

SCRUTINY PROJECT GROUP RECOMMENDATION ON WATER RATES ARREARS POLICY

This recommendation will be presented by Councillor Jenny Flood.

BACKGROUND

The report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Project Group on Water Rates were considered and approved by the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 16 January 2014 where it was resolved :

- (1) that Officers report to Scrutiny in six months time, as to the outcome / progress on the water rate collection process and technology review.
- (2) (i) that an update be made to Scrutiny when the Contract with Severn Trent Water is formally signed (ii) that an update on the Contract be given to Scrutiny after one year.
- (3) that an informal meeting take place between the Scrutiny Chairs, Executive Member and Review Lead to discuss the operation of the 'write-off' policy to confirm with Revenues and Housing that they either remove the sentence about 'write-offs' from the policy, or insert " 'write-offs' to be Officer recommendations carried out by Executive Members";
- (4) that support be given to reviewing the Tenant's information to include:
 - (i) more robust and prominent information on support available and advice regarding water rates and water meters;
 - (ii) re-emphasis to all tenants of the importance of communication with Revenues and Tenancy Support, if it is likely that the tenant may be approaching financial difficulties that may lead to arrears.
- (5) that a progress report be given in six months time, monitoring the number of evictions for water rates arrears.

These recommendations have been pending submission to Cabinet whilst further consideration was being given to the matter at resolution (3) above.

ADDITIONAL SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TO AMEND THE POLICY

Regarding (3) above, a meeting was held involving Scrutiny Committee Chairs, Scrutiny Project Group representatives, the Executive Member for Housing, Executive Member for Customers and Communities and officers, where the current policy and procedure document (Appendix A) regarding evictions in relation to water rates arrears was discussed.

Recommended changes to the policy now being proposed are attached at Appendix B.