

**Title: Draft Recharges Policy**  
**Lead Officer: Lisa Barker**  
**Portfolio Holder: Jan Matecki**  
**Public report**  
**Wards of the District directly affected: All**

Contrary to the policy framework: No  
 Contrary to the budgetary framework: No  
 Key Decision: Yes  
 Included within the Forward Plan: Yes  
 Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: Yes  
 Consultation & Community Engagement: Yes  
 Final Decision: No  
 Accessibility checked: Yes

**Officer/Councillor Approval**

| <b>Officer Approval</b>                | <b>Date</b> | <b>Name</b>  |
|--|-------------|--------------|
| Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive | 03/06/2021  | Chris Elliot |
| Head of Service                        | 28/05/2021  | Lisa Barker  |
| CMT                                    | 16/06/2021  |              |
| Section 151 Officer                    | 08/06/2021  | Mike Snow    |
| Monitoring Officer                     | 08/06/2021  | Andrew Jones |
| Finance                                | 08/06/2021  | Mike Snow    |
| Portfolio Holder(s)                    | 09/06/2021  | Jan Matecki  |

### 1. Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to propose a policy that sets out how the Council will manage rechargeable repairs and associated charges to the Housing Revenue Account properties.
- 1.2. The policy outlines the recharge and recovery principles, the potential exemptions, including the recharging or waiving of charges decision making process. Importantly the policy also outlines in what circumstances residents may be recharged and the approach to appeals and complaints.

### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That Cabinet approves the policy at appendix 1 of this report.

### 3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1. The proposed policy aims to ensure that costs that arise from carrying out repairs where it is deemed the cost is rechargeable or where the costs are normally the responsibility of the tenant or leaseholder are recovered.
- 3.2. To produce a policy for recharges is good practice because it provides clear guidance and a consistent framework for residents and staff and conveys an important message that the properties must be looked after.
- 3.3. The policy supports, that where recharges must be levied and are not paid there is an effective recovery process to operate as an effective organisation and ensure value for money. Establishing a recharges policy was also an agreed management response to the Internal audit of Housing Repairs and Maintenance in September 2019.
- 3.4. The proposed policy was taken to the Housing and Property Policy Advisory Board and fully reviewed on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

### 4. Policy Framework

#### 4.1. Fit for the Future (FFF)

- 4.1.1. "The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects.
- 4.1.2. "The FFF Strategy has 3 strands, People, Services and Money, and each has an external and internal element to it, the details of which can be found [on the Council's website](#). The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy."

#### 4.2. FFF Strands

##### 4.2.1 External impacts of proposal(s)

**People - Health, Homes, Communities** - Housing repairs is a key customer service, health and safety is a priority concern and acts of damage

to council homes can impact not only on one household but also on other residents. The proposed policy supports health and safety, community cohesion, and supports how people feel about their local area and can therefore make a positive contribution to community safety.

**Services - Green, Clean, Safe - None**

**Money- Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment - None**

### 4.2.2. Internal impacts of the proposal(s)

**People - Effective Staff** – The policy provides clear guidance for staff when administering recharges and supporting residents through the process.

**Services - Maintain or Improve Services** – The policy will enable a fair but robust system for recharges that will assist in keeping properties well maintained.

**Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term** – By adopting clear recharge payment and recovery principles the means by which rechargeable works are accounted for and sums owed recovered will improve.

### 4.3. Supporting Strategies

- 4.3.1. Each strand of the FFF strategy has a number of supporting Strategies. The policy provides a framework in which a consistent approach is undertaken to recharging of services, where there have been deliberate actions by a resident resulting in damage to property. This supports the Housing and Homelessness Strategy by effectively managing and maintaining properties and enforcing tenant and Leaseholder agreements.

### 4.4. Changes to Existing Policies

- 4.4.1. This is a new policy which will enhance existing policies for managing and maintaining HRA properties.

### 4.5. Impact Assessments

- 4.5.1. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and this concluded that the policy does not propose any changes in respect of equalities, however the principles set out in the policy underpin the commitments to deliver a service which is fair, equitable and transparent and is consistently applied across the service.

## 5. Budgetary Framework

- 5.1. There are no budgetary implications resulting from this policy, all improvements to systems and processes are contained within existing budgets.

## **6. Risks**

- 6.1. There is a risk that potential income due from rechargeable repairs may not be identified, 'captured' and processed. The policy provides for clear guidance on what is a recharge, the recharge payment and recovery principles and the decision-making process to reduce the likelihood or probability that a recharge is not processed.

## **7. Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1. The option of not adopting a policy in this service area is not considered appropriate given one of the management responses to the recent Internal Audit of repairs and maintenance was to establish a recharge policy.

## **8. Background**

- 8.1. Consultation with residents was undertaken in two ways. Firstly, by posting the draft policy on the Council's website over a period of 6 weeks and inviting feedback via a dedicated email address. Secondly, engaging with a group of 10 residents who were asked to review the draft policy and complete and return a feedback form. The consultation via the website did not yield any responses. However, the consultation via the group of residents was more successful. The feedback from the 7 who participated was very positive. All considered that the policy was easy to understand, that the policy identified what and when there would be a rechargeable repair. Specific comments were that "it will save the Council money," "it clearly explains tenants responsibilities" and "tenants are given the opportunity to join the Council's affordable home contents insurance scheme".