



**The Hyde Group**  
Making a lasting difference

Ms Diane Shepherd  
Chief Executive  
Chichester District Council  
East Pallant House  
1 East Pallant,  
Chichester  
West Sussex PO19 1TY

11<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Dear Ms Shepherd

**RE: Chichester District Council – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Final report of the Service Charge Review Task & Finish Group**

Thank you to your staff for sending through a copy of the above review. We would be obliged if this written statement is circulated and read out at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 15 September.

We are extremely disappointed by the tone of the report and unsubstantiated allegations to which we have not had the opportunity to review and respond as we have not been provided with the evidence gathered in the course of the review. Should details of individual cases be provided we will of course be more than happy to investigate but we believe that the review has not been conducted in a fair and reasonable manner and we strongly refute the conclusions.

We also note that adverse and unsupportable comments in relation to the report have apparently been made publically by an individual Councillor. These comments have appeared in the press to the detriment of Hyde.

We are major stakeholders in the local area who have always worked in partnership with the Council providing much needed affordable, good quality homes; investment in the community and jobs for hundreds of local people both directly as well as through sub-contractors and our supply chain. We ask that Chichester District Council clarifies that the comments made were not representative of the Council and confirm your commitment to fostering a positive partnership going forward.

Turning to the report itself:

**Service charge increases**

Our approach to service charges is reasonable, legal and consistent with best practice. Our charges reflect the costs of providing services which are service chargeable.

Of 5,700 Hyde residents in Chichester, we received 450 enquiries about service charges in the year 2014/15. Of these only 80 required some adjustment.

We have not carried out a 'national exercise' to increase service charges. Some service charges have increased; some have reduced reflecting costs incurred. The services provided to individual schemes and the required apportionment of charges in lease/tenancy agreements determines the individual charges levied to each resident. We have legitimately begun to pass on the costs of health and safety compliance to our service charge paying residents which in the past we have absorbed and which have increased as statutory and regulatory requirements have increased. These costs are included in resident 2015/16 estimates and further information is posted on our website.

Management charges at 15% are standard and are in line with benchmarks. Our properties are inspected in the normal course of providing services so do not need to be inspected specifically in respect of levying service charges.

Prior to issuing service charge budget estimates/actuals statements, our staff will always aim to assess any large variances between financial years and individual cost elements. These are quality monitored to ensure that we have the relevant evidence to substantiate the cost or actual invoices/statements analysis to fully verify the charges.

### **Customer Service**

Where any resident believes that our charges are inaccurate we always recommend that they contact us and our contact details are included in all of our correspondence and on our website. Residents can contact us through a Freephone telephone number or if calling by mobile phone a low-cost number, an email address and a correspondence address are also available. We have a free App that residents can download to contact us on. Residents can also visit the local office in Chichester and again, all of this contact information is also included on our website.

It is unclear from the report as to why the Chichester District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is critical of our service in relation to the way our telephone calls are answered (point 8.1). We continue to provide services from our office in Chichester and our contact centre advisors both here and in Lewisham have access to all systems and services relating to each property. They are therefore able to assist with any query whether this is local to them or in any other region.

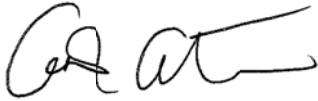
Hyde aims to respond to all correspondence within 10 working days (point 8.2) but where this is not possible, we proactively assess the situation and in some cases advise residents that it may take longer in order to be able to provide a full and detailed response to what can be complex enquiries. In practice the majority of enquiries are still resolved within 10 working days.

### **Consultation**

Hyde is not under any obligation to consult with residents prior to issuing a Service Charge estimate or statement, in the same way that a Council does not have to consult prior to issuing its Council Tax statement or a Utility company when it sends out a bill. What we do ensure is that where residents advise us that they have difficulty making payments, our staff work closely with them to help with any payment issues they face. We provide free personal benefits and money advice where this is needed.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with Chichester District Council but we do hope that you will understand our very serious concerns over the way this matter has been handled and the unsubstantiated conclusions contained within the report.

Yours sincerely



**Carol Carter**  
Group Director of Housing

Cc: Cllr Clare Abel, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Carol Purnell, Cabinet member for Housing and Planning

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**BENGALI:**

আপনি যদি এই নথিটিকে অন্য ভাষাতে বা ফরম্যাটে পেতে চান, বা আপনার যদি একজন অনুবাদকারীর প্রয়োজন হয়, অনুগ্রহ করে, আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

**FRENCH:** Si vous souhaitez obtenir ce document dans une autre langue ou sous un autre format ou si vous avez besoin des services d'un interprète, veuillez nous contacter.

**ITALIAN:** Se desidera ricevere questo documento in un'altra lingua o in un formato diverso, oppure se ha bisogno di un interprete, La preghiamo di contattarci.

**KURDISH:**

ئەگەر دەتەوئ ئەم بەلگە بە زمان یان شیوازکی دیکە بۆ تۆ نامادە بەین، یان بنویستت بە وەرگێری زارەکی هەیه، تکایە پەیوەندیمان پێو ه بەکە.

**LITHUANIAN:** Jei pageidaujate šio dokumento kita kalba ar kitokiu formatu arba jeigu prireiktų vertėjo, maloniai prašome kreiptis į mus.

**MANDARIN:**

如果您需要本文件的其他语言版本或格式，或者您需要一名翻译，请与我们联系。

**POLISH:** Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać ten dokument w innym języku lub w innym formacie albo jeżeli potrzebna jest pomoc tłumacza, to prosimy o kontakt z nami.

**PORTUGUESE:** Se gostaria de ter este documento em outro idioma ou formato, ou se necessita de um intérprete, contacte-nos.

**PUNJABI:**

ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਜੇ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੈਟਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

**SOMALI:** Haddii aad dokomantigan ku rabtid luqad ama hab kale, ama haddii aad u baahantahay tarjubaan, fadlan nala soo xiriir.

**SPANISH:** Póngase en contacto con nosotros si desea obtener este documento en otro idioma o formato, o si necesita los servicios de un intérprete.

**TURKISH:** Bu belgenin Türkçe'sini veya Türkçe bilen birisinin size yardımcı olmasını istiyorsanız bize başvurabilirsiniz.

**VIETNAMESE:** Nếu quý vị muốn tài liệu này được ấn hành bằng ngôn ngữ khác hay định dạng khác hoặc nếu quý vị cần người phiên dịch, xin quý vị vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi.

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For text relay from a text phone add **18001** before the number you want to call or to use Text phone dial **020 8297 7501**

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