland through the identification, prevention and reclaim of invalid Single Person Discount payments.

An additional £16,000 of savings have been made with the identification, prevention and reclaim of Council Tax Support overpayment.

Cllr Jan French, Fenland District Council portfolio holder for revenues and benefits, said: "Single Person Discount and Council Tax Support are very important schemes that are rightly in place to help people with the cost of Council Tax in specific circumstances.

"People who claim support and benefits fraudulently reduce the resources available to local and central government to support people who really need it.

"We are focused on ensuring we root out those people who are making themselves a burden on society in this way.

"Anyone with a genuine need or concern about not being able to meet their obligations should come to us for help. Those who are set on cheating their way to reduced bills will be found out.

"We're delighted to see such huge success with this new initiative and give thanks to our partners at Anglia Revenues Partnership and Cambridgeshire County Council for making it possible."

In the first quarter of last year (April to June 2022), fraud prevention work in Fenland uncovered £31,000 in invalid Single Person Discount payments and £6,000 in Council Tax Support. That's £101,000 less than the same period this year.

Anglia Revenues Partnership delivers revenues and benefits services for Fenland District Council and four other local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk.

The Council Tax fraud identification successes in Fenland are part of the work being rolled out countywide as part of the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub, in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council.

Extra resource is allowing better cross referencing of data to identify potential Council Tax fraud. The savings indicated in the figures take into account back payments recouped and a calculation that indicates what would have been lost if the fraud had continued.

Council Tax fraud can lead to a criminal record and a prison sentence.

A recent prosecution of a Whittlesey resident for claiming Council Tax Support and Single Person Discount and failing to declare that they had another adult resident with them, resulted in an order to repay a total of £1,500, 220 hours of unpaid work, £600 costs and £90 victim surcharge.

Fenland District Council cut its portion of the Council Tax by 2 per cent this year. Fenland District Council sets the rate for 12 per cent of the bill.

Fenland collects the rest of the Council Tax on behalf of all precepting authorities including Cambridgeshire County Council and police and fire services.

- If you suspect someone of committing benefit fraud, call the Benefit Fraud Helpline – confidential and free: 0800 515368 Or email: reportingfraud@angliarevenues.gov.uk
- If you are struggling with the cost of Council Tax, you may qualify for support. For advice contact Fenland District Council on 01354 654321 or [apply online](#).