



CABINET – 18TH MARCH 2015

SUBJECT: RECHARGEABLE REPAIRS POLICY

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

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- 1.1 The attached report, which detailed proposals to implement a Housing Services Rechargeable Repairs Policy for Council tenants, former Council tenants, owner-occupiers and leaseholders, was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 3rd March 2015. This covering report details the views of the Members and their subsequent recommendations in order that Cabinet can make an informed decision.
 - 1.2 Members considered the report and noted that the Policy is intended to complement the Recharge Procedure which has been in place for many years and provide guidance to staff when recharging for repairs.
 - 1.3 It was accepted that the vast majority of Council tenants have not or are unlikely to be recharged for undertaking repairs. However such a policy needs to be in place to deal with the situations where tenants fail to act responsibly and maintain their homes to a satisfactory standard and condition. The reason behind a discount is to try to incentivise tenants to pay the charge in full earlier and for more tenants to pay. It is proposed that a review is undertaken after 6-12 months, as this will enable Officers to assess how successful or otherwise the discount has been to generate higher levels of income and recovery overall.
 - 1.4 With regards to paragraph 7.4 'Where the tenant uses the Council's out of hours emergency service due to accidental or criminal damage (not fair wear and tear), the callout charge will be recharged to the tenant, in addition to the cost of any repair undertaken', clarification was sought as to how it is determined whether the damage is accidental or criminal. It was confirmed that there is a requirement to complete a 'Declaration of Truth' form. It was suggested that this paragraph be amended to reflect that the cost of the repair will depend on the damage that has been undertaken as reflected in the 'Declaration of Truth' form.
 - 1.5 With regards to paragraph 7.6 of the Policy which advised that 'Where a prior appointment has been made with the tenant to carry out a repair and access is not available the tenant will be recharged for the cost of the no access call at the standard rate (no minimum charge applies)' a query was raised as to whether this applies when the Council fail to attend at the appointed time. The Chief Housing Officer advised that the Council operate an appointment system for the majority of response repairs and when a tenant fails to give access at the agreed time a recharge is made. In order to ensure fairness the policy has introduced an agreement that if the Council fail to attend an appointment at the agreed time compensation to the tenant based on the standard charge will be considered, providing loss of income can be evidenced. It was requested that paragraph 7.6 be amended to reflect that compensation to the tenant will be considered.
 - 1.6 With regards to the role of the Review and Appeals Panel, and the procedure for tenants to follow if they wish to have their recharge reviewed, it was proposed that a Member be included in the representation. In noting the content the policy (as appended to the report) which detailed the circumstances when a recharge will be made, the cost and how a tenant

can ask for a review if they disagree with the recharge being made, it was requested that it be clarified within the Policy that the need to issue a recharge will depend on the damage that has been undertaken and receipt of a 'Declaration of Truth' form.

- 1.7 It was noted that consideration had been given to offering only current tenants a discount of 25% if payment is made within 28 days from the date of the invoice. The Repairs and Improvement Group proposed that this be increased to 50% where payment is made within 35 days from the date of the invoice. It was proposed by the Chief Housing Officer that this should be 25%. This would need to be monitored to determine whether a discount increases the level of income received from these invoices in respect of rechargeable repairs.
- 1.8 Following consideration of the report, and taking account of the views expressed by Members on the content of the document, it was moved and seconded that subject to the amendments proposed during the course of the meeting (and detailed within the recommendation), the following be referred to Cabinet for consideration. By a show of hands (and in noting that there was one abstention in relation to recommendations (iii) and (iv)) these were agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- (i) subject to an amendment to paragraph 7.4 to reflect that the cost of the repair undertaken will be depend on the damage that has been undertaken and receipt of a 'Declaration of Truth' form and paragraph 7.6 being amended to reflect that if the Council fail to attend an appointment at the agreed time compensation to the tenant will be considered, the Rechargeable Repairs Policy be adopted;
- (ii) subject to the addition of a Member in its Membership, the establishment of a Review and Appeals Panel be supported;
- (iii) a discount of 25% be introduced when current tenants make payment within 35 days from the date of the invoice for both rechargeable repairs and end of tenancy repairs;
- (iv) the introduction of a discount be the subject of a review within 6-12 months (or at the earliest opportunity) in order to establish its success in respect of improving the amount of income received for the HRA.

- 1.10 Members are asked to consider the recommendations.

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Appendix - Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Report (9) dated 3rd March 2015.