

BRIEFING TO MEMBERS OF THE ADULT, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL OF THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD ON 14TH JUNE 2010

SUBJECT: OVERPAYMENT OF SERVICE CHARGES IN SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEMES OWNED BY WINDSOR HOUSING

1. Windsor Housing's sheltered housing schemes provide self-contained homes for independent people generally over the age of 55 years, who simply need the reassurance of a 24 hour helpline and low level support that a non-resident scheme manager can provide.
2. Following an initial complaint received in August 2009 from a resident in a sheltered housing scheme in Windsor, Windsor Housing's complaints panel has carried out an in depth review into the calculation of service charges in sheltered housing schemes.
3. The Panel, which met twice (in October and November 2009) due to the complexity of the complaint, requested a full audit of service charges in all of Windsor Housing's sheltered schemes to assist the panel in dealing with the complaint.
4. The result of the audit shows that Windsor Housing made an error relating to the service charges in 2007/8, concerning the way that sheltered scheme manager costs were apportioned across the different schemes. The audit also showed that the error in the calculation of service charges only related to 2007/8.
5. As a result of this error, a total of 282 residents in nine of the schemes have been overcharged whilst those in other schemes have been undercharged. Of those who were overcharged, 227 residents were in receipt of housing benefit. The total overpayment for these residents amounts to £42,573, an average of £187 per person.
6. As these residents were in receipt of housing benefit, it is proposed to repay this sum direct to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, who paid the housing benefit initially. Windsor Housing has written to RBWM outlining the error and seeking the Royal Borough's agreement for the refund to be dealt with in this way.
7. Direct refunds of overpayments will be made to the tenants who were not in receipt of housing benefit. It is not proposed to attempt to recover any service charges that were undercharged.
8. Windsor Housing regrets the error that was made, and is grateful to the complainant who first brought the matter to the attention of the Association. New procedures have been introduced to ensure an error of this kind is not repeated.

Nick Fry
Director of Windsor Housing
11th June 2010

