

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DELEGATED DECISION

By

County Councillor Rosemarie Harris
Portfolio Holder for Property, Buildings & Housing
April 2017

REPORT AUTHOR: Head of Housing

SUBJECT: Adoption of Rental Exchange Scheme

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report seeks the approval of the Portfolio Holder for the Housing Team to work in partnership with Experian (credit rating agency) to offer our tenants inclusion in the Rental Exchange Scheme.

2. Proposal

- 2.1. The Rental Exchange Scheme is a free service to tenants offered by Experian in conjunction with social landlords. The service is that Experian collect rental payment data from landlords and record this against individual tenants. In this way tenants build up a credit score and history.
- 2.2. The advantage to tenants is that by generating a credit score they then have access to cheaper credit for a range of goods and services. High street shops and service provide credit to customers based on an individual's credit score. Tenants can often find access to affordable credit difficult as they do not have any credit score. Mortgage payers will build up a credit score and so can benefit from affordable credit. By allowing tenant's rental payments to add to their credit score they are likely to find credit easier to attain at cheaper rates. For example, large items of furniture, electrical goods, telephone contracts etc. In this way tenants will not be channelled towards high interest rate credit options.
- 2.3. The scheme also allows tenants to build an on-line identity. This is important for enabling them to access cheaper tariffs on utility bills.
- 2.4. The council will also benefit because the scheme will act an incentive for tenants to pay their rent on time. It also helps the Council's financial inclusion agenda.
- 2.5. The service is provided by Experian free of charge to tenants and the Local Authority. Experian make their income from this from the shops and service providers that access the Experian data at point of sale. There will be some set up costs in writing to all of our tenants and creating the IT links. However, once it is set up the service will be of negligible cost.
- 2.6. Our IT colleagues are currently looking at how the IT links can be arranged. It will require a weekly upload of payment data from the Housing system to Experian. This

is fully in line with data protection requirements as we will offer an opt out to any tenants who wish to remain outside of the scheme.

- 2.7. The next stage is for the Housing team to consult with tenants to ensure there is general support for the scheme. It is proposed that the Housing team consult with the Tenant Liaison Forum members and Housing Services Group 100. After a 28 day consultation period, we will review the feedback. If the feedback is generally positive we will write to all tenants to roll them into the scheme. Each tenant will be given the opportunity to opt out of the scheme. The letter to be sent to residents is attached as appendix 1.
- 2.8. The process of information sharing, informing tenants and having a clear opt out policy has been discussed with the Data Protection Officer who supports the proposal.

3. **One Powys Plan**

- 3.1. This initiative will help us to deliver Stronger Safer and Economically Viable Communities by ensuring that tenants have access to cheaper credit options.

4. **Options Considered/Available**

- 4.1. Alternative options are:
- 4.2. **We do not adopt the scheme** – If we do not adopt the scheme tenants may miss out on the opportunity to access cheaper forms of credit.

5. **Preferred Choice and Reasons**

- 5.1 We consult on adopting the scheme to enable tenants to access cheaper forms of credit.

6. **Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder,/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc**

- 6.1. This scheme will have no impact on these policies

7. **Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing**

- 7.1. There are no issues in respect of safeguarding children in regards to this proposal.

8. **Local Member(s)**

- 8.1. This is county wide matter with no local member issues.

9. **Other Front Line Services**

- 9.1. This matter will not have an effect on other frontline Services

10. Support Services (Legal, Finance, HR, ICT, BPU)

- 10.1. Legal: The Professional Lead –Legal has no comment to make save that the legal services believe that any decision should be taken with the views and consultation of our Data Protection Officer.(see point 2.8 above)
- 10.2. Finance: The Finance Business Partner can confirm this will enable the Housing Team to work in partnership with Experian (credit rating agency) to offer our tenants inclusion in the Rental Exchange Scheme. Tenants build up a credit score and history. The benefit to the Council is that the scheme will act as an incentive for tenants to pay their rent on time and will also help to contribute to the Council’s financial inclusion agenda.
There will be no cost as the service provided by Experian is free of charge to tenants and the local authority

11. Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

This is a specific Housing Management matter

12. Communications

- 12.1. The Housing Service will consult with tenants and then contact all tenants to confirm the scheme is in operation and offer an opt-out.

13. Statutory Officers

- 13.1 The Corporate Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: I note the legal comment and other Officer comments and have nothing further to add, save for reiterating the need to ensure compliance with Data Protection legislation.
- 13.2 The Strategic Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) notes the comments made by finance.

14. Members’ Interests

- 14.1. The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If the Portfolio Holder has an interest he should declare it, complete the relevant notification form and refer the matter to the cabinet for decision.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
1. The Housing Service consult on the scheme and, if the consultation is positive, adopt the scheme.	1. To allow tenants to build a credit profile and so have access to affordable credit.

Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	All members
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Head of Housing
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	6th April 2017

Contact Officer Name:	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
Dave Roffey			

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