

## OUTCOME OF RENT CONSULTATION 2023/24

We received 132 responses to our recent consultation on rent levels for 2023/24. A big thank you to all tenants who responded. We entered the names of all tenants who replied into a prize draw for £50 of High Street vouchers, this was won by a tenant in Redbrae Road – congratulations!

The response rate was 16.3% of all tenants. This is a good response rate, but it still means that 83.7% of tenants (around 678 households) did not respond.

A consultation document was sent to all tenants in the post, but we also sent an online link to those tenants where we hold an up-to-date mobile number or email address. We received 87 responses online and 45 responses via the paper document.

The consultation question was;

I agree with the proposal that Hillhead Housing Association maintains investment in homes and services by increasing rents by 7% (4.1% below inflation based on October 2022 CPI).	
I do not agree with the proposal to increase rents by 7%.	

The responses were as follows;

<b>Agree</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>44.7%</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>55.3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	

Of the 132 who responded, 58 are self-payers, 33 are in receipt of partial Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (UC) and 41 are in receipt of full Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. However, it is not the case that those on benefits always agreed with the increase, nor did self-payers always disagree with the increase. A detailed analysis is shown below.

Agree	Full HB / UC	29
	Part HB / UC	13
	Self-payer	17
Disagree	Full HB / UC	12
	Part HB / UC	20
	Self-payer	41
		132

The consultation also asked for comments if tenants disagreed with the proposal. We received a wide range of comments, and all of these were passed to our Management Committee in full for them to be considered when the final decision was taken on this year's rent review.

As you may expect many comments were in relation to the effects of the increased cost of living on individual households.

The Association has been very aware of the impact of rising energy and food prices on tenants. We hear about it during interactions with tenants especially around rent payments, and our Welfare Rights service has seen significantly increased demand. As this situation developed, the Association sought every opportunity to bid for external funding to help support the community. In this financial year, we have received funding awards from the National Lottery, East Dunbartonshire Council, SFHA (Scottish Federation of Housing Associations) & Employers in Voluntary Housing.

None of this money is used for staffing costs or overheads, it all goes directly to fund help with the cost of essential items such as gas / electricity, food and hygiene products for households most in need. This help is available to those experiencing financial distress and is not restricted to households in receipt of benefits.



The Management Committee deliberated long and hard over the results of the consultation and expressed concern and sympathy over the comments made by some tenants about their personal situation. The Committee sought to understand the direct financial help being made available to mitigate the cost-of-living crisis as detailed above. Committee also noted that the UK Government has committed to uprating welfare benefits by 10.1% and the National Living Wage by 9.7% both from the start of April 2023.

**Committee members expressed the difficulties they faced in balancing the immediate financial context for many households with the need to ensure that the Association still is financially sound over the long term. Decisions taken today significantly affect the ability of the Association to fund repairs, maintenance and investment in the future.**



**As with household financial bills, the Association is facing substantially increased costs for all the goods and services that we buy. Tenants will be aware that the building and construction sectors have experienced inflation even higher than in many other sectors. The cost for us to replace a kitchen is now much higher than it was just 2 or 3 years ago. A further example is the cost of the grounds maintenance contract, which we competitively tendered only last month, which has gone up by 47%.**

**Committee has looked at the financial models over a number of meetings with the clear aim that the Association remains in sound financial health over the longer term and can continue to invest in its homes and services. Based on all of above the Management Committee of the Association made the decision that rents would go up by 7% in the coming financial year. This is still 3% less than the current rate of inflation.**

Individual letters will be issued to all tenants by the end of February 2023 providing exact details of the new charge from 28 March 2023 for their property.

If you would like to talk to somebody in more detail about the increase and its impact on you, please contact your Housing Officer in the first instance.

A big thank you again to all those tenants who took the time to talk to us, respond online or complete the consultation document.

