

# CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

## REPORT FOR DELEGATED DECISION BY Portfolio Holder for Property, Buildings and Housing Cllr Rosemarie Harris May 2017

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Simon Inkson - Head of Housing

**SUBJECT:** Housing Service - Income Collection and Recovery Policy

---

**REPORT FOR:** Decision

---

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for an Income Collection and Recovery Policy which will apply to all income generated from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets.
- 1.2 The report is supported by the following appendices:
- A The proposed policy
  - B Consultation response summary
  - C Impact Assessment (IA)

### 2 Background

- 2.1 The Council's Housing Service (the Service) is landlord of around 5,400 Council homes, 110 leasehold flats, 2,000 garages, 2 Gypsy and Traveller sites and several other assets. The service aims to provide an effective income collection and recovery service to keep rent arrears and other debts at the lowest possible level.

The Service is responsible for the collection of rents, service charges and other income. This policy will formalise existing practice. The policy describes what support and advice tenants, licensees and leaseholders will receive. This enables them to understand their responsibilities to pay on time and their entitlement to benefits and credits. Where debts do arise, the Council aims to take prompt action in line with this policy.

The policy enables tenants to exercise their rights as Council tenants. It should provide Housing Staff with a reference on which they can base their decisions.

- 2.2 The Council's Housing Service (the Council) aims to keep rent arrears and other debts at the lowest possible level, in order to maximise income to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and to demonstrate good financial management.
- 2.3 The policy formalises existing practice in Powys.
- 2.4 The policy's contents are as follows:
- 1 Informing and advising tenants
  - 2 Rental charges
  - 3 Rechargeable repairs
  - 4 Leasehold flats charges
  - 5 Former occupier debt
  - 6 Other charges and garage rents

- 7 Writing off debt
- 8 Equalities
- 9 Reviewing decisions, complaints and compliments
- 10 Review of the income collection and recovery policy.

2.5 Draft versions of the policy have been discussed with:

- Policies subgroup of the Tenants' Liaison Forum
- Legal Services
- Relevant Housing staff

2.6 A public consultation was carried out. The key findings are attached to this report.

### **3 Proposal**

3.1 This report seeks approval for an Income Collection and Recovery Policy which will apply to all income generated from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets.

### **4 One Powys Plan**

4.1 This policy will enable to sustain and improve income collection and recovery. It is not expected the policy will result in higher collection rates, as it formalises current practice and income collection is already a high priority for the Service.. The policy aims to support people in Council housing to check and use benefits and credits they are entitled to receive. This is existing practice.

### **5 Preferred Choice and Reasons**

5.1 The preferred choice is to approve the policy to ensure consistency across the County.

5.2 The second choice is not to approve the policy. This would mean that there is a risk Officers will use slightly different approaches to base their decisions upon.

### **6 Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc**

6.1 The policy formalises current practice.

### **7 Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing**

7.1 The policy formalises current practice. .

### **8 Local Member(s)**

8.1 This policy applies to all Council HRA property in Powys.

## **9 Other Front Line Services**

9.1 There will be no changes to other front line services. This policy confirms existing practice.

## **10 Support Services (Legal, Finance, HR, ICT, BPU)**

10.1 Legal - The Professional Lead - Legal supports the proposal recommended in this report as it is important that such a policy is in place so that the housing service can be transparent equal and uniform in its approach towards income collection and recovery.

10.2 Finance – The Finance Business Partner notes the content of the report which will ensure consistency across Powys in regards to income collection and recovery.

10.3 There will be no changes to support services. This policy confirms existing practice.

## **11 Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc**

11.1. The following stakeholders have been invited to read the policy and provide comments as part of the public consultation.

- all Housing staff
- Heads of Service
- Tenants' Liaison Forum members
- Housing Services Group 100
- Powys Teaching Health Board
- PAVO
- Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
- Disability Powys
- Age Cymru Powys
- Shelter Cymru
- Tai Pawb
- Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru

11.2. Consultation responses are detailed in the consultation report, appendix B.

## **12 Communications**

12.1 The new policy will be published on the corporate website. Individual Council tenants will be informed of the policy through Open House Magazine and the Tenant Engagement Facebook page. The Tenants' Liaison Forum Members will be informed. There will be a link on the Council's Housing Service intranet page to the corporate website.

## **13 Statutory Officers**

13.1 The Deputy Monitoring Officer notes the content of the report, the legal comment and has nothing further to comment upon.

13.2 The Strategic Director Resources (S151 Officer) notes the comments made by Finance.

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
<b>To approve the Income Collection and Recovery Policy for HRA property.</b>	<b>The policy formalises current good practice and ensures consistency across Powys.</b>

<b>Relevant Policy (ies):</b>			
<b>Within Policy:</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Within Budget:</b>	<b>Y</b>

<b>Relevant Local Member(s):</b>	<b>All</b>
----------------------------------	------------

<b>Person(s) To Implement Decision:</b>	<b>David Roffey</b>
<b>Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:</b>	<b>1 February 2017</b>

<b>Contact Officer Name:</b>	<b>Tel:</b>	<b>Fax:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
Henk Jan Kuipers	07917172854	-	<a href="mailto:henk.jan.kuipers@powys.gov.uk">henk.jan.kuipers@powys.gov.uk</a>

**Background Papers used to prepare Report:**

- CIH practice online
- Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords

**Appendices**

Appendix A: Proposed Income Collection and Recovery Policy

Appendix B: Key findings from consultation

Appendix C: Impact assessment

F:\wlegal\Clarence\Reports\BOARD REPORT TEMPLATE VERSION 6