



Rechargeable Repairs

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1. Purpose of the Policy

This Policy sets out the council's approach for recharging tenants and leaseholders for repairs and other services carried out by the council as a landlord, for responsive repairs or the reinstatement of void properties that are the responsibility of tenants and leaseholders through neglect, damage, anti-social behaviour or other activities.

The policy will be underpinned by a Rechargeable Repairs procedure, which will set out the steps for staff to follow in responding to repair requests, identifying and notifying of recharging and the administration of the charging and recovery processes.

2. Aim

The council is committed to managing expenditure for repairs and maintenance by focussing resources on improving the housing stock for all and for ensuring that there is a culture of accountability and responsibility for those residents who do not take appropriate care of a valuable public asset.

We aim to:

- Operate a flexible approach to rechargeable repairs that takes individual circumstances and situations into account when deciding whether to recharge, and use repairs, property and tenancy data to signpost vulnerable tenants to services that will support them in their homes and allow their tenancies to remain sustainable.
- Provide residents with clear information about their rights and responsibilities under their respective occupancy agreements and when the council carries out a repair that is not its usual responsibility, that it may be rechargeable to them.
- Reduce the number of reported rechargeable repairs carried out by the council through property inspections and tenancy audits, provision of support and intervention for failing tenancies or vulnerable tenants and effective first point of contact repair handling systems to identify and respond appropriately to repair requests.
- Through the RMI contract and the establishment of a trading partnership, we will provide access to a service that can undertake repair, building and improvement works on behalf of tenants, which will be to the required standard and at cost linked to the contract rates within the RMI contract.

3. Policy Statement

Publicity and Promotion

We will:

- Actively promote and reinforce landlord and tenant responsibilities within our tenancy and licence agreements and handbooks.
- Publish supporting information about repairing responsibilities in or on all our communication channels with tenants, such as Streets Ahead, the Council's website, Tenant Portal and leaflets.

- Promote the council's Tenants' Insurance Scheme, which provides protection against insured risks, including optional accidental insurance cover, so that tenants can protect themselves against incidents or damage that could be rechargeable.
- Ensure all our stakeholders and partners, including statutory, voluntary and other support agencies are aware of this policy so that appropriate support and assistance can be provided to vulnerable people or those who are receiving help to manage their tenancies.

Definition of rechargeable repair

- Any repair to correct a one or more defects within a dwelling accepted and carried about by the council that is contractually the tenant's responsibility.
- Any repair to correct a defect within a dwelling that is a landlord responsibility repair but has become necessary owing to an act of damage, or ongoing neglect or lack of care in looking after the dwelling.
- Any repair to an asset owned by the council that has been caused by a visitor or other person lawfully or unlawfully on council land and whose identify is or becomes known to the council.

Definition of void repairs

- Any repair or work carried out by the council to a vacant property was the responsibility of the outgoing tenant to rectify under the terms and conditions of their tenancy and which was not completed prior to their vacation. This includes any damage caused to the property between the date of vacation and return of the keys to the council's offices.
- Any rectification works carried out by the council to unauthorised or unsatisfactory alterations the property by the tenant that are discovered after the tenant has ended.
- The clearance of rubbish, furniture and belongings, including any associated storage costs where appropriate, and any specialist, forensic or deep clean required to the property to make it safe to allow for the commencement of empty property works.

Other costs and services

Any other costs incurred by the council in responding to tenancy or occupancy related matters, such as: professional fees surveying, assessing and remediating any unauthorised alterations; legal and other professional fees relating to tenancy breaches or enforcement action.

Identifying and notification of recharging - repairs

We will:

- Identify accurately whether a repair is rechargeable at first point of contact by understanding carefully the information being given to us.

- Give tenants the opportunity to make their own arrangements to carry out any potentially rechargeable repairs.
- Give a reasonable amount of time to make these arrangements and check they have been completed.
- Carry out the repair and recharge the tenant if the repair is not completed within this timescale or rectify the repair if it has not been carried out a satisfactory standard
- Normally agree to carry out repairs that are the tenant's responsibility in order to preserve the health and safety of the occupants, or to preserve the safety of the dwelling or neighbours who could be affected by its condition and to recharge the tenant for such works.
- Notify tenants when a repair will be rechargeable and in most circumstances provide a fixed cost for the type of repair reported. This figure will be the amount recharged, unless the repair required is found to be substantially different to that originally reported.
- Arrange to carry out an inspection following receipt of a notice to terminate a tenancy and identify any repairs that are the tenants' responsibility to complete before they vacate their home.
- Recharge any repairs not completed before keys are returned to the council or for any previously unidentified repairs arising during vacation.

Exemption categories

We will not recharge tenants for repairs if they, or the nature of the repair meets one of the following categories:

Over 65 years of age	- For joint tenancies both tenants must be over 65.
Registered Disabled	- No further information required
Victim of domestic violence *	- No further information required
Victim of racial harassment *	- No further information required
Victim of criminal damage	- A crime reference number must be provided before the repair is undertaken.
Medical condition *	- A member of the household suffers from a medical condition that makes them unable to control their behaviour.

Safeguarding and tenancy support services

We will ensure that we implement safeguarding and tenancy support protocols to provide help and assistance to tenants and their household if those needs are identified during the handling of a rechargeable repair.

Implementing the recharge

We will:

- Confirm the intention to recharge in writing and issue a written final notification, cost breakdown and payment invoice and provide advice and information on ways to pay.
- In most cases, raise a recharge onto a sub-account connected to the tenant's main rent or charges account. Where recharging to a rent or charges account is not possible, or where the person being recharged is not the tenant, we will raise an invoice through the council's debtor system.
- Monitor outstanding balances and have a recovery process that complements the normal rent arrears recovery process, or which escalates through corporate debt recovery procedures when there is no tenancy involved.

Use of rechargeable repair information

We will:

- Use property repair histories, including rechargeable repairs, as an indicator to how every tenancy and property is performing.
- Take the condition of a property and any incidents of rechargeable repairs into account when reviewing tenancies for conversion from introductory to secure or flexible, or in reviewing a fixed term tenancy to decide whether a further fixed term tenancy should be granted.
- We will use rechargeable repair type trends to identify any pro-active support, help, information guides and training can be provided to tenants to enable them manage repairs to their homes themselves.

4. How we will monitor this policy

We will provide statistical information on a quarterly basis through the Neighbourhood Services KPI dashboard. This data will include:

- Number of rechargeable repairs raised
- Value of recharges debited to accounts/invoices issued
- Value of rechargeable debt outstanding and amount collected

5. Further Information/Reading

Slough Borough Council tenancy and licence agreements, tenancy and leaseholders handbook

Housing Acts 1985, 1988 (assured/assured shorthold tenancies), 2004

Landlord and Tenant Act 1985

The Equality Act 2010