



Report of the Head of Adult Services and Tackling Poverty

Safeguarding People and Tackling Poverty Corporate Delivery Committee
– 24 April 2023

Draft Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy

Purpose:	This report is for information purposes only.
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For Information	

1. Status at the start of the Municipal Year

- 1.1 At the start of the Municipal Year (24th May 2022), an initial working Draft Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy had been produced and engagement with departments and services with a responsibility for the collection of personal debt was ongoing.
- 1.2 Relevant services across the Council that collect outstanding personal debts continued to contribute to the Draft Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy including the draft policy statement. Contributing services include Revenues and Benefits, Housing, Education, Social Services, Parking Services and Accounts Receivable.

2. Progress during the Municipal Year

- 2.1 The draft policy has continued to develop during this period with further input from relevant services and feedback from the Safeguarding People and Tackling Poverty Corporate Delivery Committee.
- 2.2 The draft policy was circulated and presented to Corporate Management Team (CMT) in January 2023. Recommendations were given regarding further specific service engagement as well as well as Monitoring and Reporting governance. The recommendations of CMT were subsequently addressed and reflected in the draft policy.

2.3 The Draft Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy (**Appendix A**) was presented for initial consultation to the Swansea Poverty Partnership Forum during January and the Financial Inclusion Steering Group during February.

3. Next Steps

3.1 The next step is to launch the formal consultation phase. The consultation is planned to launch during May 2023. This will be promoted widely through appropriate networks with feedback collated for consideration. Following this process, it is proposed that the draft policy be presented to Cabinet for consideration and adoption.

3.2 As part of the consultation phase, departments and services within the Council that are responsible for the collection of personal debt will be informed of the consultation and requested to consider any implications and changes required as a result of the policy to their normal operating procedures. Changes to service level operational guidance and procedures are to be determined / developed by the relevant service including the completion / updating of an Integrated Impact Assessment where appropriate.

4. Integrated Assessment Implications

4.1 The Council is subject to the public sector duties relating to equality and socio-economic inequalities as prescribed by the Equality Act 2010, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

4.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in

accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

- 4.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 4.4 An IIA screening has been completed and accompanies this report (**Appendix B**).
- 4.5 The cumulative impact of the introduction of this policy would be positive. The policy itself will introduce a consistent approach to supporting people that owe the Council personal debt. Council Services that collect personal payments/debt recovery will be required to update/develop operational guidance/standards to ensure the policy commitments are embedded and met within their operational procedures. It is recommended that an IIA Screening is updated/completed by each relevant service in relation to the policy and their service specific operational guidance.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, it may lead to decisions being taken at a later date that may have costs attached. Should that be the case, additional consideration will need to be given to how the additional costs / resources will be provided at that time.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 as well as its duties under the Equality Act (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A: Draft Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy

Appendix B: IIA Screening Form