

Rutland County Council celebrates big Bacs win in Brighton



**Rutland
County
Council**

Smallest County's Local Authority wins payment collection award

The Council Tax Collection team at Rutland County Council is celebrating after winning a prestigious Local Authority award from Bacs – the not-for-profit industry body behind Direct Debit.

The award, which was presented at the Institute of Revenue, Rating & Valuations (IRRV) annual conference in Brighton was given to Rutland Council for increasing the number of people who pay their Council Tax bill by Direct Debit by 8.68%.

Rutland is the smallest county in the UK and its Local Authority issues just over 15,000 Council Tax bills each year. Explaining more about their win and their reasons for entering Bacs' annual awards programme, Terry King, Cabinet Portfolio holder for Corporate Services at Rutland County Council said; "Even for a Council of Rutland's size, the efficiencies to be gained from encouraging more people to pay by Direct Debit are enormous. For our residents, paying this way gives them peace of mind. They know exactly when the money will be deducted from their account and can rest assure that their Council Tax bill has been paid on time."

Continuing he said; "For the Council, getting money in via Direct Debit means we don't need to chase in late payments. This cuts down on time spent on the phone and the cost of any associated calls. And because we don't have to issue as many reminder bills or letters, it also reduces our printing and postage costs. These savings mean money can be invested elsewhere to improve the quality and breadth of services we offer residents in Rutland. We entered Bacs' Local Authority Awards so we could benchmark our performance against that of other Councils – and winning is a real bonus."

Rutland's 8.68% increase represents 1,161 new residents who selected to pay by Direct Debit. Almost three quarters (73%) of people in the Council's catchment area now chose to automate payment of their Council Tax bill rather than paying by traditional means like cash or cheque. The Council's uplift was achieved through a series of simple initiatives that educated residents about the advantages of automating payments and made it much easier for them to sign up to Direct Debit.

In the first instance, Rutland sent a letter to 4,400 cash paying residents, asking them to pay their Council Tax bill by Direct Debit. The letter included a Direct Debit instruction form and a pre-paid return envelope to encourage sign up. In addition, the Council included a Direct Debit form in the centre pages of its general Rutland Council leaflet that was mailed out to all residents with their annual Council Tax bill. Copies of Direct Debit forms were also prominently displayed at the council's cash office and made available to download from the Rutland Country Council website.

Commenting Michael Chambers, managing director of Bacs said; "It's a well known fact that Councils that improve their Direct Debit rates have the potential to save millions of pounds in administration costs. We are delighted to see that so many local authorities – big and small – are taking this on board and have taken the time to enter our awards programme. We congratulate the team at Rutland and wish them every success for the future."