

**WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**27 NOVEMBER 2018**

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**Title:**

**PROGRESS REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE  
WAVERLEY SCRUTINY GROUP'S REPORT ON RECHARGES**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Carole King]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

The Waverley Scrutiny Group completed a review on how the council manages the process of recharging certain costs to tenants and leaseholders. The report and recommendations were shared with the Committee in March 2018 and July 2018.

This report is an update informing the Committee how the Housing Service team has addressed the recommendations raised in the Waverley Scrutiny Group's report on recharges.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

The report supports the Value for Money corporate priorities.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

Having a clear policy on re-charges, and unambiguous procedures, ensures that tenants and leaseholders are treated fairly and consistently.

**Financial Implications:**

Implementation of the recommendations raised by the Waverley Scrutiny Group will ensure an improvement on the recouping of costs and also a more controlled, transparent and accurate interpretation of the information.

**Legal Implications:**

The process and legal basis for recharging tenants is set out in Waverley's tenancy agreement. Waverley will not make any charges if the court or the law says that it cannot do so. Tenants' responsibilities for repairs are set out under Section 8 (Repairs and Maintenance) of the tenancy agreement.

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**Background**

- 1 In September 2017 the Housing Service recruited a Recharge and Collections Officer to develop a recharge policy and process to hold tenants financially accountable for any damage and to support tenants requiring assistance with minor repairs and services.

- 2 The Waverley Scrutiny Group identified the pilot as an area of scrutiny reported their findings in February 2018. The comprehensive report from the Waverley Scrutiny Group covered the following:
  - whether the recharge policy and process is fit for purpose and fair to tenants and leaseholders
  - how the appropriate teams within the Housing Service are operating the new process
  - what systems are being used to monitor and regulate collection of recharges
  - what communication there has been to contractors and tenants in respect of recharge
  - how cost effective the new process will be and whether it provides value for money
  - what is being done to assist tenants in avoiding recharges, and
  - recommendations to improve the process.
- 3 A first draft action plan was presented to the committee in March 2018. It was recommended for the action plan to be amended and submitted to the next committee in July 2018
- 4 In July 2018 all 14 of the identified recommendations were accepted and work had commenced on all actions and eight had been completed
- 5 Completed recommendations included:
  - the review of the Recharge Policy to reflect officer decision making and responsibilities
  - new accountancy system codes have also been created to easily identify and report on recharges, and
  - new tenants are encouraged to take up home insurance
- 6 Work was in progress for the remaining six recommendations all expected to be completed by September 2018
- 7 It was recommended that a progress report on implementation of recommendations and details of the number of recharges and income received was provided for the committee in November 2018

### **Progress Update July to November 2018**

- 8 Work has been completed on all six remaining actions and recommendations have become incorporated into the process.
- 9 Completed recommendations included new forms, leaflet, training and reporting. Please refer Annexe One for full details of recommendations and actions taken.

### **Caseload**

- 10 The number of recharge invoices issued to date is 277, with a total charge of £52,488.29.

11 So far £14,427.03 has been recovered which is a collection rate of 27.49%

## **Conclusion**

12 All the recommendations have been actioned and completed supporting a clear policy and process. The recharge project is relatively new but a positive start has been made with raising awareness of the policy and tenant responsibilities.

13 There have been internal challenges with resources for the pilot. Therefore the pilot has been extended from September 2018 until the end of March 2019.

14 Further work is required to improve collection rates and the pilot will be reviewed in February 2018.

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## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. thanks the Waverley Scrutiny Group for their report;
2. agrees the implementation of the scrutiny recommendations and action plan, and
3. agrees any observations or recommendations regarding the recharges pilot

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## **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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