



**OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

All Directors of Finance of
English County Councils, District
Councils, Unitary Councils, London
Borough Councils, Metropolitan
Borough councils, English Fire and
Police Authorities.

All respondents to our Consultation
paper

All Non-Domestic Rating contacts

Major software suppliers

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**IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH COUNCIL TAXPAYERS:
DRAFT COUNCIL TAX AND NON-DOMESTIC RATING DEMAND NOTICE
REGULATIONS 2003**

**E-BILLING: THE COUNCIL TAX AND NON-DOMESTIC RATING (ELECTRONIC
COMMUNICATIONS) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2003**

On 29 August 2002, the Local Government Minister Nick Raynsford, announced that the detailed prescription of the information billing authorities are required to send out to council taxpayers with the council tax bill is to end and regulations allowing for the electronic service of demand notices would be made.

I am now writing to you enclosing draft regulations that will bring these two proposals into effect and seeking any comments you may have on their content. I must stress your comments should be confined to the wording and effect of the regulations themselves. This is not a further consultation on the principle of ending detailed prescription or allowing e-billing. Please send your comments to me at the above address **by Friday 20 June**.

Demand Notice Regulations

Under the proposals for the demand notice information, instead of the detailed prescription billing authorities will have a duty to provide statements on their expenditure plans; how these are to be funded; their impact on council taxpayer; and reasons why the level of council tax has varied from previous years. The content of these statements will be left to local discretion but the statements themselves must still accompany demand notices. We had originally intended that billing authorities would have complete autonomy

on the method of delivery and content of the information. However, the primary powers under which we can make regulations regarding demand notices do not allow us to do this. We can only prescribe what must be sent with bills not what billing authorities might like to do. The new requirements are therefore a compromise on what we can do under primary legislation whilst at the same time giving billing authorities the widest possible discretion.

As the financial information that currently must be sent with council tax demand notices must also be sent with non-domestic rate demand notices the ending of prescription will also be extended to the information that must be sent with rate bills.

We have taken this opportunity not only to amend but also consolidate the Demand Notice Regulations. For ease of reference those parts of the regulations that have changed are shown in bold type.

E-billing

The proposals for e-billing allow billing authorities to service both council tax and non-domestic rate demand notices electronically. But this can only be done where the taxpayer or ratepayer has requested this and provided an email address for this purpose. The demand notice can either be served as an attachment to an e-mail or via a secure website. Any information that must accompany the notice can also be sent by these methods. A taxpayer or ratepayer must give billing authorities at least 3 days notice of any change of e-mail address or their wish to cease having demand notices served electronically.

I must stress that the Order does not give a taxpayer or ratepayer the right to have their demand notice served electronically or compels authorities to do so. It merely enables electronic service if both parties wish it. However, we encourage all billing authorities to plan to offer this service to their taxpayers as soon as practicable.

Please send your comments **by Friday 20 June to:**

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