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# Help and advice if you have received a Council Tax summons

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If you do not pay or you are unable to keep up to date with your instalments then we may ask Lancashire magistrates court to serve a court summons on you.

When the court serve a summons a cost of £62 is added to your Council Tax account. You must pay the full amount shown on your summons, including the costs before the hearing date.

If the full amount remains unpaid on the day of the hearing then we will ask the magistrates to grant a Liability Order against you. This is a court order which allows us more powers to recover the amount you owe.

## If you do not dispute the summons

If you do **not** dispute the summons then you do **not** need to attend the hearing, as a Liability Order will be granted in your absence. However, you will still need to take some action:

- Pay the outstanding amount on the summons. If you pay the full amount shown on the summons, including costs, then we will withdraw our action with the court. [You can make online payments via BACS, debit or credit card or via PayPal](#)
- Pay the first instalment of the payment proposal shown on the front page of the summons by the date shown. If you pay this first instalment then we will obtain a Liability Order in your absence but we will not take any steps to enforce this whilst payments are being paid as agreed
- Submit an alternative payment plan to pay the amount you owe over a different timescale or frequency (for example weekly or fortnightly). [You can submit an alternative payment plan online](#)

## If you dispute the summons

If you dispute the court summons then you have the right to attend the hearing and offer evidence. However, you should only attend if you have a legal defence to put to the magistrates.

If you attend to the hearing the magistrate will ask if you have a valid legal defence to stop the Liability Order being granted. If you do not have a legal defence then the Liability Order will be granted.

## Invalid defences

The following are **not** valid defences against the issue of a Liability Order:

- You think you should not have to pay
- You cannot afford to pay
- You have submitted an application for a discount, exemption or relief
- You have an outstanding claim or appeal for Universal Credit or Council Tax Reduction
- You have an outstanding appeal with the valuation tribunal

## Attending the hearing

We have now moved to virtual hearing, taking place via telephone or where required, video link. This means you can no longer turn up in person without prior arrangement with the court. If you dispute the court summons then you will need to complete a pre-hearing assessment with the council. If, ultimately, despite our best efforts, we are unable to resolve your query and you wish to

attend a court hearing then you will be invited to do so. We will pass your details on to the court who will contact you separately to arrange a telephone conference call through BTMeetMe.

**Pre-hearing assessment**

## Help with Council Tax debt and managing your money

If you are struggling to pay your Council Tax then you may wish to consider making an application for Universal Credit or other benefits, and you may benefit from some free and impartial debt advice. [Please see our dedicated page for help with Council Tax debt and managing your money.](#)

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