

Almost 7% of parking and bus lane charges in 2023/24 went unpaid

Parking fines worth more than £200,000 went unpaid last year after being handed out to foreign drivers, it has been revealed.

Almost 7% of all parking and bus lane charges went unpaid in 2023/24, making up a total of £666,454 in lost income, according to a report on city debts set to go before councillors.

In total, £1.79 million in debt was written off by the council in 2023/24, with parking and road traffic charges making up over a third of this.

Of the parking charges, some £214,620 was from 2,494 penalty charge notices to foreign drivers or for foreign registered vehicles.

And £8,640 was lost from 192 bus lane violations for foreign drivers or foreign registered vehicles.

Some £117,231.16 was lost to 1,246 parking charges where all options for recovering debt were exhausted, and £67,877.41 was lost for 694 bus lane violations meeting the same criteria.

And a further £215,725 was lost for 2372 parking charges where investigation was impossible, as well as £42,360 for 1,392 bus lane violations.

In addition to parking charges, £180,620 was written off in

unpaid council tax, 0.04% of the total amount paid, as was £333,413 in non-domestic rates – 0.09% – and £399,980 in overpaid housing benefit, or 0.25%.

And, £218,328 of “miscellaneous” debt was written off, which covers things from accommodation charges and home care to commercial rents and statutory repairs.

When the council decides it is no longer able to recover a debt, it writes them off to reflect this on the city’s balance sheets.

This can be due to a range of reasons, including the cost of recovering the debt being too expensive, legal advice that a debt is not recoverable or the debtor being unreachable.

In addition, debt sometimes can’t be recovered due to a debtor being in prison, destitute or dead – though the council will try to get money from estates when possible.

For miscellaneous debts written off, £116,423.64 was lost in commercial property rents, £10,524.34 in social work costs and £38,516.88 in “Supporting People” costs.

Further, £40,785.88 was lost in accommodation charges, £41,770.26 in home care costs and £23,334.33 in shared repairs costs.

And, £1,527.59 in “non-council” debt, £3,266.40 in theatre and halls costs and £19,155.28 in “other services” costs were written off.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter