SP08 Sundry Income Recovery Policy

1 Scope of policy

This policy sets out Soha's approach to collecting sundry income and current and former tenant recharges.

This Policy does not cover our approach to current and former tenants' rent arrears, which is set out in our the Former Tenant Arrears Policy, or our approach as to when to recharge tenants, which are set out in SP05 Repairs and Maintenance and SP17 Empty Properties

2 Aim

2.1 Soha aims to apply the income recovery policy in a fair yet robust manner.

2.2 Soha aims to collect the maximum amount of income and other charges promptly from customers to protect the provision of services and maintain its financial stability.

3 Policy Statement

3.1 Soha adopts a robust but fair approach to income recovery. Our aim is to try and collect all the debts that are owed to us.

3.2 Soha will follow a clear and consistent procedure. In cases of persistent non-payment, following appropriate warnings, Soha may take legal action to collect the debt and may pursue other legal remedies such as attachment of earnings or debt collection agencies. Use of such methods will be considered on a case-by-case basis. We will always work within our customer care standards and principles when asking for payment.

3.3 Soha will view sympathetically, where appropriate, debts owing and assist customers in making realistic arrangements to pay these. We accept that a customer's personal circumstances may change, for example through illness or unemployment, and that this can sometimes make it difficult for them to pay the debt.

3.4 We will work closely with housing management, the rental income team and colleagues across Soha to coordinate our approach. We can also refer customers for specialist advice such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

3.5 When repairs are to be recharged to a tenant, the Customer Services team, Technical Officers and Soha's Out of hours service provider will ensure, wherever possible, that the tenant has agreed to the charges in advance and provide support with the Invoice request form prepared for finance.

4 Implementation

4.1 While there are differences between the types of services charged for and the customers receiving those services, there are some elements of debt recovery that are common to all types of debt and these general principles are set out below. Soha will:

- Make all reasonable attempts to recover debts
- Contact customers at the earliest reasonable stage
- Be pro-active in helping customers to pay debts
- Provide full and timely information and advice to customers
- Work closely with other agencies to aid the recovery of debts

- Have a coordinated approach across Soha with input from other teams, where appropriate
- Monitor and strive to improve performance on income recovery

4.2 To support these principles Soha will:

- Comply with relevant statutory requirements and processes
- Review the position on debts outstanding regularly and provide reminders
- Encourage customers to contact Soha at the earliest opportunity if they have difficulty paying
- Promote and encourage a wide range of cost effective and accessible payment methods and encourage regular payments
- In the case of deceased tenants, where possible recover outstanding debts from the deceased's estate
- Make sure we give accurate information on debt that the customer can easily understand
- Provide accessible and confidential facilities to discuss customers' accounts
- Make sure we have procedures in place for the recovery of debts, and that the extent of recovery action will be appropriate to the amount owed and the likelihood of successful debt recovery
- Use external agents to trace and recover debts where internal procedures or information held is insufficient
- Follow Financial Regulations for the write off of irrecoverable debts

5 Resident Involvement

Soha will review the income recovery policy in accordance with the Policy review timetable and will involve Members' Forum in this process.

6 Appeals

Any customer wishing to complain about any aspect of the income recovery process can make a formal complaint in accordance with Soha's complaints policy.

7 Responsibility

The Director of Finance and Resources is responsible for effective implementation of this policy.

8 Monitoring and review

Soha will review this policy in 2025 (subject to any legislation or sector developments requiring earlier review) to ensure that it continues to reflect good practice and statutory requirements and always meet legal requirements. We will continually monitor good practice and statutory requirements.

9 Context

SP04 Rental Income Policy
SP17 Empty Homes Policy
SP05 Repairs and Maintenance Policy
Income Recovery Procedure

Members' Forum	12 May 2022	Board Approved	26 May 2022
EIA Completed		Review Date	May 2025