<u>Accreditation Framework and Criteria for a Local Authority</u>

1. Introduction

1.1 The *ECB* provides independent oversight of debt enforcement work to ensure that those who are subject to the *enforcement process* in England and Wales are treated fairly and are protected from poor practice.

1.2 This Accreditation Framework and Criteria **is applicable for 2026/27 accreditation year.**

1.3 Accreditation is available to teams operating *in-house* at local authorities that undertake debt enforcement work under the Taking Control of Goods Regulations 2013.

1.4 *In-house enforcement teams* which wish to benefit from *ECB* accreditation, once granted, must comply with the A*ccreditation Criteria*.

2. Accreditation process and outcome

2.1 An *in-house enforcement team* which intends to apply for *ECB* accreditation must complete an application form, which must be signed or verified by a Chief Officer or a Senior Director (or equivalent) who has authority to act on behalf of the local authority, and is accountable for adherence to the ECB Professional Values and Standards.

2.2 The application must confirm that the *in-house enforcement team* will comply with the *Accreditation Criteria*.

2.3 The *ECB* will consider the application for accreditation and may seek further information from the applicant team. The *ECB* will confirm in writing its decision whether to grant accreditation to the *in-house enforcement team*.

2.4 Once the *ECB* has granted accreditation, it will allow the *in-house enforcement team* to use the *ECB* accredited logo subject to the *team* providing to the *ECB* a signed copy of the accredited logo licence agreement and paying the relevant fee as required.

2.5 Once the *ECB* has granted accreditation to an *in-house enforcement team*, the Authority's details will be published on the *ECB*'s Accredited Local Authority Register.

2.6 Accreditation is valid until midnight on the day before the commencement date for the following year of accreditation, as published by the *ECB*. An accredited *in-house enforcement team* will need to renew its accreditation each year.

3. ***Accreditation Criteria***

Standards

3.1 An accredited *in-house enforcement team* must ensure that the team, and all work carried out in its name, complies with:

3.1.1 all applicable laws and regulations, including the Taking Control of Goods Regulations 2013;

3.1.2 the *ECB*'s Professional Values and Standards of Practice for Enforcement Firms;

3.1.3 the *ECB*'s Professional Values and Standards of Practice for Enforcement Agents; and

3.1.4 the Taking Control of Goods: National Standards (2014) as amended from time to time.

Annual levy and periodic data returns

3.2 An accredited *in-house enforcement team* must pay the annual levy to the *ECB* by the deadline(s) the *ECB* specifies.

3.3 An accredited *in-house enforcement team* must complete and submit in a timely manner to the *ECB,* periodic data returns, self-assessment forms and any other regular information submissions as requested.

Cooperation with the *ECB*

3.4 To enable the *ECB* to discharge its oversight function, an accredited *in-house enforcement team* must cooperate with the *ECB*, including by:

3.4.1 cooperating with all reasonable requests made by the *ECB*, including in relation to the *ECB*'s investigation or determination of a *compliance issue*;

3.4.2 allowing the *ECB* access to carry out compliance reviews and monitoring visits; including access to all information, data and body worn video footage, staff, agents and premises to conduct such work;

3.4.3 providing data and information in a timely manner following a request from the *ECB*, in line with data protection legislation;

3.4.4 proactively declaring any substantive breaches of the TCOG Regulations or the ECB Professional Values and Standards of Practice;

3.4.5 complying with any sanction imposed by the *ECB* following the investigation of a *compliance issue*.

4. ***Failure to comply with the accreditation criteria***

4.1 Where there is a concern that an accredited *in-house enforcement team* may have failed to comply with the *accreditation criteria,* the ECB will follow the process set out in the ECB's Non-Compliance and Sanctions Rules.

4.2 One of the following sanctions may be imposed upon an accredited *in-house enforcement team* following a finding that the team has failed to comply with the *accreditation criteria*:

4.2.1 A published *note of concern*;

4.2.2 Directions with which the accredited *in-house enforcement team* must comply for a period which the *ECB* specifies;

4.2.3 an order that the accredited *in-house enforcement team's* accreditation with the *ECB* be suspended for a specified period of up to 5 years;

4.2.4 an order that the accredited *in-house enforcement team's* accreditation with the *ECB* be removed (the team may reapply for accreditation after a specified reasonable period).

5. ***Withdrawal from Accreditation***

1.1 An In House Team may notify the ECB of their intention to withdraw from accreditation by providing as much notice as possible, with a minimum of one month, unless there are exceptional circumstances;

5.1 following notification of a request to withdraw the ECB will undertake further work to understand the impact on those experiencing enforcement to ensure they are still treated fairly, in the interim;

5.2 there will be no refund of the levy which has been paid, regardless of the point within the year that the firm decides to withdraw from accreditation.

Glossary

“Accreditation criteria” means the criteria set out within paragraphs 3.1-3.4 of this Accreditation Framework and Criteria.

“Compliance issue” means an issue with apparent non-compliance with the ECB’s *Standards* which has been referred to the *ECB* or identified by the *ECB* from monitoring or supervision visits.

“ECB” means the Enforcement Conduct Board.

“Enforcement agent” means an individual who is responsible for seeking to recover money owed in order to satisfy a writ, warrant or liability order, including by taking control of goods.

“In-house enforcement team” means a business or organisation that employs or engages *enforcement agents*.

“Enforcement Process” means the process of seeking to recover money owed in order to satisfy a writ, warrant or liability order, including by taking control of goods.

“Note of concern” means a note, published on the *ECB’s* website, which sets out the concerns in relation to an *in-house enforcement team’s* failure to comply with the *accreditation criteria*.