

**Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing
and Safer Neighbourhoods**

20 September 2018

Report of the Assistant Director of Housing and
Community Safety

Introduction of a Responsive Repairs and Rechargeable Repairs Policy

Summary

1. This report outlines the reasons why a decision has been taken to introduce a Responsive Repairs and Rechargeable Repairs Policy; the methodology used to develop this and the key changes that will be introduced if these policies are approved.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member is asked to
 - a) Agree the rationale for introducing this policy
 - b) Approve the attached policies

Reason: This will ensure consistency in decision making around repairs and maximise income from rechargeable repairs.

Background

Current position

3. CYC does not currently have an all encompassing Responsive Repairs and Recharge Policy. Information relating to repairs is contained in various locations, including:
 - Tenancy agreements
 - Fact sheets
 - CYC website

- Internal documents that are not publicised to tenants

4. A Repairs Policy is essential for any housing provider as it fulfils a number of functions:

- It ensures that all tenants are treated in a fair and equitable manner and are aware of the service standards they can expect
- It ensures all CYC employees are making consistent decisions and giving consistent advice. With a strong policy in place, all employees will have increased confidence in decision making, including trades people, reducing the need for inspections and second visits to properties.
- Clearly defining what repairs we will and will not complete will reduce expenditure on repairs as fewer discretionary repairs will be completed.
- It will assist with managing disrepair claims – by being clear what is and isn't our responsibility and our expectations of our tenants we have a stronger position to deal with disrepair claims.
- A Repairs Policy demonstrates that CYC is meeting its obligations under the Right to Repair scheme
- Having a Repairs Policy will assist CYC in demonstrating that we meet the requirement in the Homes Standard to *“provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time”*

5. The proposed policies have been developed by a group of employees from across the directorate to ensure the needs of all service areas are met. Best practice from other similar organisations was considered with the review of numerous other organisation's policies; alongside the current CYC literature and the experiences of employees to ensure the policies meet the specific needs of CYC.

6. The key changes included in the proposed policies are:

- For Rechargeable Repairs an emphasis on 'payment up front'. Where a repair is not considered a Health and Safety issue then the tenant will be required to pay for the repair before any work is undertaken; this would include items such as damaged internal doors. Where a repair is considered a Health and Safety issue; for example, broken glass in a window. Payment will be requested up front, if the tenant is unable to pay the full amount a proportion of

the payment will be requested. In circumstances where the repair is urgent and places the tenant at risk if it is not completed and they are unable to make any payment CYC will continue to carry out the repair and invoice after the work has been done. If a rechargeable repair is required out of hours then no up front payment will currently be required; although possible changes at 'Be Independent' who take out of hours repairs calls may make it feasible for payments to be taken out of hours.

- In the Responsive Repairs Policy we have added a comprehensive appendix detailing Tenant and Landlord responsibilities; whilst this does not contain major changes to current ways of working it may exclude some repairs that are currently carried out because of lack of clarity.
- Introduced the concept of 'gifting' certain items to tenants on start of a tenancy so that CYC does not retain the repair obligation for these items – this applies predominantly to wood garden sheds and built in ovens / hobs.

Consultation

7. Employees across Housing Services and Building Services have been involved in the development of the policies and drafts widely circulated for comment. They have also been discussed as the Tenant Scrutiny Panel on 9 July 2018.

Options

8. **Option 1:** The policies are approved and adopted. This will involve a communication exercise to both employees and tenants to ensure that all were fully informed of the new policies and they were applied with consistency by all employees.

Option 2: Continue with current arrangements.

Analysis of Options

9. The adoption of these policies will allow a number of benefits to be achieved. These include:
 - A consistent approach to Repairs delivered by all CYC employees
 - Increased clarity for employees and tenants on what repairs CYC will and will not complete
 - Increased recovery rate for rechargeable repairs
 - Decreased expenditure on discretionary repairs

10. Whilst not adopting the policies will not have a significant detrimental impact on the service provided, the current status quo will be maintained and the identified benefits will not be achieved.

Council Plan

11. Introducing a Responsive Repairs and Rechargeable Repairs Policy is aligned to the following key priorities for the council.
- **a prosperous city for all** - where local businesses can thrive and residents have good quality jobs, housing and opportunities. *This proposal will assist in ensuring the Council Housing tenants have good quality housing by focussing spend on the repairs that matter.*
 - **a focus on frontline services** - to ensure all residents, particularly the least advantaged, can access reliable services and community facilities . *Responsive Repairs is a key frontline service delivered to CYC council house tenants; these policies will ensure that these services are delivered consistently to all tenants.*

Implications

12. Financial

- There are no cost implications to the introduction of these policies – any training and communication will be delivered within existing resources.
- Cost savings should be seen through less ‘discretionary repairs’ being undertaken and increased income from recharges.
- The Recharge Policy may well lead to increased revenue collection from Recharges. Even with this revised policy we would not anticipate collection rate to be much in excess of 25% - in a typical year Repairs Recharges are approximately £37k – the new policy would increase this with additional recharges in Void properties. Assuming an increase to invoiced amount to £50k this would lead to collection of £12.5k / annum.

Human Resources (HR). Impact on a number of different groups of employees:

- **Customer Support Officers** – will be required to take payments over the telephone which will be a new responsibility, however, this is included in their job descriptions and the software is available internally to allow

this to be done and training will be provided to ensure they are aware of the guidance around taking card payments.

- **All employees:** with detailed clarity on what is considered to be CYC responsibility with regards to repairs there may be an increased requirement to say 'no'. This may require training in Customer Care and methods of dealing with these conversations

- **Equalities**

One of the stated aims of introducing this policy is to ensure consistency in the way that we deliver our repairs service.

- **Legal**

Legal advice has been sought and the Senior Solicitor (Property) has provided amendments to the policy and confirmed it complies with all relevant legislation.

- **Crime and Disorder - None**

- **Information Technology (IT)**

- Updates will be required to the CYC website pages referencing repairs
- Roll out of the software required to take payments - Financial Transactions Manager aware.

- **Property – none**

- **Other**

Risk Management

1. Key risks and mitigations are as follows:

ref	Risk	Mitigating Action
a)	Increased complaints / decreased customer satisfaction due to reduced scope of what is considered landlord's responsibility with regards to repairs.	Multi channel Communication Plan for the new policy to ensure that tenants are aware of the changes and the reasons for them

ref	Risk	Mitigating Action
b)	CYC employees fail to embrace and fully implement the policies	Briefing notes will be prepared for the launch highlighting the key points; articles included in newsletters; use made of email reminders and trades people briefed at tool box talks with laminated summaries of CYC / Tenant responsibilities.

Contact Details

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**Report
Approved**



Date 12/09/2018

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex A – Draft Responsive Repairs and Rechargeable Repairs Policy