



ALBION WATER
HOUSEHOLD SCHEME OF CHARGES
Five Oaks Lane
2020/21

Albion Water Limited

Registered in England No. 3102176

Registered Office:

Operations Centre, Claverton Down Road,
Claverton Down, Bath, England, BA2 7WW

www.albionwater.co.uk

Charging Scheme – Water and Sewerage Services

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1.0 Introduction

Albion Water is the appointed water and sewerage undertaker for the area known as Oaklands, Five Oaks Lane and as described in Albion's variation of appointment notice. This Household Scheme of Charges has been published as required under the provisions of the Water Industry Act 1991 and a Statement of Assurance has been approved by Ofwat, the independent economic regulator of the water industry. The area surrounding Albion's boundary is serviced by Essex and Suffolk Water for water and Thames Water for sewerage services.

This document constitutes Albion's complete charging scheme for household customers. Charges for non-household customers are available on request.

2.0 How to use this guide

Our water and sewerage charges are set out in Section 10 for those domestic properties within Albion's area receiving metered water supplies and for those unmetered properties that are based on an assessed charge. Sections 3 through to 9 detail Albion's approach to billing, payments and help for vulnerable customers.

3.0 General Principles

Our charges scheme is made under section 143 of the Water Industry Act 1991, charges being set to ensure the current and future deliverability of sustainable water and sewerage services for the Five Oaks Lane inset area. We match or better those of the incumbent water and sewerage companies (Essex & Suffolk and Thames Water respectively).

Charges will be made up of two elements - fixed standing charges and a variable or assessed charge to reflect system usage. System usage charges will be based on meter readings where these are available or, alternatively, on an assessed charge if no supply meter has been installed to serve your property. In the event that a property is served by more than one supply pipe, charges will apply to all measured or assessed supply connections.

4.0 Customers with a Metered Water Supply

Standing charges are based on supply meter size, including fixed components for surface (rain) water conveyance and disposal and highway drainage. The standing charge for water covers both potable and non potable supplies. Volumetric charges for sewerage are based on 100% of water supplied (an allowance for volumes not returned to the sewer has already been made in the tariff). Percentage reductions might be applicable in certain commercial circumstances or in temporary situations in which supply pipe leakage has been acknowledged and rebated. All such cases would need to be assessed and verified by Albion personnel (please call our Customer Services number if you believe that a reduced percentage

is appropriate). If meter readings are not available, for any reason, your charge will be based on an estimated or assessed value.

5.0 Customers without a Metered Water Supply

Standing charges are based on Essex and Suffolk Water's standing charge for water and Thames Water's standing charge for sewerage. The sewerage standing charge includes fixed components for surface (rain) water conveyance and disposal and highway drainage. An additional fixed charge is levied that is derived from average measured charges within the inset area, adjusted to remove exceptional usage.

6.0 Help for Vulnerable Customers

Qualifying customers (those on specified benefits or with certain medical conditions) can get help with their water and sewerage bills if these are based on supply meter readings. This scheme (known as 'WaterSure'), detailed in section 8.4 of our Code of Practice, is reproduced below for your convenience. An application form can be obtained by telephoning Albion's customer helpline **03300 242020**. Eligible customers will benefit from the start of the billing period in which an application is made until the end of the billing period in which eligibility ceases. Annual evidence of eligibility will be necessary; this evidence may require third party verification.

The Government has decided that certain metered customers should receive help with their bills so that they do not reduce water use below the levels they need (the WaterSure scheme).

To qualify for help, in addition to paying metered charges, you must also be in receipt of one or more of the following benefits (or have someone else living in your household in receipt of the benefit):

- (a) under Part VII of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 – **universal credit, council tax benefit, housing benefit, income support (and its successor, the income related employment support allowance)**;
- (b) under section 1(4) of the jobseekers Act 1995 – **income based job-seeker's allowance**;
- (c) under section 8 of the Tax Credit Act 2002 - **the Working Tax Credit**;
- (d) under sections 10 and 11 of the Tax Credit Act 2002 - **the Child Tax Credit** (except for families in receipt of the family element only);
- (e) under the State Pension Credit Act 2002 - **Pension Credit**.

The person in receipt of the benefit must then have either:

- (a) three or more dependent children under the age of 19 normally living with them; or
- (b) be diagnosed as having one of the following medical conditions (or any member of the household has been diagnosed as having the condition):
 - desquamation (flaky skin loss)
 - weeping skin disease (eczema, psoriasis, varicose ulceration)
 - incontinence
 - Crohn's disease
 - ulcerative colitis
 - abdominal stomas

- kidney failure requiring home dialysis (unless your health authority provides financial assistance towards water used in the dialysis process) and, as a result of that condition, the person concerned is obliged to use a significant additional volume of water.

In addition to the groups set out above, Albion will consider requests for assistance from customers in receipt of benefit who have other medical conditions which involve significant extra use of water.

Proof of a relevant medical condition would be required, such as a medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner which states:

the name and address of the person with the illness,
the illness which requires a significant extra amount of water to be used,
the date on which the certificate is issued,
the name and address of the registered medical practitioner.

You will have to pay any charge the medical practitioner makes for issuing such a certificate.

Where a person qualifies for help, they will pay an annual amount equivalent to the average household sewerage bill in Albion's area (or their actual metered charges if these are lower).

7.0 Paying Your Bill

The person(s) living in a property is responsible for payment for water and sewerage services. If you are a tenant who pays for water and sewerage services through rental payments to a landlord then you must provide the landlord's contact details so that payments can be requested directly from the landlord. Failure to provide such details may result in Albion instigating debt recovery proceedings against you (described in Appendix 1 of our Code of Practice and reproduced below for your convenience).

Our water and waste water disposal services have to be paid for. We will pursue charges where they are not being paid.

If after we have sent you a bill we do not receive payment or any contact from you to discuss payment, we will send you a reminder. We will also send you a reminder if you miss paying instalments.

If we do not hear from you or receive payment after sending you a reminder, we will send you notice of our intention to ask the County Court to issue a Claim for non payment. If you had been paying by instalments and not responded to a reminder, you will receive a combined notice of cancellation of your instalment plan and intention to issue a Claim.

If you do not respond to this notice, depending on your payment history, we may:

- ask the Court to issue a Court Claim; or
- contact you again ourselves; or
- ask a Debt Collection Agency to recover the outstanding money.

If a Court Claim is issued it will add to the debt you owe us as you will have to pay Court and Solicitors' Costs.

If you receive a Court Claim you can ask the Court to decide how you should pay off the debt but if you do, you may have to pay additional Court costs. You can also dispute the Court Claim if you believe you do not owe the money claimed.

If you do not respond to the Court Claim, the Court will make an Order against you for the full debt. Further legal action, such as the issue of Warrant for the seizure of goods, can be taken against you once an Order has been made. A Court Order for payment may affect your ability to obtain credit.

Where an Order for payment has been made by the Court and there is still no agreement with a customer to pay a debt, depending on the circumstances we may take one or all of the following actions:

- ask a Debt Collection agency to recover the outstanding money,
- visit a customer ourselves to try and agree a payment plan,
- ask the Court to issue an enforcement process such as:
 - a Warrant to allow a Court Bailiff to seize your goods.
 - an Attachment of Earnings Order requiring your employer to pay money from your wages directly to us.
 - a Charging Order if you own your home. This will mean that you have to settle the debt before you can complete the sale of your home.

Unless other arrangements have been agreed, bills are sent to occupants twice every year and should be paid in full within 28 days of the bill date. Sections 8.2, 8.3 and 8.6 of Albion's Code of Practice detail the various frequency and methods of payment available; these are reproduced below for ease of reference.

8.2 Paying Water Service Charges – Unmetered Properties

Unless a customer has agreed a different payment arrangement with the Company, unmetered charges are payable in advance in two equal instalments, on 1st April and 1st October.

The Company offers regular payment plans for unmetered charges:

- (a) the standard plan is for payment by 12 instalments, with payment being due on a set day of each month.
- (b) Payment by a maximum of 10 instalments between April and January is also possible (if you ask to use this option after April, the charges due will be apportioned on a monthly basis so that they are settled by January). Payment is due on a set day of the month.
- (c) If you need to pay more frequently, alternative plans may be available on request.

8.3 Metered Charges

The annual standing charge element of metered charges is payable in advance, and the volumetric part is payable in arrears (based on meter readings) and, unless you have agreed a different payment arrangement with us, they are payable within 28 days of a bill being issued.

Metered bills are usually issued on occupation, moving out or around 1 April (including the annual standing charge) and, thereafter, every six months (or quarterly in the case of some commercial properties). We aim to base every bill on meter readings but estimates may need to be used on occasions. It is recommended that a meter reading is taken and sent to us when moving into or out of a property, otherwise closing or opening bills may include assessed usage.

We reserve the right to take meter readings and issue bills on a more regular basis.

We operate a special payment plan for metered customers. Under the plan you agree to pay a fixed amount each month (which will be based on an estimate for your usage). At the end of each year we will review the account and make any adjustments to the required monthly payment if water use (on which discharge volumes are based) has changed and the amount being paid is too high or too low.

If the account is in credit, you can choose to have the over-payment refunded or carried forward to reduce next year's payments. If the fixed amount was set too low, the debt will be added to the following year's bill and monthly payments re-set to repay the outstanding balance and that year's charges over the next 12 months. Alternative plans for paying metered charges, or repaying any arrears, are available on request.

Monthly or more frequent plans are available for re-paying any arrears of metered charges, or the assessed volume charge or any other tariff system.

8.6 Paying Charges

Payment can be made by:

- (a) Direct Debit (please contact our customer service team for a form or, alternatively, download one from our website, complete it and return it to us)
- (b) Internet banking (please use details provided on the back of your bill, remembering to include your unique customer reference number)
- (c) Cheque (with your address and customer reference number written on the back) by post to: Customer Accounts, Albion Water, Harpenden Hall, Southdown Road, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 1TE (please do not send cash through the post)
- (d) cash at a PayPoint facility (please contact our customer service team for a payment slip), details and the location of participating outlets are available on request
- (e) credit or debit card via Albion Water's customer helpline or [our website](#).

Please refer to our charges scheme for your area for further information on charges and tariffs.

8.0 Applying for a Meter

Owners of unmeasured domestic properties have the right to request the installation of a meter free of charge (although properties served by joint supply pipes may be ineligible for free installation) and are able to revert to paying by unmetered bills if they should choose to do so within twelve months of meter installation. If you wish to discuss the installation of a water supply meter please contact our Customer Services team on 03300 242020.

9.0 Further Information

9.1 Moving home

Whether you are moving in or vacating a property within Albion's statutory area, you must notify our customer services team. If you are leaving a metered property you will need to give us at least two days' notice so that a final reading can be arranged; failure to do so could result in continuing liability for water and sewerage payment (up to a maximum of 28 days). New occupants should similarly notify us (within 2 days of moving in) so that billing details can be appropriately adjusted.

9.2 Surface (rain) water drainage rebate

To avoid flooding, rain water falling on hard (impervious) surfaces is channelled to dedicated surface water drains and sewers so that it can be safely removed. A fixed fee to pay for surface water management is included within your standing charge. If you are able to prove to Albion's satisfaction (e.g. a surveyor's report) that your property does not have any surface water discharge connected to the sewerage system then a lower standing charge will be payable. Please check your bill to identify whether surface drainage has been charged prior to claiming a rebate - properties without surface drainage managed by Albion Water should already benefit from a reduced standing charge. In the event that grounds for a rebate are proven, Albion will reduce the standing charge in line with the fixed surface water element for the current and future charging years.

9.3 Single occupancy

To qualify for the single occupancy tariff for unmeasured charges you must provide Albion with evidence of your single occupancy status in the form of your current Council Tax bill displaying your single occupancy discount. You must be a single occupier (one person only), a single parent with children at the same address will not be classed as single occupancy

9.4 Complaints

Albion Water has an established complaints procedure, the details of which are contained in Appendix 2 of the Code of Practice (extracts from which are reproduced below for your convenience), it is also accessible in full on our website or can be requested from our customer services team. Should a complaint not be resolved to your satisfaction, you are able to refer the matter to Consumer Council for Water, see Section 11 for their contact details.

- 1.1. A complaint is defined as any contact with the Company by a customer or potential customer in which dissatisfaction is expressed.
- 1.2. A contact will be defined as a complaint if it expresses dissatisfaction with the services provided by the Company regardless of whether the complaint is made on behalf of another party or the person making the complaint does not pay charges to the Company.

3. Receipt of complaints

- 3.2. Customers will be asked to direct complaints to our Customer Service Department in the first instance.
- 3.3. Full details of how to contact us with a complaint will be sent to customers annually.
- 3.4. Telephone numbers and the address to contact the Company's Customer Service Department about accounts or service issues are:

Accounts issues

Our Accounts Helpline can be contacted by telephone on **03300 242020**

Other Customer Service Issues

Our Service Helpline, for all other customer service issues, can be contacted on **03300 242020**

Alternatively, if you need to contact us in writing about an accounts or customer service issue, please write to:

Albion Water Limited, Customer Services, Harpenden Hall, Southdown Road,
Harpenden, Herts, AL5 1TE

or email to: complaints@albionwater.co.uk

7. Handling of complaints

- 7.1. All complaints will be dealt with courteously, fairly, efficiently and as simply as possible.
- 7.2. Where it is in the Company's power to do so, the cause of the complaint will be put right as quickly as possible. If the Company is not responsible for the cause of the complaint a full explanation of why it cannot help will be given together with suggestions as to who the customer should contact for assistance.
- 7.3. It may not be possible to remedy some problems immediately. Wherever possible in these cases the Company will take action to reduce the effect the problem has and keep the customer informed of action to eliminate the problem in the longer term.
- 7.4. Complaints will be overseen by one of our complaints handling teams in our Customer Service Department. Staff who deal with complaints have undergone specific training in complaints handling and the Company's procedures and policies for dealing with customers who wish to register a complaint. Regular training in complaints handling is provided for employees.
- 7.5. A response to a complaint will include:-
 - Thanking the customer for contacting the Company.
 - An apology where the Company is at fault.
 - Explanation of all matters raised by the customer, including:
 - an explanation of the cause of the problem, where appropriate;
 - a description of the action which has been taken to overcome the problem;
 - a description of the action which the Company will be taking together with timescales for that action; or
 - a description of the action which has been taken to reduce the problem together with an explanation of further action planned to resolve the problem ultimately and a commitment to keep the customer informed of progress; or
 - a full explanation of why the Company is not able to satisfy the customer's requirements or expectations.
 - Advice on who to contact where responsibility for the problem does not lie with the Company.
 - A named contact and telephone number for further enquiries where this is appropriate.

9. Redress

- 9.1. If the Company fails to provide a customer with a service which it guarantees, financial redress will be made in accordance with the levels set out in its Guaranteed Standards Scheme. Details of these standards, periodically updated, are contained within the Occupier Manual.

- 9.2. Where a complaint involves a matter not covered by the Guaranteed Standards Scheme recompense will be considered taking into account the cause of the problem and loss suffered.
- 9.3. The Company may make an ex-gratia payment or provide other redress where an immediate remedy is not available for a problem or where worry or distress has been caused.
- 9.4. In certain cases, especially those where a customer alleges specific loss or damage, it may be necessary to ask the customer to provide the Company with full details, together with receipts for any expense incurred.

13. Dissatisfied customers

- 13.1. Where a customer is dissatisfied with the way in which the Company has handled a complaint, or action it has taken to resolve a problem, the case will be reviewed by the senior manager responsible for the area of the business associated with the complaint.
- 13.2. If the relevant senior manager has been involved in a case previously the review will be carried out by a Director of the Company to ensure an independent review. Both senior functional managers and the Director are empowered to take any action necessary to resolve the matter under review with the customer and are expected to do so by the Company.
- 13.3. A substantive response will be sent within 10 working days. A £30 payment will be made automatically for failures to meet this target.

15. The Consumer Council for Water (CCWater)

- 15.1. In the event that you remain dissatisfied after a senior manager has reviewed her or his complaint the matter may be referred to the CCWater, the independent customer watchdog for the area.
- 15.2. CCWater is independent of us. A complaint may be referred to it at any time but usually it will not begin its own investigations into a complaint until we have had the opportunity to resolve it.
The address and telephone number for the local area CCWater is:

CCWater
c/o 1st Floor, Victoria Square House, Victoria Square
Birmingham
B2 4AJ
Telephone: **0300 034 2222**
e-mail: You can email via the CCWater website at www.ccwater.org.uk
Office hours: Mon to Fri 8:30 to 4:30

- 15.3. If you remain dissatisfied following CCWater's efforts to resolve your complaint, you have the right to refer your complaint to the Water Redress Scheme known as WATRS. WATRS is a voluntary alternative dispute resolution scheme to help address the very small number of customer complaints that remain unresolved. WATRS, is designed to provide an independent, impartial and easy to use alternative to going to Court or a Tribunal.
- 15.4. You can make an application, free of charge, via WATRS website www.watrs.org or you can ask for an application form to be sent to you info@watrs.org. Guidance notes are available on the website or you can ask for a copy to be sent to you by telephoning 0207 520 3801. Their address is:

WATRS
70 Fleet Street
London
EC4Y 1EU

15.5. We have signed up to the scheme's commitments which are set out below. A full copy of the Scheme Rules can be found here www.watrs.org/commitments.

Commitment to:

1. Provide WATRS free of charge to customers;
 2. Support the principles set out in the ADR Specification;
 3. Respect the independence of WATRS
 4. Be bound by decision of the WATRS' adjudicator if accepted by customer and to implement decision as required by Scheme Rules;
 5. Co-operate with and have due regard to the recommendations of the ADR Panel
 6. Provide accurate and reliable information to and co-operate with the WATRS' adjudicators;
- 15.6. What type of complaint can be referred to WATRS?
Only disputes relating to the following apply:
Bills, payment, collections and debt recovery
Metering
Water supply services
Wastewater/sewerage services
Development and new supplies

9.5 Empty Properties

With the exception of properties that are subject to building or renovation works or are newly built but awaiting transfer of ownership from the builder, if you are able to demonstrate to Albion's reasonable satisfaction that a property is unfurnished and unoccupied, then:

- (i) Unmetered properties will not be liable for charges
- (ii) Metered properties will not be liable for the standing charge

If a property is unoccupied for a continuous period of three months or more and you are able to demonstrate to Albion's reasonable satisfaction that the customer is living in a care home or nursing home then:

- (i) Unmetered properties will not be liable for charges
- (ii) Metered properties will not be liable for the standing charge

Empty properties that are physically disconnected from the supply system (with adequate evidence provided) and do not receive a water supply from any alternative source, will only be charged for surface water drainage.

9.6 Problems paying

Should you find yourself in financial difficulty, requiring assistance to cover water and sewerage bills, Albion recommends that you contact our customer helpline to notify us without delay. Temporary arrangements could possibly be made to spread payments; these are set out in Appendix 1 of the Code of Practice.

10.0 Our Charges¹ 2020/21

Household Water Charges

<i>Metered supply potable water charges</i>	£
Standing charge	39.39
Charge per m ³	1.3187
WaterSure*	223.47
<i>Metered supply non potable water charges</i>	
Charge per m ³	1.2528

Household Waste Water Charges

<i>Metered supply sewerage charges</i>	£
Standing charge	63.56
Standing charge (no surface drainage)	37.16
Charge per m ³	0.8604
WaterSure*	185.00

*includes standing charge, highway drainage and surface water drainage

MISCELLANEOUS CHARGES

	£
CON29DW Search (combined sewerage/water)	62.00
Water Mains or Sewer Map (A4)	12.50
Surface water drainage only	42.45

¹ To minimise the environmental costs of printing and postage, details of relevant future charges will be included with your bill and the full scheme will be available on our website.

11.0 Contact Details

Albion Water Limited

Emergency Helpline **0800 917 5819 / 01582 344372**

Customer Service Helpline **03300 242020**

Our Customer Service Helpline is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am until 5.30pm. Please call it if you want information on:

1. the water pipes and sewers to which your house connects; water quality issues, smells from sewers or sewage treatment works; or any other area of our water and waste water services. If we need to get somebody to come out and see you we will do our best to agree a fixed time appointment convenient to you for our visit. We will also ask you whether you wish to give us a password to use when we call so that you know we are who we say we are when we arrive.
2. your account for our water and sewerage services; if you want to set up a payment plan or you need to discuss changing an existing one because you are having difficulty paying; or if you are moving house.

Contacting us in writing:

If you want to write to us about any customer service or billing issue, please use:

Albion Water Limited, Customer Services, Harpenden Hall, Southdown Road, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 1TE

Albion Water on-line:

For general enquiries – customerservices@albionwater.co.uk

Our website - www.albionwater.co.uk - contains customer information and alternative email addresses if you wish to contact us electronically.

Registered Office:

Operations Centre, Claverton Down Road, Claverton Down, Bath, England, BA2 7WW

The Consumer Council for Water

Consumer Council for Water
c/o 1st Floor, Victoria Square House, Victoria Square
Birmingham
B2 4AJ

Telephone: 0300 034 2222
e-mail: You can email via the CCWater website
website: www.ccwater.org.uk
Office hours: Mon to Fri 8:30 to 4:30

Local Advisory Services

Citizens Advice Bureau
Broadway Chambers
1 Cranbrook Road
Ilford
Essex
IG1 4DU

Telephone: 0208 514 1878
website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/redbridgecab