

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee : 29 April 2009

Subject: Rent Arrears Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To seek Committee approval for a rent arrears policy for West Dunbartonshire Council.

2. Background

- 2.1** The current West Dunbartonshire rent arrears policy was introduced in December 2003 to ensure effective recovery and control of rent arrears.
- 2.2** The Scottish Housing Regulator examined the current policy as part of their interim review during 2008 and noted that the existing policy was due for review.
- 2.3** Corporate Services Committee at its meeting on 17 December 2008 agreed a Corporate Debt Policy that includes rent arrears as part of the Council's holistic debt. The Corporate Debt Policy is the overarching policy that defines how the council will collect debts and the rent arrears policy gives a more detail on the collection of rent arrears.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The redrafted rent arrears policy document is attached as Appendix 1. The revised policy takes into account the Corporate Debt Policy, views of stakeholders and residents groups.
- 3.2** A meeting with key stakeholders including social work, welfare rights, Citizens' Advice Bureau, housing management and the Independent Resource Centre took place in January 2009 and their comments are included in the policy.
- 3.3** All residents groups were invited to a series of meetings to discuss the policy and their comments are detailed in Appendix 2.
- 3.4** The attached policy aims to ensure effective recovery and control of rent arrears and to enable tenants to maintain their tenancy wherever possible.
- 3.5** The Policy is based on both legal guidance and good practice guidance. It ensures that debt recovery methods are flexible and take into account the needs of individual households.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The policy aims to ensure effective recovery and control of rent arrears and to enable tenants to maintain their tenancy wherever possible.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 If the policy is not approved this will affect the recovery of rent arrears and will have a financial impact on the Housing Revenue Account.

6.2 An equalities impact assessment screening has been carried out on this policy. A summary of the impact assessment is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.

7. Conclusions

7.1 This report seeks Committee approval for rent arrears policy.

8. Recommendation

8.1 The Committee is requested to approve the attached rent arrears policy for West Dunbartonshire Council.

Joyce White
Executive Director of Corporate Services
Date: 6 April 2009

Wards affected:	All Council wards
Appendix 1:	Rent Arrears Policy
Appendix 2:	Results of resident groups consultation
Appendix 3:	Equalities Impact Assessment Summary
Background papers:	Corporate Debt Policy
Person to contact:	Marion Smith, Section Head (Revenues) Telephone 01389 738754 Email: marion.smith@west-dunbarton.co.uk.