

SCRUTINY PROGRESS MONITORING REPORT ON : WATER RATES PAYMENT POLICY

Progress report on Ref: EW2 of the Scrutiny Monitoring Form. To provide progress in implementing recommendations of the Enterprise and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee from its scrutiny project work on Water Rates Payment Policy. These recommendations were approved by Cabinet on 16.01.14, 05.06.14 and 29.07.14.

Recommendation 1 :

That officers report to scrutiny in six months' time, as to the outcome and progress on the water rate collection process and technology review.

Action	Responsibility / Implementation by:	Resources Needed / Available	Target Date	Achievement / Completed
As recommendation.	Cabinet Member for Housing. Cabinet Member for Business Transformation. Housing Service Manager (Customer Services Division). Arvato Customer Centric Services Manager.	Existing resources.		A new version of the collection system – Northgate Rent System, has been released which will allow for payments to be split off for rent, water rates etc, The payments will be allocated according to a hierarchy and it is envisaged that rent will be number one. This software upgrade has been released recently and will require significant testing before it can be implemented for staff to use, hopefully later in 2015. <i>(Progress as of Jan 2015)</i>

Recommendation 2 :

That an update be made to scrutiny when the contract with Severn Trent Water is formally signed and again after one year.

Action	Responsibility / Implementation by:	Resources Needed / Available	Target Date	Achievement / Completed
As recommendation.	Cabinet Member for Housing. Cabinet Member for Business Transformation. Housing Service Manager (Customer Services Division). Arvato Customer Centric Services Manager.	Existing resources.		The net income from the Severn Trent contract was £121,937 for 2013/14. This was £6000 lower than was forecast. The net income budgeted for 2014/15 was £121,570.

Recommendation 3 :

That support be given to reviewing the tenants information to (a) include more robust and prominent information on support available and advice regarding water rates and water meters and (b) re-emphasise to all tenants 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.

Action	Responsibility / Implementation by:	Resources Needed / Available	Target Date	Achievement / Completed
As recommendation.	Cabinet Member for Housing. Cabinet Member for Business Transformation. Housing Service Manager (Customer Services Division). Arvato Customer Centric Services Manager.	Existing resources.		The Housing Service has carried out a review of the information given to tenants regarding the payment of water rates, with the importance now being stressed at pre-allocation, sign-up, new tenants' visits and during any contact where rent arrears are discussed. Tenants are also encouraged to have water meters fitted and Support Workers work with tenants with regard to budgeting and to apply for grants from charities to assist with arrears.

Recommendation 4 :

That a progress report be made to Scrutiny in six months time, monitoring the number of evictions for water rates arrears.

Action	Responsibility / Implementation by:	Resources Needed / Available	Target Date	Achievement / Completed
As recommendation.	Cabinet Member for Housing. Cabinet Member for Business Transformation. Housing Service Manager (Customer Services Division). Arvato Customer Centric Services Manager.	Existing resources.		For the period from 1 April 2014 to 31 December 2014 there have been 128 evictions applied for and 48 evictions that have taken place. There have been no evictions for water rates only.

Recommendation 5 :

That the Council's policy and procedure document in respect of evictions for arrears of water rates only, be amended to adopt the wording set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

Action	Responsibility / Implementation by:	Resources Needed / Available	Target Date	Achievement / Completed
As recommendation.	Cabinet Member for Housing. Cabinet Member for Business Transformation. Housing Service Manager (Customer Services Division). Arvato Customer Centric Services Manager.	Existing resources.		The policy (on evictions for arrears of water rates only) has been amended in respect of the advice given to tenants on the installation of water meters, and the 'write-off' policy when dealing with arrears.

Any Additional Information :

SEVERN TRENT WATER AGREEMENT
DETAILS OF INCOME TO GENERAL FUND

	<u>Budget</u> <u>2013/14</u> £	<u>Actual</u> <u>2013/14</u> £	<u>Budget</u> <u>2014/15</u> £
<u>Income from Severn Trent Water</u>			
5% Commission	208,019	204,064	202,000
Irrecoverables (bad debts) 4%	<u>151,286</u>	<u>148,410</u>	<u>146,320</u>
Total Income from Severn Trent	<u>359,305</u>	<u>352,474</u>	<u>348,320</u>
<u>Less Costs</u>			
Collection	62,688	72,480	65,800
Bad Debts	<u>167,928</u>	<u>158,057</u>	<u>160,950</u>
Total Costs	<u>230,616</u>	<u>230,537</u>	<u>226,750</u>
Net Income to General Fund	<u>128,689</u>	<u>121,937</u>	<u>121,570</u>