

## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

County Council  
13<sup>th</sup> July 2017

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Jonathan Wilkinson, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Countryside Services

**SUBJECT:** Question from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe

### Question

Following queries raised by residents that they are being charged for washing line rental and have to share with other tenants, as well as alarm call cover they do not even have set up on their weekly rental break down, can the portfolio please provide a breakdown of the list of what council tenants could be charged (including cost) and how they are able to opt out of these charges if they do not receive or wish to receive them as part of their rent?

### Answer

Before the financial year 2016/17, the cost of managing and maintaining council housing was spread equally across all tenants regardless of the services they received. The introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 required local authorities to introduce service charges to tenants who receive additional services. This was introduced by the Welsh Government to take account of changes introduced into the Housing Benefit system, by the UK Government, which meant that some types of charges were no longer eligible for Housing Benefit. Therefore since 2016/2017 the Council, to comply with the 2014 Act has had to separate the costs of additional services and charge them to tenants and leaseholders who receive the 'additional services', in the form of a service charge. Therefore where the Council supplies washing lines, the tenants can expect to be charged for this service.

Individual tenants are not generally able to opt out of paying service charges, however if tenants collectively come up with an alternative solution, this may be considered.

The information in the table below gives the schedule of Service Charges levied in the current financial year.

Service	Highest Weekly	Lowest Weekly Charge Where	How Calculated
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	Charge		Charged (NB many residents have a zero charge for most items)		
	16/17	17/18	16/17	17/18	
Grounds maintenance (for flats and bungalows only)	£2.10	£1.33	£.04	0.04	Calculated on a site by site basis, based on actual meterage and the cost of the contract.
Cleaning of communal areas	£1.15	£1.20	£1.15	£1.20	Based on the global cost of the contract divided by all recipients of the service.
Communal Heating and Lighting	£1.01	£0.73	£1.01	£0.73	Based on the cost of the service globally divided by all recipients.
Fire Safety Work	£1.61	£1.66	£0.21	£0.08	Based on actual costs per block and divided by all residents of the block.
TV Aerials	£0.52	£0.17	£0.01	£0.04	Based on the costs associated with each aerial and divided by all potential recipients.
Repairs to Entrance Doors	£5.13	£1.84	£.0.06	£0.06	Based on actual costs per block and divided by all residents of the block.
Communal Washing Lines	£.05	£0.26	£0.04	£0.03	Based on actual costs per block and divided by all residents of the block.
Sewerage Treatment	N/A	£4.62	N/A	£4.62	Based on the cost of the service contract for 2017/18 (this year's figure is used because the figure for 2016/17 was uncompetitive). The costs of additional repairs in 2016/17 is added, with the cost spread over 5 years. The running costs ie electricity and grounds maintenance. All costs pooled between all recipients of the service so each user is charged the same amount.

Lift Maintenance	N/A	£6.49	N/A	£6.49	Costs split equally between all tenants
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All tenants were made aware of these charges, along with their rent liability, 4 weeks prior to the start of the new financial year. The Housing Service does produce rent statements for tenants upon request. The statement details the charges on their account and payments received. We previously produced quarterly rent statements but have moved to producing them on request, due to the costs of postage and the fact that tenants had requested this information in alternative formats eg via e-mail.

In respect of community alarms, these have been placed in all of our older persons' and are considered a feature of the property. Therefore alarms will not be removed from the property and we will in the near future be renewing the alarms in all of the council's older persons' accommodation.

If a tenant does not wish to make use of the service then that is their choice but they will still be liable to pay the weekly charge. It should be noted that those tenants who receive full Housing Benefit, the cost of the alarm is covered by the payment of Supporting People Programme Grant and therefore the tenants contribution is nil.