

## How can 'AWICS' help with Service Charges?

'AWICS' is a management consultancy and training company. We specialise in providing support in finance and management to clients in housing. We are well known for our ability to analyse and explain complex financial and management issues clearly.

Service charges are an integral part of landlords' work in financing value for money services and sustaining customer satisfaction. Housing Associations have traditionally levied service charges with most local authorities in England introducing them in the 'noughties'. In Wales, local authorities and housing associations have introduced service charges as part of the Welsh government's new rent policy. The rolling out of Universal Credit is having an impact on benefit entitlement for service charges.

The calculation and management of service charges for leaseholders and tenants can be complex. We have recently worked with a number of social landlords on various aspects of service charges. This brochure outlines some of the services that we offer to help social landlords with service charges.



**Adrian Waite, Managing Director of 'AWICS' outside the AWICS offices.**

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### Service Charges 'Health Check'

We have devised a service charge 'health check' that offers social landlords a comprehensive high level review of special and communal services and service charges to establish their robustness, effectiveness and sustainability and that offers recommendations for improvement.

The 'health check' asks and answers the following questions:

- What do services cost to provide and is income maximised?
- Does the service comply with legal requirements and good practice?
- Does the service offer value for money?
- How good is the property data?
- How good are the accounting systems and charging mechanisms?
- How good is the input and monitoring from residents?
- Could further charges be de-pooled?

This is a useful check for landlords who would like to establish the strength of their existing approach to services and service charges and whether and how that approach can be improved. However, we can also tailor this standard approach to the individual requirements of a client. For more information, please contact Adrian Waite at [Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk)

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### Publications

We publish a 100-page guide to service charges entitled 'All You Want to Know about Service Charges in Social Housing' that is updated annually. The latest edition was published in February 2016. For more information or to order a copy, please visit our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/schsbook2016.asp>

## Introducing and De-Pooling Service Charges

We have developed a methodology for introducing and de-pooling service charges that enables us to identify the scope for new and / or increased service charges and to develop options for their introduction. Our methodology includes:

- Considering what to charge for based on statute, case law and the provisions of leases and tenancy agreements
- Identifying the merits of fixed or variable service charges
- Identifying all appropriate costs
- Identifying options for apportioning costs between schemes, leaseholders and tenants based on the best available information
- Ensuring charges represent Value for Money
- Keeping it Simple
- Consulting residents and providing complete information

This is a useful process for landlords who would like to examine the scope to introduce new service charges or to vary existing service charges as part of a strategy to maximise income or improve value for money. However, we can also tailor this standard approach to the individual requirements of a client. For more information, please contact Adrian Waite at [Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk)

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## Training Opportunities

We provide seminars on 'All You Want to Know about Service Charges in Social Housing'. These seminars address the following questions:

- How do Service Charges work in Housing Associations and Local Authorities and for Leaseholders and Tenants?
- How are service charges calculated?
- How to de-pool service charges?
- Legal obligations, accounting guidance and good practice
- When are service charges eligible for housing benefit / universal credit?
- How to ensure excellent customer service?

The sessions are accompanied by a very useful 100-page book that is designed for reference after the session entitled: **"All You Want to Know about Service Charges in Social Housing 2016"**

### The Venues and Dates of the next sessions are:

- **Cardiff:** Novotel Hotel, Cardiff – 6<sup>th</sup> September 2016
- **London:** Novotel Hotel, Waterloo – 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016

For further information or to book a place please visit our website at: <http://www.awics.co.uk/schs2016.asp>

This seminar is also available in-house. The in-house sessions are similar to the open seminars but are tailored to local requirements. For further information about in-house sessions, please contact Adrian Waite on 017683-52165 or [adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:adrian.waite@awics.co.uk)

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For any enquiries about how we could assist with service charges please contact Adrian Waite at [Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk) or on 017683-52165.

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