

## Direct Debit is a real 'bobby dazzler' for Daventry District Council



### **Council secures Direct Debit win at the Bacs LA Challenge Awards**

After increasing Direct Debit take-up by 4.9 per cent, Daventry District Council's revenues team is celebrating a prestigious council tax honour awarded by Bacs Payment Schemes Limited (Bacs) – the not-for-profit industry body behind Direct Debit and Bacs Direct Credit.

The council picked-up the award at the Institute of Revenue, Rating & Valuations (IRRV) annual conference in Brighton after encouraging 1,362 more residents to pay their council tax bill by Direct Debit over the last 12 months. The authority also persuaded 60 more companies to pay business rates by Direct Debit, an increase of 3.3 per cent.

Leon Spence, revenues service manager at Daventry District Council said: "As a council we have only recently begun a concerted push to increase the number of residents that pay their council tax bill by Direct Debit. The primary driver behind our new proactivity is the demonstrable revenue benefits and cost efficiencies that can be achieved by automating collection. Before commencing our 2007 promotion, we calculated that converting just 200 residents to Direct Debit could translate into a council cost saving of up to £1000 over traditional payment methods. These figures spoke for themselves."

In conjunction with promotional leaflets about Direct Debit, the Daventry revenue team also sent instruction forms to all new occupiers. They also promoted Direct Debit extensively over the telephone offering residents two dates for automated payments to be collected from their account. This proven technique helps Direct Debit payers align their council tax payments more closely with the date their salary is received - giving them greater control over their finances.

Mr Spence continued: "We initially entered Bacs' Local Authority Challenge Awards to acknowledge the hard work put in by our small revenue collection team. We knew we were performing adequately and that what we were doing to promote Direct Debit was working – but didn't think we stood a chance against other authorities. It is a fantastic reward for our team and we are delighted with our achievement. Moving forward, we aim to continue promoting Direct Debit as a real 'bobby dazzler'."

Daventry is already looking ahead to 2008 and wants to achieve another 10 per cent increase in Direct Debit usage. Tools already in its armory for the billing year ahead will include marketing material developed by Bassetlaw Council – a previous Bacs award winner. Daventry are currently employing a leaflet featuring TV personality David Dickinson and the catchphrase "Paying Council Tax by Direct Debit – what a bobby dazzler idea!" to drive further awareness.

The council is also looking at adding a further Direct Debit payment date and will promote to residents the opportunity to sign up to Direct Debit via the internet.