

Response by Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, to recommendation from the Finance & Performance Panel, read out at Cabinet meeting on 15 July 2020.

Recommendation

That the Council reviews the service charges it makes to Council housing tenants to ensure current levels reflect actual costs.

Response

The Council takes its responsibilities towards tackling poverty and extremely seriously and recognises that now is a particularly sensitive time financially for many. To ensure that tenants are not overcharged a selection of the charges made to tenants are reviewed each year. This has proven to be a cost-effective means of monitoring charging levels. It is worth noting that previous reviews have indicated minimal differences between the charges levied by the Council and its actual expenditure (between five and ten pence per week).

When we reconcile the actual charges for leaseholders each year, we compare those costs against the tenant service charges in the blocks and then make any changes to tenant service charges ahead of budget setting for the following year. It should be noted that the accounting periods for tenants and leaseholders are different so the charges won't be completely identical but they are usually very similar.

Where the Council has found discrepancies it has made changes, previously removing the window cleaning charges when the service was not fully delivered. It is the intention of the Council to continue to review the suitability its charging schedule and make any adjustments as required. This will obviously be especially important this year in view of the circumstances.

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