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Policy Name	Rent Accounting Policy
Policy Author	Head of Housing Services
Approved by Sub Committee	Nov 2022
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Latest date of Next Review	Nov 2025

West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative will provide this policy on request at no cost, in larger print, in Braille, in audio or other non-written format, and in a variety of languages. Please contact the office.



Registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator No. 203
Registered Charity No. SCO38737, VAT Registration No. 180223636
Registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014

1. Introduction

- 1.1. West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative is a community owned and controlled, non-profit making Housing Co-operative and operates under Fully Mutual and Charitable Co-operative Model Rules based upon the SFHA Charitable Model Rules (Scotland) 2013. It is a Registered Social Landlord registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator and the Financial Conduct Authority. It is also a Scottish Charity, registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.
- 1.2. The Co-operative must demonstrate effective governance and sound financial management and must have a robust policy and procedural framework that complies with legislation, guidance and good practice.
- 1.3. This policy explains how the Co-operative collects rent and it's accounting methods. It is intended that this policy will be used in conjunction with the rent accounting procedures.
- 1.4. The policy forms part of the overall system of financial and management control and takes account of the Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) Standards of Governance and Financial Management.

Regulatory Standard 3: The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being, while maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford to pay.

2. Equality and Diversity

- 2.1 We are committed to ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment for all people in our work. In implementing this Policy, we will provide a fair and equal service to all people, irrespective of factors such as gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other personal attributes.

3. Rent Collection

- 3.1 The Co-operative will debit all rent accounts monthly in arrears however tenants will have the option to make partial payments towards their rent throughout the debit period. (i.e. weekly ,fortnightly, four weekly etc). We still have a few historical tenancies which are being charged four weekly. All new tenancies will be on monthly debits and we will work to reduce the number of tenancies on four weekly charges.

- 3.2 The rental month will run from 29th of each month until the 28th of the next month with accounts being charged on the 28th. For tenancies that are being charged four weekly the rental week will run from Monday to Sunday with the accounts being charged on a Sunday. When a tenancy starts or ends mid-month the charge will be calculated on a daily basis
- 3.3 For reasons of security the Co-operative will not accept cash rent payments at the office except in circumstances approved by the Assistant Director (Tenancy Services).
- 3.4 Tenants will be able to make payments to their rent account in the following ways: -
- a) By direct debit
 - b) By Allpay - These payments can be made using a rent card at a paypoint or Post Office outlet, online, by phone or with the Allpay app
 - c) By phoning the office and making a debit card transaction over the phone using the Callpay system. All cardholder data will be handled in compliance with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).
Tenants should be persuaded not to pay using internet banking or standing order due to problems with referencing.
- 3.5 The Co-operative will receive four weekly Housing Benefit payment schedules from South Lanarkshire Council on behalf of tenants who pay for their rent by Housing Benefit. A bulk payment for each period will be received by BACS. In addition to this there may be smaller schedules for backdated Housing Benefit and Discretionary Housing Payments received during each four week period.
- 3.6 The Co-operative will receive daily schedules from DWP on behalf of tenants who make payments towards their rent from their Universal Credit by Managed Payments to Landlord. The individual payments will be paid by BACS and will be referenced.
- 3.7 The Co-operative will receive four weekly Third Party Deductions/Arrears Direct payments from the DWP on behalf of tenants who make payments towards their arrears by deductions from their benefits.
- 3.8 The Co-operative will receive monthly payments from Corporate and Legal detailing payments they have collected on behalf of the Co-operative.

4. Rent Accounting

- 4.1 Allpay.net are the handling company for all cash payments and direct debit instructions and they will provide details of all payments the day after the payment has been made. The details of the individual payments will be downloaded electronically using the WebConnect software.
- 4.2 The payments are held in trust by Allpay in the Co-operative's name and then transferred to the Co-operative's own Royal Bank of Scotland account after 10 working days. Statements of amount being credited and debited to the trust account are also provided on a monthly basis.
- 4.3 The 'books closed' date (i.e. last possible payment date each debit) is 28th of each month.
- 4.4 Payments will be downloaded daily and the tenant's accounts updated using Open Housing software.
- 4.5 Housing Benefit and DWP payments will be processed within 1 day of them being received.
- 4.6 The 'debit run' will be completed on the first working day after the charge is due. Any Housing Benefit payments that are received after the debit date but relate to a period before the date will be "slotted" into the correct place. Once all the payments and adjustments have been processed the appropriate reports will be produced to allow income, individual accounts and arrears performance to be monitored. The details of the required action to be taken against Tenants who have missed rent payments is detailed in the Rent Arrears Policy and Procedures.
- 4.7 Statements will be sent to tenants in arrears after each rent charge. This information will be clear and concise. As well as this Tenants will be provided with additional statements as requested.
- 4.8 If a Tenants account goes into credit and they are entitled to the money they will be advised of the credit balance as soon as possible and given the option of a refund.
- 4.9 If a payment has been miss-posted to an account due to a "keying" error the money will be transferred as soon as the error is identified. However if the tenant advised a payment is miss-posted and no keying error has been identified no money will be transferred until a receipt has been seen to confirm ownership of the payment. If a tenant wishes money to be transferred to another rent account in their name they must provide confirmation of this in writing to the Co-operative.

5. Confidentiality

5.1 All information relating to Tenants rent accounts will be treated as strictly confidential and under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It will only be passed onto or discussed with another person or organisation only with the applicant's permission or where the Co-operative is legally required to do so.

6. Reconciliation

6.1 The Housing Assistant will provide Finance Officer with details of income received during each debit period.

6.2 The report will include:-

- Breakdown by account type (lock ups and properties)
- Breakdown by payment source (housing benefit, arrears direct, cash, Universal Credit and Allpay).
- Details of any refunds processed either to tenants or by to South Lanarkshire Council as Housing Benefit overpayments.
- Missed posted payments will also be shown for audit purposes.

6.3 The Housing Assistant and Finance Officer will then work together to ensure rental income reconciles with the income figures produced by Corporate Services Team.

7. Policy Review

7.1 This policy shall be reviewed every 3 years unless there is a requirement to review outwith this cycle.

7.2 The next policy review will be due November 2025.