

Local Government Information Unit  
NEWS RELEASE  
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### **Taxing times for councillors**

Local democracy think tank the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) today launched Councillors' Tax and Benefits 2004, the latest edition of its definitive guide to the treatment of councillors within the tax and benefits system.

Elected to represent people from the communities in which they live, councillors come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds and live in many different circumstances. There is no such person as 'the average councillor'.

Some will be in full time or part-time employment. Others are unemployed, retired or have a long-term illness or disability. Others have demanding duties as carers. Some councillors claim means-tested benefits, while others may run businesses. Whatever a councillor's individual or family circumstances, it is important that they understand how their role as a councillor can affect their rights to social security benefits and their position in relation to the tax system.

This guide provides plain English guidance about complex areas of the tax and benefits system and will be of use to councillors and local authority officers who work in Members' Services. This new version takes into account recent changes such as the new mechanisms for setting councillors' allowances through independent remuneration panels.

Councillors' Tax and Benefits 2004 was written by Bob Prew, an independent welfare rights consultant and trainer with more than 25 years of experience in the field of benefits advice.

Dennis Reed, Chief Executive of the LGIU, said: "As well as being an excellent plain English guide to a complex subject, this latest version of Councillors' Tax and Benefits also performs the service of illustrating another of the reasons why it is so difficult to attract decent candidates to stand for council office."

ENDS

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## Notes to Editors

1. Founded in 1983 to campaign against the ratecapping, the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) is Britain's foremost independent local democracy think tank, campaigning to extend local authority best practice, freedoms and responsibilities. The LGIU is working to influence the debate on local government modernisation. The LGIU and its sister organisations The Education Network (TEN) and the Democratic Health Network (DHN) provide research, policy briefings, information, advice, training and lobbying services to local authority and trade union affiliates. Previous LGIU news releases and statements can be viewed at [www.lgiu.gov.uk](http://www.lgiu.gov.uk).

2. Copies of Councillors' Tax and Benefits 2004 are on sale at £20 each (£10 to LGIU affiliates) from Central Books on 0845 458 9910, 0845 458 9912 (fax) or e-mail [mo@centralbooks.com](mailto:mo@centralbooks.com).

3. A PDF version of Councillors' Tax and Benefits 2004 is available to journalists by contacting Kevin Morton at [Kevin.morton@lgiu.org.uk](mailto:Kevin.morton@lgiu.org.uk)

4. The LGIU is running a campaign under the heading of Perilous Democracy to increase public engagement in local politics. The reforms that the LGIU is pressing for include:

- \* Paid time off for public duties, including full-time public service responsibilities, with the employer compensated for staff undertaking public service and the employee retaining certain employment rights.

- \* New grants and tax incentives to encourage employers to support any of their staff who undertake public service, as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes.

- \* All councillors entitled to make pension contributions in the local government pension scheme, or to a comparable alternative of their choice.

- \* There should be a requirement for local authorities to reimburse councillors for childcare and other caring responsibilities.

- \* There should be 'councillor development grants' for parish and town councils to develop the potential of elected members.

- \* Councils should be able to apply for a 'public service promotion grant' to enable them to encourage people to undertake a wide range of public service roles.

- \* The voting age should be reduced to 16 and the age of candidature to 18.

- \* Restrictions preventing local government employees from participating in political activities should be amended to only apply to designated senior local government officers.

\* There should be a system of academic and vocational accreditation linked to experience and training to recognise the skills gained as a councillor.