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Paying your rent

Your rent is charged to you on a weekly basis. When the amount you need to pay weekly changes, we will send you a new Rent Notice within five working days of us being told of the change.

If your Housing Benefit entitlement changes, we will send you a new Rent Notice as soon as we have confirmation of your new award.

We will send you a rent statement every year which will summarise the charges and payments on your rent account.

How to pay

The annual rent for each property is set at the beginning of April each year, based on government rules.

There are several ways you can pay your rent:

- **Online:** Make a payment on our website (www.welhat.gov.uk).
- **Direct Debit:** This is the easiest and most efficient way to pay. You can choose for the payments to be made on either the 1st, 8th, 15th or 22nd of each month. Please contact us if you would like a form. If you pay by Direct Debit we will

calculate the amount by taking the yearly rent and dividing it into 12 equal instalments. If the amount you need to pay changes, we will write to you two weeks before the new payment amount is due. When you send us a Direct Debit mandate we will update your rent account and send this to your bank within five working days of receipt.

- **Telephone: 01707 357 755** (24hrs Payment Line).
- **Standing Order:** This is similar to Direct Debit but you need to amend the instructions to your bank whenever your monthly charge changes.
- **PayPoint card:** On request, we give a PayPoint card which can be used at any PayPoint outlet or Post Office. You can check where your nearest PayPoint outlet is by visiting www.paypoint.com.
- **Cheque:** Please make cheques payable to **Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council** and write your rent account number clearly on the back.

HOUSING BENEFIT

We do not deal with Housing Benefits claims and payments. If you have a query about Housing Benefit, please contact 01707 357 000.

Paying your rent

Your rent notice

Your rent notice may include some or all of the following charges:

- **Rent:** The rent for your home.
- **Communal heating:** Only applicable to some properties.
- **Utilities and running costs:** These are only charged for temporary accommodation.
- **Insurance:** Our discounted home contents insurance scheme.
- **Garage and/or parking:** Charges for garages which you can choose to rent and some properties that have allocated parking spaces.
- **Store shed:** Charges for store sheds in a block.
- **Support charges:** Examples include charges for the Scheme Manager Service or for Lifeline Emergency Alarms.

Rent arrears

Paying rent is a key part of your tenancy agreement and we take a firm but fair approach to those who do not pay. We recognise that tenants may suffer from money problems and can fall into arrears for lots of reasons. Your Income Officer is there to help, and you should contact us as soon as possible if you are having trouble paying your rent.

Falling behind with rent payments

If you fall behind with the rent and you are in arrears, your Income Officer can identify benefits you may be entitled to, help you fill in claim forms and make an agreement with you to pay your arrears in instalments.



Paying your rent

We will offer you support and help to deal with your arrears, but if our efforts to help you fail or if you break an agreement with us, we will consider taking legal action to evict you or denying you certain rights, for example transferring or mutually exchanging your home.

If we do evict you for having rent arrears, it is unlikely that we will offer you housing again in the future unless the outstanding arrears are cleared.

If you would like to speak to your Income Officer about rent arrears, please contact us as soon as possible.

The council works in partnership with **Citizens Advice**. For independent impartial advice, please contact the Citizens Advice on **03444 111 444** or talk to one of their advisors online at **www.citizensadvice.org.uk**.

Actions we may take include:

- Writing to you, telephoning you or visiting you at home to discuss the arrears and agree the best way to deal with them.
- Serving a 'Notice of Seeking Possession', the first stage in the legal process that could lead to you losing your home.
- Applying for possession in the County Court.
- As a last resort evicting you.

Our aim is to prevent rent arrears from developing and we work with support agencies, in particular Citizens Advice, to deliver targeted advice and assistance.

Rent arrears recovery

If you are in arrears, we will take a number of steps to recover the money you owe.

