

23 September 2015

Housing and Health Committee

Recharge Policy

Report of: *Helen Gregory, Acting Head of Housing Services*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This policy provides the Council with the tools to be able to re-charge the residents who do not comply with the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement or lease agreement; and therefore help to keep rents and service charges low.

2.1 The Recharge Policy has been written as a result of the modernisation programme and will allow for a more cost efficient service.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Committee is asked to approve the new Recharge Policy.

3. Introduction and Background

3.1 Housing Services are currently in the process of modernising the repairs service area. As a result of this it has been highlighted that there is no current re-charge policy in place.

3.2 The Brentwood Borough Council (BBC) Tenancy Agreement states that the tenant, those living with the tenant and their visitors must take reasonable care to prevent damage to the property, decoration, fixtures and fittings, BBC supplied furniture (if applicable), communal areas and neighbouring properties.

3.3 However, there are a small number of residents who do not value their homes or take responsibility for ensuring they comply with the terms and conditions of their tenancy or lease relating to property standards.

3.4 Housing Officers and Contractors are working alongside repairs to identify, impose and chase recharge payments.

- 3.5 The Orchard Management system used by Housing Officers to monitor rent accounts has the facility to monitor invoices from the point at which they are raised to when they are paid.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 As part of the Modernisation Programme it has been highlighted that works deemed to be tenant responsibility are currently being funded by the Housing Revenue Account; and ultimately passed on to the wider tenant population as increased rent.
- 4.2 It has been considered if recharges could be made under clause 4.6.4 of the Tenancy Agreement. However, this single clause is not transparent in all aspects of recharges and does not outline responsibilities of tenants and the Council.
- 4.3 The current procedure for recharging tenants is unclear and implemented on an ad hoc basis; it is outdated and has not been reviewed for at least 5 years.
- 4.4 With this new policy we aim to promote a responsible attitude from residents towards their property by ensuring that costs are pursued from those who are negligent or have caused deliberate damage.
- 4.5 We aim to reduce the amount of money spent on repairs which are deemed to be tenant responsibility and invest the money into improving the service for residents.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to note the work of Estates Management and the Repairs teams and their commitment to reducing costs to help keep rents and service charges low for residents.
- 5.2 The Committee is asked to approve a new Recharge Policy in line with best practice and to assist in our Modernisation Programme and efforts to help keep rents and service charges low.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 All Housing Managers and Team Leaders have been consulted on the Recharge Policy and feedback was positive.

6.2 The Recharge Policy has been presented to Tenant Talkback for comments and feedback was positive.

7. References to Corporate Plan

7.1 Housing, Health and Wellbeing: Recovery of rechargeable repairs costs will meet the Council's commitment to service improvements and will also contribute to a more cost efficient service which will subsequently assist in providing the best outcomes for Brentwood residents.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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8.1 The Council is currently paying out money for repairs which are not their responsibility. The new recharge policy will reduce these costs and help to maintain the Housing Revenue Account.

Legal Implications

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8.2 None.

Other Implications

8.3 None directly arising from this policy.

9. Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

9.1 None.

10. Appendices to this report

Appendix A - Re-charge Policy 2015

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