

Policy and Resources Committee	
Meeting Date	27 November 2024
Report Title	Update of Sundry Debt Policy
EMT Lead	Lisa Fillery, Director of Resources
Head of Service	Claire Stanbury, Head of Finance and Procurement
Lead Officer	Claire Stanbury, Head of Finance and Procurement
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree the Sundry Debt Policy. 2. Delegate to the Deputy Head of Legal changes resulting from changes to legislation or the constitution.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposal for an updated sundry debt policy, which requires adoption by this committee.

2 Background

- 2.1 The council raises invoices for a number of services, where payment is not made in advance or at the point of service. The sundry debt function covers all such invoicing that is not in relation to Council Tax, Business Rates or Housing Benefit overpayments.
- 2.2 The majority of invoices are paid without the need for any intervention, but for various reasons there can be a need for action to be taken in order for payment to be made. This can range from a simple reminder, through to court action and placing charges on owned property.
- 2.3 By its very nature, sundry debt varies greatly in size. Invoices may be for relatively low value printing works, through to large S106 agreements. Actions taken to recover the monies therefore need to be proportionate to the debt being chased. This proportionality needs to consider the size of the debt, but also any legal agreements and precedents.
- 2.4 The sundry debt policy was last updated in 2019, and is therefore due to be reviewed. There have been advances in technology in that time, and also changes to the resources used for this work. It is therefore important to ensure that the policy allows us to work in an efficient way.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The policy is being amended to automate initial reminder processes where debt is unpaid. This will be by issuing standard letters/emails and should require minimal

staff input. If the invoice remains unpaid after those reminders, then officers will be directly involved in contacting the customer. The policy retains an element of discretion, allowing officers to intervene at an earlier stage where it is felt appropriate to the debt.

- 3.2 The policy sets out the standard actions that will be carried out by the Finance Support Team, but also sets out the requirements on service departments. Again, the policy allows for discretion as to how involved service departments are, recognising that the relationship and involvement will differ depending on the type of debt.
- 3.3 The previous policy cancelled any debts under query that were not dealt with within 28 days. The revised policy no longer cancels these debts, but escalates cases to the Head of Finance and Procurement to ensure that work is undertaken to resolve the query at the earliest opportunity and allow the collection of the debt to happen expediently.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 To not adopt the revised sundry debt policy. The current policy does not make the best use of resources in a modern way, and therefore this is not recommended.
- 4.2 Not to provide delegation to the Deputy Head of Legal for changes resulting from legislative or constitution changes. This would result in the policy coming back through the committee cycle for what could be very minor changes, or where there is no choice regarding the changes. Any major changes resulting from changes to legislation would still be reported to committee for noting.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 No consultation has taken place, or is proposed.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This updated policy supports the running of the council, and making it fit for the future.
Financial, Resource and Property	There are no direct implications. However, efficient and robust debt collection processes are required to ensure that money owed to the council is recovered in a timely fashion and debt write offs are minimised.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage

Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified at this stage
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Sundry Debt Policy

8 Background Papers

- None