

## **Important information and notes for guidance about your summons and restrictions on Court attendance**

If you would like more information please contact the Council Tax Service. It will also help you if you wish to dispute a liability.

### **Why have I been sent a summons?**

You have been issued a summons because you have not paid the amount shown on your bill.

### **Do I have to appear before the Court?**

No, although you have the right to do so. If you believe you have a valid defence against the summons after reading the enclosed Notice issued by HM Courts & Tribunal Service, you must contact the Council Tax Service a minimum of 7 days prior to your hearing to discuss your account and advise us you wish to appear. You will then be contacted by a member of staff to arrange how and when you are to appear before the Magistrates. You only need to appear if you wish to dispute the summons.

### **How will I appear before the Court?**

If you wish to appear in person please contact the Council Tax Service a minimum of 7 days prior to your hearing by calling 020 8871 8081 or e-mailing [counciltaxsummons@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:counciltaxsummons@wandsworth.gov.uk)

The Court expects defendants to attend hearings in person. However, if there are circumstances why you cannot attend in person please contact the Court giving your reasons at least 7 days before the hearing date at [southlondonmc@justice.gov.uk](mailto:southlondonmc@justice.gov.uk). The court will then consider granting you permission to appear before the court in another way such as a video link hearing.

The Council is unable to process requests for virtual attendance.

### **If I ignore my summons what will happen?**

The Council will ask Wimbledon Magistrates' Court to issue a liability order against you. The Magistrates will order you to pay costs.

### **What is a liability order?**

It is a legal document that gives us the power to:

- Take what you owe directly from your earnings or benefits
- Ask enforcement agents to take some of your valuables and sell them off to pay off what you owe.
- Make you bankrupt.

### **I agree I owe the Council Tax but I cannot afford to pay, what should I do?**

Contact the Council Tax Service before the hearing to make an arrangement to pay, you will be asked to provide employment details if you are working.

### **I would like independent advice, who can I ask?**

Citizens Advice Wandsworth offer a debt counselling service and free legal advice. You can contact them on Freephone 080 8278 7833 or visit their website [www.cawandsworth.org](http://www.cawandsworth.org)

### **The Council did not deal with me properly, what should I do?**

You should first call the Council Tax Service to discuss the problem. If you are not happy after this call you should write to the Head of Council Tax.

### **I do not think I owe the amount shown on the summons, what should I do?**

There are two principal legal defences against the Council's application for a liability order.

- The sum has not been requested from you in accordance with the law. For example, we did not send you a bill and a reminder before the summons.
- You do not owe any Council Tax for the period stated. For example, you have paid in full or are not liable. If you got behind with your payments and did not bring the account up to date in time you will have lost your right to pay by instalments and the whole year is due.

In any case if you do not agree that you owe the amount shown on the summons for any reason, please call the Council Tax Service before the hearing to discuss the matter.

### **If I tell the magistrates that I cannot afford to pay will they issue a liability order?**

Yes. This is because they can only consider whether or not you owe the balance shown on the summons. If the Court is satisfied you do, the magistrates will grant a liability order.

### **For more details you can:**

- **Phone** us on 020 8871 8081
- **Email** us at: [counciltaxsummons@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:counciltaxsummons@wandsworth.gov.uk)
- **Write** to us at London Borough of Wandsworth, Council Tax Service, PO Box 65962, London, SW18 9HN
- **Visit our website:** [www.wandsworth.gov.uk](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk)

### **By Direct Debit**

This is the easiest way to pay and it has many advantages, such as:

- You can choose from five payment dates - 4th, 11th, 15th, 18th or 25th of the month.
- You stay in control, knowing in advance what you will be paying and when. You are free to cancel the arrangement at any time.
- It is secure, convenient, and once set up you do not need to remember to pay.
- It helps to keep the Council's costs down.

Please call us on 020 8871 8081.

### **By Online payment**

You can make an online payment via a secure site using a credit/debit card 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Please visit our website [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/council-tax/ways-to-pay-council-tax](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/council-tax/ways-to-pay-council-tax) for details and to make a payment.

### **By Telephone**

You can pay using a credit/debit card by phoning our dedicated line for payments 0800 021 7763. As this is an automated line, this service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You will be asked to enter your Council Tax account number which is shown on the front of your bill.

### **Transfers from your bank**

You can pay using your personal internet or telephone banking service. You will need to quote your Council Tax account number, as well as the Council's Bank account number 69612544 and sort code 60-22-28.

### **At a Post Office**

You can pay, free of charge, by cash, cheque or debit card, at any Post Office. You must take your bill with you, as the Post Office will need to read the bar-code details printed on your bill. If you pay by cheque, please make your cheque payable to 'Post Office Counters Ltd'.

### **At a PayPoint**

You can pay, free of charge, by cash, at any PayPoint. You must take your bill with you, as the PayPoint machine will need to read the bar code details printed on your bill.

### **Citizens Advice Wandsworth**

If you are experiencing financial difficulties and require independent advice, you can contact Citizens Advice on Freephone 080 8278 7833 or visit their website at [www.cawandsworth.org](http://www.cawandsworth.org)