



RECHARGE POLICY

OVERALL PURPOSE

- To ensure the maximisation of financial resources available to West North West homes Leeds and the efficient and effective maintenance of housing stock and other services
- To link with other strategic documentation and policies, particularly the value for money agenda of West North West homes Leeds, which is seeking to ensure good cost and quality service provision for all customers
- To provide a framework in which a consistent approach is undertaken to the recharge of services, where provision has been as a result of specific customer request, or in response to the deliberate actions of the customer, resulting in damage to property or other assets managed by West North West homes Leeds
- This will also include the recharge of services to leaseholders or owner occupiers, where upon special request, these customers are included in specific schemes of capital improvement
- An approach which will take account of the individual circumstances of each customer and provide the flexibility to Officers, for waiver of charges, where such exceptions allow
- Builds on the comments made in and distributed through the Tenant Handbook
- A need to align with other policies adopted by the organisation, specifically on the recovery of outstanding charges from vulnerable client groups

INTRODUCTION

The Policy will be underpinned by the following principles –

- This organisation is committed to delivering a service which is fair, equitable and transparent
- It will be supported by detailed procedures and agreed practices, which will be consistently applied across the housing service

- Tenants will be made aware through the Handbook, of circumstances in which charges may apply, but specifically connected to wilful damage, neglect and abuse of the property
- Each case will be assessed on individual merits and discretion will be exercised in such circumstances to take account of age, health and disability of the customer

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- The range of recharges made are included in section 3 of this policy and the recovery rates by item and area will be the subject of ongoing performance review, to ensure income returns are properly maximised
- It is also proposed to monitor the number of recharges raised over a period of time to detect any trend, or whether the fullest communication of the policy will act as a deterrent and reduce the need to raise and levy invoices

RECHARGE POLICY

1.0 Statement of Intent

- 1.1 West North West homes Leeds will ensure this Recharge Policy Statement operates to deliver the following -
- Tenants and other customers will be recharged for costs for which they are responsible (including leaseholders and owner occupiers) and clear guidance is in place to support this approach, including payment arrangements
 - Such costs will be recovered effectively and efficiently, using a consistent approach
 - Tenants are responsible for the conduct of all persons in the household, including any visitors to the property, where a possibility of wilful damage may arise
 - Agreements in place with customers are adhered to and enforced where appropriate
 - West North West homes Leeds will not recharge where repairs are due to *fair wear and tear*, or where a crime number (or reference number provided by the contact centre facility operated by the police force) has been reported to the organisation, following damage to a property
 - The policy, upon adoption will be placed on the website of West North West homes Leeds and will signpost the customer to areas of assistance or where further enquiries need to be made

- Is further underpinned by advice to former tenants, of their responsibility to leave the property in a good clean condition, otherwise following inspection an invoice will be raised for the full cost of the necessary repair works

2.0 Outline of Service

2.1 West North West homes Leeds will provide a number of procedures for Officers and customers of the organisation which are designed to –

- Outline the process of recharging for repairs, including possible recovery of cost through customer own personal contents insurance
- Outline the basis for calculation of the charge
- Inform tenants of the payment arrangements and action which will be taken if payment is not made, but ensures alignment with other existing corporate debt policy and weekly repayment amounts agreed as a result of the adoption of this
- Monitor the performance of rechargeable repairs in order to seek continuous improvement
- Allow degrees of flexibility on the levy of recharges, where the damage is caused as a result of vandalism and a crime reference number obtained
- Allow current and former tenants a right of appeal, within 14 days of receipt of invoice, if dissatisfied with the basis on which the recharge is to be made, using the Complaints Procedure of West North West homes Leeds

3.0 Charging Criteria

3.1 This organisation will seek to recharge in the following circumstances (this list may be added to over time and as an element of the annual review of policy) -

- Legal costs incurred in dealing with no access issues for gas servicing and anti social behaviour
- For the cost of repairs due to wilful damage or neglect, the removal of graffiti and reinstatement works following fire or flood, where insufficient insurance cover has been provided by the customer
- Costs incurred through missed appointments, where the responsibility lies with the customer
- A request for emergency repairs, when the work required is assessed as being of a priority or general nature
- The cost of replacement keys, fobs, internal and external locks (including garage doors) and forced entry required as a consequence of loss
- All glass to external doors and windows

- The restoration of power supply, where loss has been caused by appliances owned by the customer
 - Burst water pipes and any subsequent damage where the premises have been temporarily vacated and the tenant has failed to turn off water supplies
 - Any damage caused by faulty household appliances
 - Costs of removing rubbish, including abandoned vehicles
 - Costs of storing, removing and disposing of household contents, including furniture
 - The costs associated with owner occupiers choosing to buy in to schemes of capital improvement, managed by West North West homes Leeds
 - Where transfers and mutual exchanges have been authorised, any costs preceding or following such activity (particularly relating to wilful damage or neglect) will be recharged
- 3.2 West North West homes Leeds will ask the customer to sign and return a Recharge Liability Form, which will show an estimated cost of works, before any repairs commence.
- 3.3 The customer will have the right to have the repairs undertaken by a third party, but they must be to the organisation's standard, if not a recharge will be levied if West North West homes Leeds have to undertake this.

4.0 Review

- 4.1 The recovery of recharge will be dependent on the quality of internal record keeping, including use of supporting evidence from the individual house-file and the use of this information and successful recovery of cost will form an important element of the review.
- 4.2 It will also be the responsibility of the Chief Executive, Head of Finance and Corporate Services and other members of the Senior Management Team to ensure an annual report on the recharge policy, including recovery and performance is provided to the Directors of West North West homes Leeds.
- 4.3 A cost benefit analysis will be undertaken as an element of the review, particularly the economic advantage accruing to the organisation, in the pursuit of outstanding recharges (whilst it is recognised there will be additional income streams to the organisation, the administration of a more comprehensive recharging system, may involve further staffing costs)
- 4.3 Such cost benefit analysis will also explore the practical possibilities (including any data protection issues) of pursuing compensation through the small claims court for criminal damage caused by third parties.
- 4.4 The recharge policy and amendments proposed will also be taken through the

Item 4.5
Appendix 1

Customer Sounding Boards and Service Improvement Groups, for feedback and comment.

