

Appendix B

Key findings report

Cyngor Sir Powys County Council

Housing Services
Income Collection and Recovery Policy
Public Consultation

Date of report : 9 November 2016
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1. Key findings and conclusion

The respondents give support to the policy. They find it easy to read and no one indicates that any part of the policy discriminates against anyone. Comments and suggestions have led to improving the wording of the policy.

2. Background

2.1. Background to the policy and purpose of consultation

The Council's Housing Service (the Service) is landlord of around 5,400 Council homes, 110 leasehold flats and 2,000 garages. It 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 aims to 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 should enable tenants to exercise their rights as Council tenants. It should provide Housing Staff with a reference on which they can base their decisions.

The consultation enabled Housing staff, other Council Services, tenant representatives and external stakeholders to provide their views.

2.2. Background to the consultation and engagement

A draft policy was discussed with members of the Tenants' Liaison Forum's Housing Policies Sub-Group prior to the public consultation. The members are experienced in giving feedback on policies and recommendations on improving Housing services.

The proposed policy and a survey response form were sent to:

- all Housing staff
- Heads of Service
- Tenants' Liaison Forum members
- Housing Services Group 100

The following external stakeholders have been sent the proposed policy and response form:

- Powys Teaching Health Board
- PAVO
- Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
- Disability Powys
- Age Cymru Powys

- Shelter Cymru
- Tai Pawb
- Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru.

In addition the consultation was advertised on the Powys County Council Tenant Engagement Facebook page.

There was a four week response period.

The consultation process was agreed with the Corporate Consultation Officer.

The Housing Service consults with Tenant Service Monitors and Tenants' Liaison Forum Policies Sub Group to improve the consultation process.

Feed back has been that it should be considered to offer the option to fill in a questionnaire on line. Previously, an on line survey was used for the WHQS compliance policy. The WHQS compliance consultation was published on the Council's "Have your say" page. Developing this facility required additional staff resource, including staff from other services than the Housing Service. The response rates were very low and it was considered not worth the extra effort to have an on line survey in addition to the e-mailed questionnaire. People can opt for questionnaires on paper instead of e-mail.

2.3. Response rate

Thirteen completed questionnaires have been received. Eleven are from Council tenants, one from a County Councillor and one from someone working for the Council. None of the external stakeholders have responded.

Although the response numbers are relatively small, there is no indication additional responses would have highlighted any additional issues.

2.4. Profile data

Sex

Female	8
Male	4
No answer	1

Age

Under 18	0
18-35 years	0
35-59 years	3
60 or over	9
No answer	1

Disability

day-to-day activities limited a lot	1
day-to-day activities limited a little	6
day-to-day activities not limited	6

Welsh

Speak Welsh	3
Speak, read and write Welsh	0
No Welsh skills	10

The response numbers are small, but it stands out no people under the age of 35 have responded.

2.5. A note about market research and consultations

When conducting market research companies use a margin of error and confidence level to ensure that their results are robust and representative of the population they are seeking views from. (I.e. the population of interest).

A consultation however isn't market research as people choose to respond and are not contacted using a sampling methodology. People self-select so sometimes when conducting a consultation you only hear the views of the people who are either strongly in favour or strongly object to a proposal. The silent majority may not have given a view. However when we analyse any consultation results we do consider how robust they are in terms of the population of interest.

When conducting consultation exercise Powys County Council works to the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales.

<http://www.participationcymru.org.uk/national-principles>

3. Question by question analysis

Question 1: Do you find the policy easy or difficult to understand?

Answers

easy	12
difficult	0
No answer	1

Question 2: Please tell us if you find anything unclear

Question 3: Do you feel there is something missing in the policy? Does anything needs changing?

The following comments were received. Below each comment is the response.

A. 2.2.b. / 3.2.c.: fax? Seriously? This is the 21st century.

Response: removed the ways in which the Council may contact tenants.

B. 3.: explain clearly what a rechargeable debt is.

Response: added the following: “Rechargeable repairs are repairs that are the responsibility of the tenant or leaseholder and carried out by the Council.”

C. 4.2.d.: sentence doesn't make sense. “known more vulnerable”

Response: standard home visits to known vulnerable tenants who are in debt has been removed. It is Housing staff's responsibility to communicate in an effective way. Staff will have to follow the Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords. This protocol includes communicating with vulnerable tenants. The proposed policy states that Housing staff will work closely with the Supporting People Team, Money Advice Team and with external agencies, to support tenants in maximising their income and paying their debt in order to sustain tenancies.

D. 1.2.e. / 4.2.b.: change to

- i. Direct Debit
- ii. PayPoint (cash only) – a Council Rent swipe card is necessary
- iii. Post Office (cash, cheque or debit card) – a Council Rent swipe card is necessary
- iv. By debit or credit card – online/via the automated phone line/over the phone

Response: changed.

E. 2.3.c.+d.: confusing – is there a word or two missing from d?

Response: deleted part of the sentence.

Question 4: If you think our policy does discriminate or puts a person at a disadvantage compared to another person we would like to hear your views.

The Housing Service wants to be fair to everyone and not discriminate anyone. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- age
- being or becoming a transsexual person
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or having a child
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

No responses were recorded, other than that there would be no discrimination.