



**Notice of a public
Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing & Safer
Neighbourhoods**

To: Councillor Douglas (Executive Member)
Date: Thursday, 25 October 2018
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: The King John Room (GO59) - West Offices

AGENDA

Notice to Members – Post Decision Calling In:

Members are reminded that, should they wish to call in any item* on this agenda, notice must be given to Democratic Services by **4:00 pm** on **Monday 29 October 2018**.

*With the exception of matters that have been the subject of a previous call in, require Full Council approval or are urgent which are not subject to the call-in provisions. Any called in items will be considered by the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee.

Written representations in respect of items on this agenda should be submitted to Democratic Services by 5.00pm on Tuesday 23 October 2018

1. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, the Executive Member is asked to declare:

- any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests
- any prejudicial interests or
- any disclosable pecuniary interests

which they may have in respect of business on this agenda

2. Minutes (Pages 1 - 2)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 September 2018.

3. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting, members of the public who have registered to speak can do so. The deadline for registering is **5.00pm on Wednesday 24 October**. Members of the public can speak on agenda items or matters within the Executive Member's remit.

To register to speak please contact the Democracy Officer for the meeting, on the details at the foot of the agenda.

Filming, Recording or Webcasting Meetings

Please note that, subject to available resources, this meeting will be filmed and webcast, or recorded, including any registered public speakers who have given their permission. The broadcast can be viewed at <http://www.york.gov.uk/webcasts> or, if recorded, this will be uploaded onto the Council's website following the meeting.

Residents are welcome to photograph, film or record Councillors and Officers at all meetings open to the press and public. This includes the use of social media reporting, i.e. tweeting. Anyone wishing to film, record or take photos at any public meeting should contact the Democracy Officers (contact details are at the foot of this agenda) in advance of the meeting.

The Council's protocol on Webcasting, Filming & Recording of Meetings ensures that these practices are carried out in a manner both respectful to the conduct of the meeting and all those present. It can be viewed at

https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/11406/protocol_for_webcasting_filming_and_recording_of_council_meetings_20160809

4. Former Rent Arrears - write off debts over £5000 (Pages 3 - 8)

This report seeks approval from the Executive Member to write off former rent arrears over £5000, where there is no realistic prospect of repayment.

5. Urgent Business

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officer:

Chris Elliott

Contact details:

- Telephone - (01904) 553631
- Email - christopher.elliott@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democratic Services Officers responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports and
- For receiving reports in other formats

Contact details are set out above.

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

 (01904) 551550

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City of York Council

Committee Minutes

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods
Date	20 September 2018
Present	Councillor Douglas

10. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, the Executive Member was asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they had on the business on the agenda. No additional interests were declared.

11. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2018 be approved and then signed by the Executive Member as a correct record.

12. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

13. Introduction of a Responsive Repairs and Rechargeable Repairs Policy

The Executive Member considered a report that outlined the reasons why a decision had been taken to introduce a Responsive Repairs and Rechargeable Repairs Policy; the methodology used to develop this and the key changes that would be introduced if these policies were approved.

The Head of Building Services and the Building Services Change Manager were in attendance to present the report and confirmed:

- CYC did not currently have an all encompassing Responsive Repairs and Recharge Policy, information relating to repairs was contained in various locations;
- Workshops had been held across the service to discuss the policy;

- This policy had been considered by the Tenants Scrutiny Panel who were supportive and requested only minor changes, such as more detail on the responsibility matrix.

The Executive Member noted that a Repairs Policy was essential for any housing provider as it fulfilled a number of functions and that the proposed policies had been developed by a group of employees from across Housing and Building Services to ensure the needs of all service areas were met.

The Executive Member noted the key changes within the proposed policies and considered the options put forward, she thanked Officers for their update.

Resolved:

- (i) That the rationale for introducing the Responsive Repairs and Rechargeable Repairs Policy be agreed.
- (ii) That the Responsive Repairs and Rechargeable Repairs Policy be approved.

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

Councillor Douglas, Executive Member
[The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 2.10 pm].



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

25 October 2018

Report of the Assistant Director of Housing and Community Safety

Former Tenants Arrears – Write off**Summary**

1. To seek agreement to write off a number of former tenants arrears.

Recommendations

2. That the Executive Member approves Option 2 which involves writing off FTAs of 23620.63 as detailed in Annex A.
3. Reason: It is considered good financial practice to write off uncollectable debts so that they do not count against the bad debt provision within the Housing Revenue Account. Debts can be written back on to a customer's account if they do come to the attention of Housing Services in the future and will be applied against policies which consider housing related debt.

Background

4. Good practice requires existing balances to be examined and uncollectable debts to be written off on a regular basis where these have proven uncollectable using the tracing and debt collection processes engaged for all former tenant arrears. Reasons that make debts uncollectible are the inability to trace a former tenant or that they are deceased and have no resources left in their estate to try to recover the debt from.
5. Former Tenant Arrears (FTAs) have had a significant effect on the additional contribution made each year within the Housing Revenue

Account (HRA) towards bad debts. This has had an adverse effect on resources available for expenditure.

6. Where a debt is written off this does not mean that it can never be recovered. The debt is written back on to a rent account if the customer is located. This may be because the customer has made contact again with Housing Services. Debts are written back on each month and this is reported on monthly. From 01.04.18 to 29.08.18, £15,398 FTA's have been recovered.
7. Housing Services check on debts owed by newly accepted homeless customers and customers applying to the housing register to ensure that former arrears are highlighted. In addition we have a system for doing periodic traces on customers who have had their debt written off, this includes use of Experian and Insight databases to locate customers.
8. Officer delegated powers are restricted to writing off debts of £5000 or less.
9. As previously agreed, write off reports will be brought to Executive Member every 6 months where appropriate cases exist. This will assist officers and members in the monitoring process and should give a clearer view on performance throughout the year.
10. FTAs are monitored weekly. The Authority makes use of a tracing database which conforms to GDPR requirements to locate former tenants. Where a former tenant is found efforts are made to recover the debt in traditional ways, including letters, phone calls and visits. Legal action is taken in appropriate cases and where it is financially viable to do so. Approved Debt Collection agencies (not bailiff services) are also used as part of the overall process, this does not incur additional costs to the council.
11. Details of individual cases are set out in Annex A

Consultation

12. None

Options

13. Option 1: Maintain these FTAs on accounts. This would lead to an increase in the bad debt provision and would go against good practice as recommended by auditors and is in line with Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) guidance.
14. Option 2: Write the debts off on the understanding that if necessary they can be reinstated at a later date.

Analysis

15. It is recommended that FTAs are written off totalling £23,620.63. This represents 0.08% of the total rent debit for this financial year. These are cases where Housing Services have attempted a number of traces but have been unable to obtain a forwarding address or any information on the whereabouts of the former tenant.

Council Priorities

16. This action supports the Council's priorities in respect of the following:
 - A focus on frontline services – enabling the housing management service to provide high quality front line services to tenants.

Implications

17. Financial: These write offs can be contained within the bad debt provision of the Housing Revenue Account. The current provision is £757,522.
18. Human Resources: There are no Human Resources implications associated with this report.
19. Equalities: There are no equalities implications associated with this report
20. Legal: None
21. Crime and Disorder: None
22. Information Technology (IT): None
23. Other: There are no other implications associated with this report.

Risk Management

24. Writing off debts that can not currently be recovered will help reduce the bad debt impact on the HRA. This reduces high risk financial implications for the HRA. The risk of these debts never being recovered is high but has been improved due to the use of tracing IT package and more robust systems on checking for former debts when customers want re-housing.

Contact Details

Author:

Louise Waltham
Housing Management
Service Manager
Phone: 01904 551680

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Tom Brittain, Assistant Director for Housing
and Community Safety

**Report
Approved**



Date 11/09/2018

Specialist Officer Implications: None

Wards Affected:

All

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex A – Former Tenant Arrears – Write Off Amounts

Annex A

Former Tenant Arrears – Write Off Amounts

Tenants Name	tenancy end date	Balance
tenant A	20.01.2013	5322.38
tenant B	14.02.2016	6427.91
tenant C	24.08.2014	6275.88
tenant D	23.08.2015	5594.46
		23620.63

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