

Rechargeable Repairs Policy Consultation Report

Contents

Aims of the consultation.....	3
Approach to the consultation.....	3
Summary of consultation results.....	4
Consultation questions and responses.....	5
Relevant actions to be taken.....	13

Aims of the consultation

It is important that we hear from as many people as possible who live and work in Sandwell every day when developing our policies.

This consultation was designed and completed to obtain feedback from residents, tenants, employees and councillors on our Rechargeable Repairs Policy prior to its publication.

This policy explains how Sandwell Council manages rechargeable repairs. The main aims of the policy are to outline the process for charging tenants for repairs caused by damage or neglect, to detail the process for recovering charges both fairly and efficiently and the approach to preventing rechargeable repairs where possible.

We hope that the implementation of this policy will help us to achieve our strategic priorities of ensuring that homes remain safe and secure, whilst maximising our financial position.

Feedback received in this consultation will inform the final version of the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.

Approach to the consultation

Please note that the analysis of feedback found in this report pertains only to survey feedback received in the public consultation.

Promoting draft policies within resident engagement groups:

The Council distributed the policy and raised awareness through two Housing Policy engagement sessions, as well as with various resident engagement groups, including the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group and members of the Sandwell Community Information & Participation Service (SCIPs).

Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities (SNAC) Board

Additionally, feedback was provided by elected members regarding operational delivery when the policy was presented to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny (SNAC) Board on 6th February 2025. These suggestions have been incorporated into the final drafts of the policy documents.

Online Consultation

Online consultation took place over a 4-week period, from February 5th to March 5th, 2025. The survey included a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions, allowing respondents to provide feedback on the policy proposals, assess the document's accessibility for residents, and highlight any missing elements. Based on the feedback received, revisions will be made to the policy document where necessary before it is finalised and presented for Cabinet approval in April 2025.

Summary of consultation results

Overall, the policy was relatively well-received, with the majority of respondents in support of the policy's aims. The majority of respondents also believed the policy to be clear, affirming the use of plain and simple language. Of respondents who were in favour of the policy, some expressed the view that it is the tenants responsibility for the upkeep of their property, and they advocated for the inclusion of this information in the policy.

While the majority of respondents thought that the policy was written with clarity, respondents highlighted the need for physical copies of policy documents and the tenant handbook, particularly for those without internet access.

The majority of respondents also thought that the policy encapsulated all the necessary information in the appropriate level of detail, however, one respondent also asked for additional information on what constitutes rechargeable repairs, acceptable claims, and exemptions.

Consultation questions and responses

As of March 5th 2025, this consultation had **8** responses.

Please tick which best describes your interest in this consultation.

7 of 8 respondents (88%) said that they were interested in this consultation as they are a tenant living in socially rented accommodation.

1 respondent (13%) selected 'prefer not to say'.

Please state which type of accommodation you live in.

4 respondents (50%) live in a flat.

2 respondents (25%) live in a house.

1 respondent (13%) lives in a bungalow.

1 respondent (13%) selected 'prefer not to say'.

Please state your age group.

4 respondents (50%) were aged 35-59.

3 respondents (37%) were aged 65 and over

1 respondent (13%) selected 'prefer not to say'.

What is your gender?

5 respondents (63%) identified as female.

1 respondent (13%) identified as a male.

2 respondents (25%) selected 'prefer not to say'.

What best describes your ethnicity?

7 of 8 respondents (88%) are white English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British.

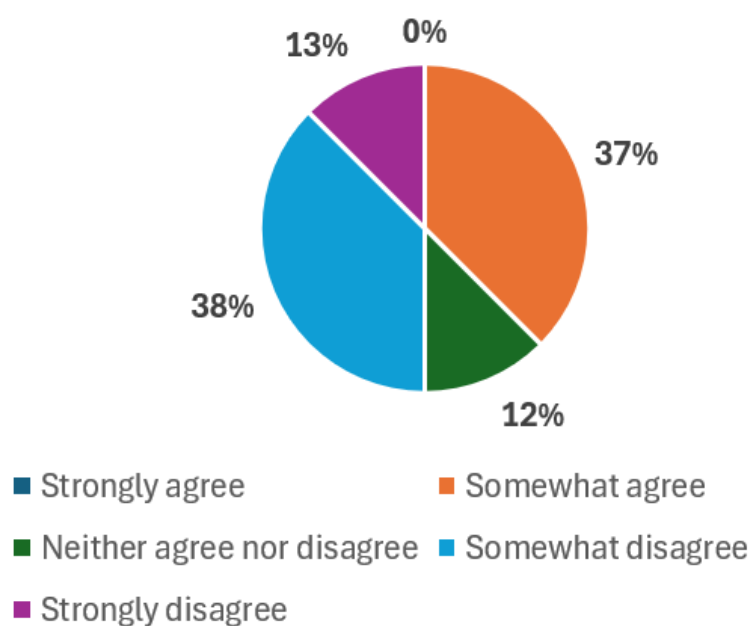
1 respondent (13%) is Indian

For all questions, respondents could select one of the following answers:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

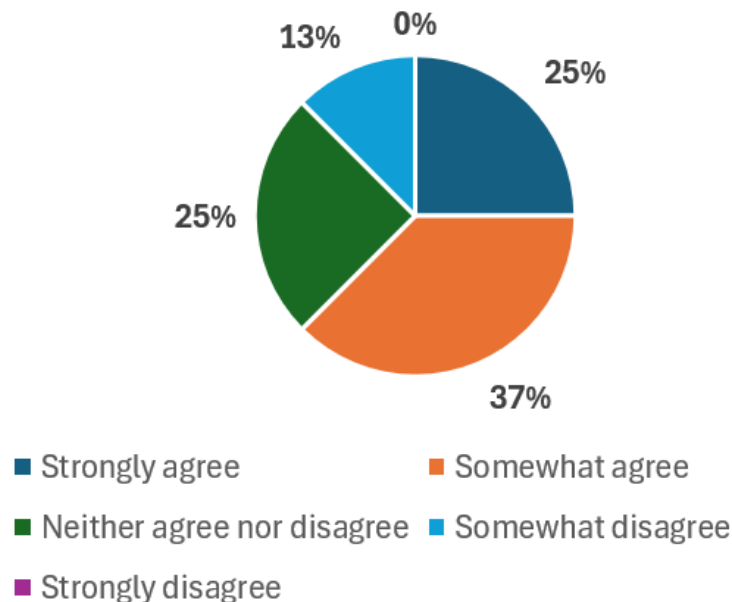
1) Before reading this policy, I was aware of the service Sandwell Council provides to tenants and leaseholders regarding rechargeable repairs.

Half of respondents (50%), disagreed. 3 respondents (37%) somewhat agreed, providing a balanced response to this question.



2) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the aims of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy?

The majority of respondents, 5 of 8 (63%), agreed with the aims of the policy. 1 respondent (13%) disagreed with the aims of the policy.



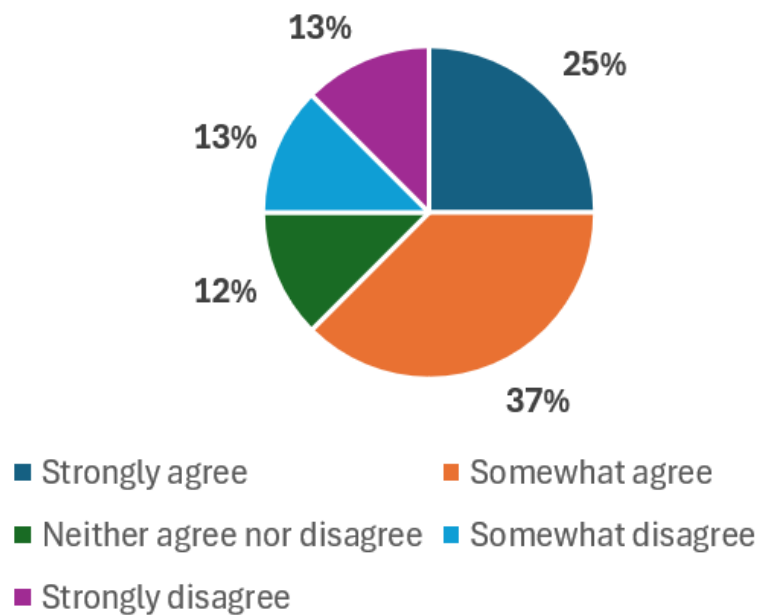
One respondent who agreed said that 'tenants should be held responsible for damages/neglect to a property if not maintained throughout their tenancy'. A further respondent who agreed said that the policy 'may make some tenants responsible' for ensuring their property is properly maintained, while also ensuring that appropriate 'help is given for genuine repairs'.

Two respondents who somewhat agreed with the aims of the policy also added additional comments. One respondent said that in addition to this policy, the tenant handbook must also 'be kept up to date and made available to those tenants who cannot or do not access the internet, in a format they can understand and read'. Another stated that 'the aims are understandable but are not always carried through', and that 'more information is needed for tenants to ensure that residencies are looked after by them too'.

One respondent who disagreed, did so as they stated it was solely the council's responsibility to cover the costs of repairs.

3) The policy is clear about what qualifies as rechargeable repairs.

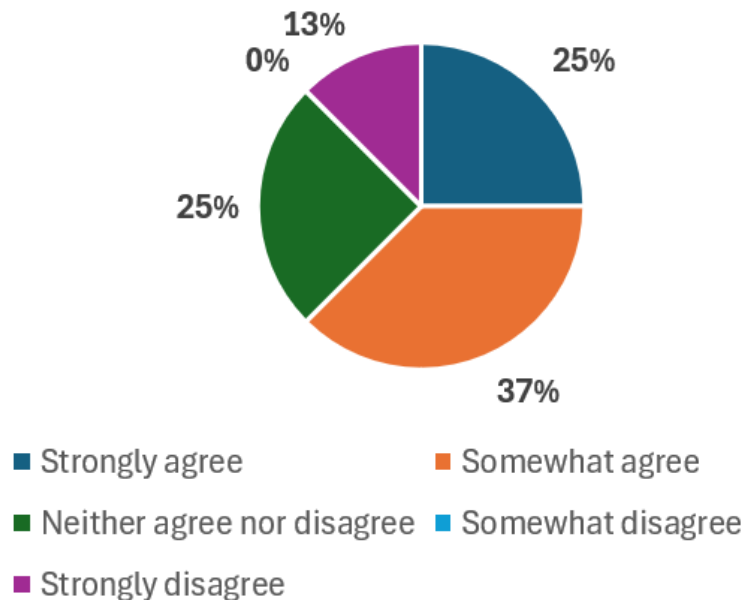
The majority of respondents, 5 of 8 (63%), agreed.



Respondents who agreed also said that they would like more clarity on 'examples of rechargeable repairs', and on what is deemed an 'acceptable claim'. Respondents said the policy was 'explained well' and covered 'many eventualities' but that they would like paper copies of the Tenancy Handbook.

4) The responsibilities for tenants, leaseholders and the council outlined in this policy around recharges are easy to understand.

The majority of respondents, 5 of 8 (63%), agreed. 1 respondent (13%), disagreed.

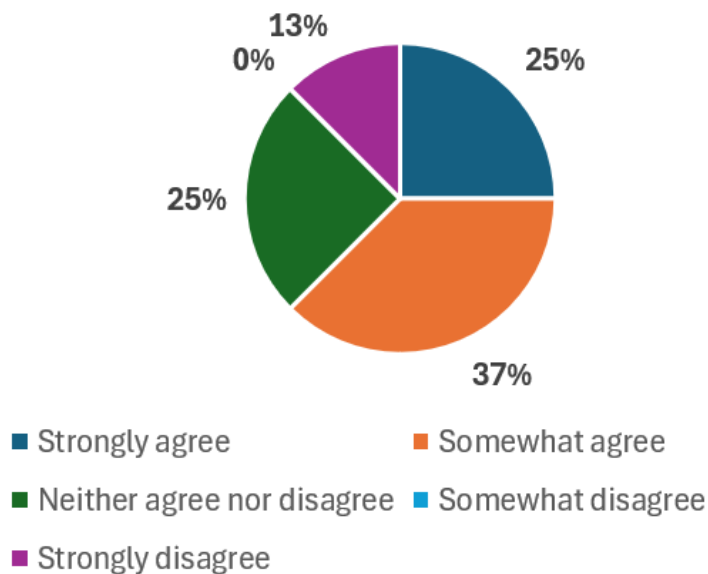


Those that agreed again confirmed that the 'language used is clear', 'straightforward', with the appropriate 'level of detail'. Another respondent who agreed added that 'some tenants may expect too much' and instead require 'information regarding the self-upkeep of a residence'.

One respondent who disagreed said that 'there is no (clear) policy', and that tenants can only get information from the council after waiting for a long time on the phone.

5) The policy clearly explains how and when exemptions for rechargeable repairs will be applied?

The majority of respondents, 5 of 8 (63%), agreed. 1 respondent (13%), disagreed.

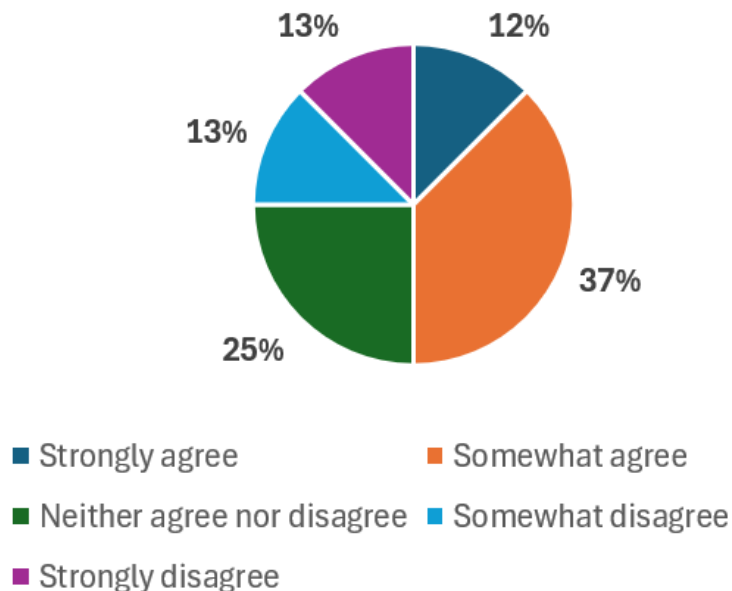


Those that agreed again praised the use of 'clear language', also stating that it can be difficult to encourage 'people to pay when they have different priorities to spend money on'. Another respondent who agreed also asked for additional clarity on whether Sandwell Council 'receive many circumstances where a rechargeable repair charge has to be reduced or waived, (and) if so, why' is this the case.

Another respondent only somewhat agreed as they said that the policy to some extent was 'open to interpretation'.

6) To what extent to you agree or disagree that the majority of tenants and leaseholders will understand this policy?

Half of respondents (50%) agreed. 2 respondents (25%) disagreed.



One respondent who agreed, did so as the 'policy is clear, highlighting many areas of the rechargeable repairs process'. Two other respondents who also agreed stated that in addition, to the current policy, it would be beneficial to have 'information available in a format for those whose first language isn't English', and 'other means of communication'.

7. Any other comments

Respondents were then asked if they had any additional comments on the policy.

In response to question 7, one respondent stated that 'it would also be helpful for tenants to have a list of what is chargeable and how much it might likely cost'. Another respondent said that it is a 'really good policy' but should also be provided in alternative formats and not just online as 'lots don't have online access'. In response to the consultation, one respondent also asked whether 'Sandwell Council receive many rechargeable repairs appeals and/or complaints from tenants and leaseholders', (and) - if so, why?'

Actions taken in response to consultation feedback

During the consultation, respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on the reasoning behind their answers to the multiple choice questions. Question 7 also asked for any additional feedback on the policy not otherwise stated. Feedback received from respondents can be found in the table below, in addition to our response and any actions we are taking.

What respondents told us	Our response	Relevant actions	Timescale
If specific examples of what is and what isn't the responsibility to the tenants etc within the Tenant Handbook, it must be ensured that an up to date paper copy of the handbook is made available to those tenants who cannot or do not access the internet, in a format they can understand and read.	A repairs-specific booklet combining the Repairs Policies and Tenant Handbook will be created in order to provide an easy-read summary for this information. This will reduce the likelihood of tenants/residents being digitally excluded.	Create a repairs-specific booklet combining information from the Repairs Policies being drafted and the Tenant Handbook into an easy-read document.	April 2025.
The rechargeable repairs examples could include further detail e.g. fixtures such as kitchen cabinets and sinks, appliances such as...???	A list of the most common re-chargeable items, with a brief description and costs will be available on the Council website. Further detail could be		

	provided, however, the intention of the list of examples is to provide a summary of the most common items subject to a re-charge.		
Need information regarding self-upkeep of residence.	All this information is available in the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy. We will make a clearer link to this document in the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.	Add link to the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy to ensure tenants are aware of their own responsibilities towards the general upkeep of their property.	April 2025.
4.3 covers the exemptions to recharging repairs. Do Sandwell MBC receive many circumstances where a rechargeable repair charge has to be reduced or waived - if so, why?	Tenants have the right to appeal any recharge, when an appeal is received the circumstances behind each recharge will be investigated, if those investigations reveal any errors or mitigating circumstances, the recharge may be reduced or waived. E.g. damage		

	caused by vandalism where a police crime or log number is provided, will not be re-charged.		
Need other means of communication e.g. audio, face-to-face, language barriers, etc.	We need to assess our corporate priorities regarding this as this is a prevalent issue across. While there are online tools available to help with language barriers on the website, there are still noticeable gaps.	<p>Conduct a review of corporate priorities regarding language barriers online, in person, and in policy documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess current online tools available for language support. • Identify gaps in language accessibility for digital, in-person interactions, and policy documents. • Prioritise areas for improvement across all these areas. • Develop a plan to implement additional resources or tools to address these gaps. 	December 2025

It would be nice for tenants to have a list of what is chargeable and how much it might likely cost	We already provide a list of commonly charged repairs, however, it is difficult to provide a definitive list of repairs that may be charged, as the re-charge is not triggered by the type of component, but whether that component was damaged or neglected by the tenant or leaseholder as opposed to fair wear and tear, so in theory it could be any one of the 3,000 + SOR codes.		
Do Sandwell Council receive many rechargeable repairs appeals and/or complaints from tenants and leaseholders - if so, why?	<p>The council do receive a relatively small number of re-chargeable repairs appeals; these tend to fall under 3 main headings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The value of the re-charge 2. Disputing that the work was done 3. Contesting liability 		

	<p>It should be noted that leaseholders are required to contribute to the cost of all repairs to the common areas of blocks in which they reside. These tend to generate a higher volume of appeals as leaseholders may not know what communal repairs have been completed at their block until they receive a bill. We also experience difficulty in pursuing previous tenants for damage caused whilst a tenant.</p>		
--	--	--	--