

Rechargeable Works Policy

(including Pest Control Services)

Wrexham County Borough Council



Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Aims and Objectives	4
3.	What is rechargeable work?	4
4.	When does the Council recharge?	5
5.	General Alterations and Home Improvements	7
6.	Emergency Work	7
7.	Routine Repairs	9
8.	Recharges – Moving Home	9
9.	Police Involvement	11
10.	Pest Control	12
11.	Notification of Recharges, Reviews and Appeals	13
12.	Paying Recharges	14
13.	Cancelling Recharges	15

1. Introduction

It is essential that we can recharge for work that we carry out, if it states in the Council's Occupation Contract that the work is the responsibility of the contract holder.

Rechargeable work includes work that we have to carry out due to negligence and deliberate or accidental damage caused by the contract holder, a member of the household or a visitor to the home. This does not apply to fair wear and tear in the property.

It also includes services to deal with certain household pests, which could lead to public health issues if left untreated.

Recharging in certain circumstances allows us to be effective and have the resources we need to carry out work that is our responsibility.

This policy sets out how we raise and recover costs associated with rechargeable work. It also covers the repairs and services we class as rechargeable and the circumstances when we raise recharges.

The following corporate and departmental documents are linked to our policy on rechargeable works. In particular:

- The Departmental Lettable Standard;
- Housing Department's Contract Transfer Procedure (formerly Mutual Exchanges);
- The Council's Allocations Policy;
- The Council's Occupation Contract; and
- The Council's Recharge Policy

2. Aims and Objectives

The aim of this policy is to set out the criteria and conditions for when the Council will recharge contract holders for the cost of repair work needed to their homes.

The key objectives of the policy are:-

- To have a clear and transparent process in place for dealing with rechargeable repairs;
- To give contract holders a clear idea of when and why the Council will recharge for repairs;
- To ensure that contract holders know the type of repair work that the Council charges for;
- To ensure that all repair recharges are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner;
- To ensure that the cost of carrying out repair work due to damage or neglect is not absorbed by the Council's repair budget; and
- To ensure that Council funds are used as effectively as possible and bring the most benefit to contract holders.

3. What is rechargeable work?

The Council raises recharges for certain types of work and services and work that we carry out in certain circumstances.

If the Council or a Council contractor has to carry out work at your home, due to neglect or damage, we will charge you for the cost of doing it. This includes accidental damage or damage caused by members of your family or visitors to your home.

We will give you the opportunity to hire a tradesperson to do the work but you must make sure that they are qualified. You can also carry out the work yourself but please remember, we will inspect the work once it has been completed. If we have to put right any incomplete or badly carried out work, we will recharge you for having to do this.

4. When does the Council recharge?

4.1 Accidental Damage

You are responsible for any accidental damage but you may be able to claim the cost of any work through your household contents insurance. You should contact your insurance company to find out if you can make a claim.

If you cannot carry out the work and the Council has to do it for you, we will recharge you.

If you do not pay or have difficulty in paying, we may still carry out repairs, especially if damage has made your home unsafe or insecure. We will, however, expect you to make arrangements to pay at a later date. This includes setting up a regular repayment plan.

To set up a repayment plan, you should contact your local Estate Office. A member of the team will be able to help you.

4.2 Damage affecting security

If you have caused any damage to your home as a result of neglect, misuse or carelessness, and this affects the security of your home, the Council will recharge you.

Examples of work that would affect the security of your home include:

- A change of locks due to lost door keys; or
- reglazing a broken window

In some cases, the Council will secure the property but we will recharge you for this.

4.3 Damage affecting security – caused by crime

If you have been the victim of crime and there is criminal damage, for example, due to forced entry, you must report it to the police. We do not raise recharges provided that you follow the process set out in this policy.

When you report a crime to the police, they will carry out the necessary investigations and issue you with a crime number. You should keep this and quote it whenever you contact us to discuss the repair.

You must also contact your local Estate Office so that you can complete a Declaration Form. A member of staff will explain the contents of the form to you and sign it to say that they have done this.

You will be asked to complete and sign the form and provide a statement to support your case. We will keep one copy of the form and give you the other to keep, should it be needed at a future time.

If you contact your local Estate Office first, you must still get in touch with the police. You will receive a crime number and the police will be aware that a crime has been committed.

If you are a joint contract holder, you must both sign the Declaration Form. If this is not possible, you must explain the reason to the housing officer who is helping you to complete it. They will record it on the form.

In instances when someone refuses to sign a Declaration Form, the police will not treat an incident as a crime. As a result, we will charge for work to be carried out.

4.4 Fire Damage

In cases of damage caused by fire, we will recharge for the cost of any remedial work, if there is evidence to indicate that it has been caused by a person's actions or neglect.

Information will be passed to our Recharge Team and a member of the team will arrange for you to be recharged for the work.

4.5 Domestic Abuse

In cases where there is damage due to domestic abuse, we will not raise a recharge if you have reported the matter to the police and/or it is the subject of a MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

If the perpetrator remains at the property or you remain in a relationship with them and do not take action or press charges, we will usually raise a recharge for any work that is needed.

5. General Alterations and Home Improvements

You must have Council permission before you carry out any alterations and improvements to your home. Please contact your local Estate Office before you begin any work. Staff will be able to give you information regarding our policy for general alterations and home improvements.

We will let you know in writing if you have permission to carry out the work and we will inspect it when you have completed it. If it has not been completed to our satisfaction, or you have carried out work without our permission, we will recharge you if we have to carry out any remedial work.

6. Emergency Work

6.1 Reporting work outside of office hours

Delta Wellbeing are responsible for administering emergency repairs out of office hours.

Delta Wellbeing will check to establish whether properties are Council owned. If any property is not in Council ownership, staff will contact the police or other relevant party. Council tradespersons will not attend a property that is not owned by the Council.

If Council appointed contractors carry out the work, Delta Wellbeing staff will contact them using the list of contact numbers issued to them. Our contracts require them to attend out of hours emergencies.

The Delta Wellbeing operative will also contact the Standby Officer on duty. He/she will advise the contract holder if there might be a recharge, quoting the cost from the current recharge costing sheet.

If a member of the emergency services has reported an emergency repair, the Standby Officer will record details of the officer's name, contact telephone number, event number and their official service number. This will enable them to gain contact later if needed.

The Standby Officer will record details of any conversations with you or anyone who is phoning on your behalf. They will also record whether you are willing to pay any recharge or not.

If you are reporting damage caused by crime, we will advise you to contact the police as soon as possible, if you already have not done so, and to visit your local Estate Office to complete a Council declaration form.

We will recharge you if we find that you have misled Delta Wellbeing operatives by exaggerating the seriousness of any repair. The Standby Officer on duty will make this decision, in consultation with the relevant senior Council officers.

We will aim to write to you within 28 days of work being carried out. This is to confirm the final cost of the repair recharges and the payment options available.

6.2 Reporting emergency work during office hours

You can report work to the Housing Service Centre by telephone or email. If you contact the Housing Service Centre by email, a member of staff will telephone you.

We do this, so that you know that there may be a possible recharge, if you want the Council to carry out any work. Once the works have been completed we will aim to write to you to confirm the full cost of the works, and the options available to pay the remaining amount owed. We will aim to do this with 28 days of the works being completed.

We do not operate an appointment system for 24-hour emergency work but staff will tell you when a tradesperson is due to call. You must wait in until they arrive and carry out the work.

We can make alternative arrangements with you if there are circumstances, which make it necessary to leave your home, for example, you have no heating or power and you have frail or young family members.

If you are not at home when a tradesperson calls and you have made no alternative arrangements with us, we will recharge you and may re-prioritise your repair.

7. Routine Repairs

When you report a day to day repair, staff at the Housing Service Centre will raise an inspection/repair request. The advisor you speak to will give you an estimated cost of the recharge based on the information you provide at this stage. You will be required to confirm whether you are going to carry out the work yourself, you are disputing the recharge or if you want the Council to carry out the work for you.

If you have chosen for us to complete the repairs work for you, we will calculate the final cost of the work and aim to write to you to let you know within 28 days of the work being completed. If you would like any further information, this can be found on the Council's website - the link can be found on the notification letter that we send you. If you have decided to employ a contractor to carry out the work, or you intend to carry out the work yourself, you must begin the work within 28 days of receiving our consent.

If you do not give the Council access to your home to do any work, Housing Repairs staff will contact your local Estate Office, asking them to help resolve the matter. The Estate Team Leader at your local Estate Office can cancel any non-urgent repairs, if they think that this is appropriate.

If it is not possible to resolve the issue, he/she will pass all details to the Housing Enforcement Solicitor, who will start legal proceedings for breach of your Occupation Contract due to non-access.

8. Recharges – Moving Home

8.1 Ending your Occupation Contract

When you give the Council written notice that you are ending your occupation contract, we will arrange to visit you to inspect your home, before you leave.

During the visit, we will inspect for any damage and take photographs where necessary.

If there is evidence of damage, we will discuss the matter with you. You will have the choice of being able to arrange to put it right yourself, or we can carry out the work on your behalf and recharge you for the costs incurred.

We will arrange for you to be recharged and billed as set out in this policy, if we are carrying out the work for you.

In instances where we find damage, or there are items left in the property after you have moved out, we will record the details and the cost of the recharge will be assessed. We will send you a bill for the necessary work at the forwarding address you have provided.

If you have not provided a forwarding address, you will remain liable to pay this amount if you reapply to the Council for re-housing within 6 years.

8.2 A Contract Holder Passes Away

If a Contract Holder passes away, we will check our records to see if there are any outstanding recharges for repair work or the removal of items left behind when the keys to the property were returned. We will contact any family members, who are dealing with their estate, to find out if there are funds available to clear outstanding costs.

8.3 Moving to another Council Property (Transfer)

If you have applied to move to another Council property and we are considering your application, a member of staff from your local Estate Office will visit you at home.

The purpose of this visit is to see if there are any problems with your current occupation contract, for example, damage to the property or the condition of your garden.

Damage could result in you being excluded from the housing register in very serious cases, or your application for re-housing being placed in Band 5, due to breaches of your occupation contract.

If your garden is in a poor condition, this could also affect your transfer application. We will aim to tell you during the visit whether there are any problems and let you know how you can put them right.

Until you can address any problems, or pay any recharges as a result of the Council having to carry out repair work, remove items left behind or work to bring your gardens to an acceptable standard, it is unlikely that you will be considered for a transfer.

8.4 Housing Association Property (Nomination)

If we have nominated you to a Housing Association for rehousing, a member of staff from your local Estate Office will also visit you at home.

The purpose of the visit will be to inspect your home and advise the Housing Association if it is in good condition or if there are any issues such as damage.

It is likely that any issues will affect your chances of a Housing Association making you an offer of a property.

8.5 Transferring your Occupation Contract to another person (also called a Mutual Exchange)

We will also visit you at home, if you have applied to transfer your occupation contract to another contract holder of Wrexham County Borough Council, another local authority or housing association.

If there are any issues with damage, this can affect your ability to transfer your contract. Staff will discuss this with you, let you know what work you need to do and agree a timescale for completing it.

Any issues regarding the condition of your home, including damage, will affect when you can carry out the transfer of contract. In some instances, it can stop it taking place

9. Police Involvement

9.1 Forced Entry – Crime Detection and Prevention

There are occasions when the police have to gain entry into someone's home, for crime prevention or detection purposes.

When a police raid is successful and there is evidence of a crime, the Council will recharge you afterwards, for the cost of any repairs that are needed.

9.2 Forced Entry - Other Circumstances

We will not recharge you, if we have to liaise with the police to force entry in the case of an emergency. For example, if a person were unwell or had had an accident in the home and we needed to gain entry for emergency or GP services.

10. Pest Control

If you have an infestation of some common pests, we can carry out any necessary treatment to resolve the problem. All pest control fees are subject to review, dependant on the costings provided by the contractor that we have employed. You can use an alternative provider if you wish. We treat the following:

- Rats;
- Mice;
- Bedbugs;
- Wasps;
- Bees;
- Ants;
- Fleas;
- Squirrels;
- Flies; and
- Flying ants

For all other pests, for example silverfish or woodlice, we will need to carry out an initial survey, at a cost, to find out what type of pest it is and what remedial action is needed.

If we cannot resolve the problem when the survey is carried out, we will need to arrange a further visit. The cost of this visit will be agreed in advance, with the contractor who is carrying out the work for us.

We will let you know what the cost is beforehand. You will be able to decide if you want to proceed with the treatment.

In the case of rats and mice, we will always carry out the work, regardless of whether you are liable to pay.

We will recharge you for this service, after the work has been carried out, if we find that any infestation is a direct result of something that you, or a member of your household has done or failed to do.

As all pest control services are provided by an external contractor, charges are subject to review. They will depend on the costings provided by the contractor.

You will need, however, to pay in advance for the treatment of any of the other infestations listed in this policy.

11. Notification of Recharges, Reviews and Appeals

11.1 Notification

We will send you a letter to let you know if you have to pay a recharge and the amount you must pay.

Further information regarding charges is available on the Housing pages of our website. This includes an explanation of why you have been recharged and the arrangements that you can make to repay the amount due.

11.2 Requests for Reviews

If you think that the amount you have been recharged is incorrect, or that you should not have been recharged, you have 28 days to request a review.

All requests should be sent to:

Housing Services
Ruthin Road
Wrexham
LL13 7TU

If you do not request a review of a decision to recharge you within the 28 day period, we will contact you again to let you know that the recharge has been debited to your rent sub-account.

12. Paying Recharges

12.1 Paying at a local Estate Office

Whenever possible, you should try to pay for any recharge at your local Estate Office. This is to make sure that the amount that you pay is credited to the correct account.

12.2 Paying at another location

You can pay, however, at the following locations if it is more convenient for you:

- Any other local Estate Office in the County Borough;
- Using the [Council's online payment facility](#) (please visit: Residents | Wrexham County Borough Council); or
- Using the Council's dedicated phone line: 0300 333 6500
- By phone via the Housing Service Centre : 01978 298993

If you pay at another location, you should take the receipt to your local Estate Office. This will ensure that housing officers are aware that you have paid.

12.3 Non-Payment

If you do not pay, after we have completed work, we will send you a final reminder letter, to let you know that there is a recharge outstanding and to request you to make payment.

In cases where there is no cooperation, we will pass all the details of the case to our Debt Recovery Team for the necessary recovery proceedings to be started.

13. Cancelling Recharges

13.1 How we cancel recharges

All decisions to cancel recharges will be made by the Service Manager - Housing and the Property Repairs Lead.

In the first instance, staff at the Housing Department will gather all the information regarding the case and forward it to the Service Manager – Housing and to the Property Repairs Lead, for a decision to be made regarding cancellation.

We will contact you to let you know, if a recharge has been cancelled.