

AUTHORITY OWED **£14M** IN UNPAID COUNCIL TAX

■ New report shows figure has been building up for 22 years

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MORE than £14 million is still owed to local authority coffers in unpaid council tax covering the last 22 years.

A new report looking at Inverclyde Council's debt recovery performance revealed the size of the outstanding bill which has built up over the years.

A cumulative total of just over £17m remains owed in various fees and rates, with the bulk of it made up of unpaid council tax.

But the document also highlighted how last year saw the best ever council tax collection rate — rising to 94.5 per cent.

There was also more good news with a record £1.067m in historic 'prior year' debt recovered over the last 12 months.

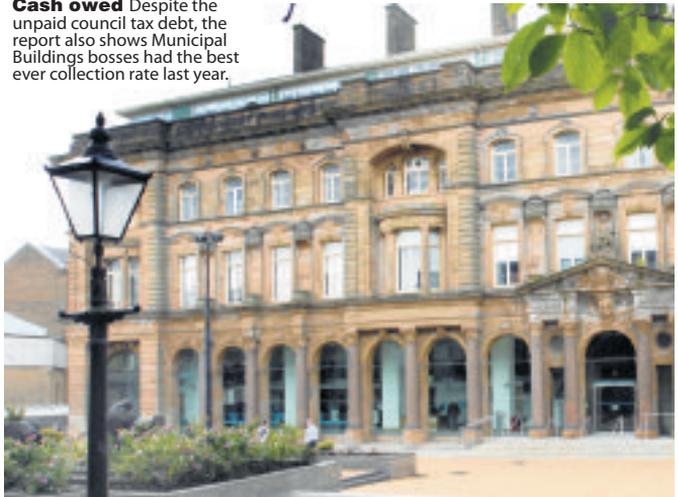
The report, which will be put to councillors today, said: "Despite another challenging year due to the continuing difficult economic climate, the council tax in year collection level increased by 0.3 per cent to 94.5 per cent, which is a significant achievement and can be attributed to the hard work of the council's revenue services."

The report adds: "Prior year collection is difficult to collect and becomes increasingly difficult with the passage of time.

"In 2013/14 however, the best to date prior year collection was achieved, bringing in £1.067m compared to £955,000 in 2012/13."

Local authority chiefs are crediting

Cash owed Despite the unpaid council tax debt, the report also shows Municipal Buildings bosses had the best ever collection rate last year.



their debt recovery partners Alex M Adamson LLP and their own in-house team with the 'continued good performance' in clawing back cash.

The council has been working with the firm since 2012 and a deal has been struck for that to continue until March next year.

Officials say: "Alex M Adamson LLP are proving to be very effective partners both in terms of their collection results to date but also in the ease of communication with them.

"They continue to operate an office in

Cathcart Street where individuals can make payments and basic enquiries."

The report also praised the council's in-house debt recovery team for improving their own collection figure from 2012/13, increasing collections by £7,000.

It says: "Considering the difficult economic climate, this is a commendable effort."

While council tax collection increased, there was a slight drop in the level for non-domestic rates — down 1.1 per cent to almost 96 per cent.