

Rent Consultation Feedback

February 2024

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Rent Increase 2024/25 Consultation Feedback

During December 2023 and January 2024, we consulted with all tenants on rent increase options inviting everyone to make their views known through a wide range of consultation methods. Thank you to everyone who took part, your views were appreciated and valued.

If you would like to get involved in other consultation activities or any other aspect of Tenant Participation then please contact us on 01324 664966 or email enquiries@paragonha.org.uk or message us on Facebook and we will contact you to let you know when the next meetings are.

Rent Increase % Options

6.3%

6.5%

These options were considered against a background of very high general inflation.

	Oct 2022	Nov 2022	Oct 2023	Nov 2023
RPI	14.2%	14.0%	6.1%	5.3%
CPI	11.1%	9.3%	4.6%	3.9%

Feedback

Consultation was carried out in a number of ways.

- Paper survey by post
- Online Web Page / Email survey
- Telephone Surveys
- Online and in person Rent Focus Groups / Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- Call back telephone calls on request



Information was provided in the format of Facebook Posts (including a short video), a newsletter to all tenants with the postal survey enclosed and a more comprehensive briefing paper on our web site for those who wanted more detailed information.

Feedback cont.

87.03% of those responding reported that they were satisfied with the level of consultation and information provided in relation to this annual rent consultation.

Method (and number received)	Option 1 – 6.3%	Option 2 – 6.5%	Other option	No response
Phone / Email (295)	163	107	25	0
Postal / Online (106)	59	19	22	6
Total (401)	222	126	47	6
Percentage for each option	55.36%	31.42%	11.72%	1.5%

Whilst there was a low turn out to the Rent Focus Group a number of tenants requested and received call backs. We have been unable to contact a small number of you and if you are still awaiting a callback please let us know.

Respondents were asked to give their key priorities and these are aggregated below. Affordability came on top with all survey methods broadly identifying the same priorities.

Priority	Email / Phone Survey	Postal Survey
The affordability of rent for tenants	16.1%	83.02%
Prioritising resources for day to day repairs and maintenance service	15.9%	60.73%
Improving existing housing stock	14.6%	48.28%
Improving the Estates	8.7%	40.57%

Other priorities, such as providing services to support tenants received significantly lower levels of support.

We also asked you what you thought about the timing of the consultation and 61% of you told us that you had no strong views on the possibility of moving the consultation forward and using the October rate of inflation.

Decision

The decision was made to increase rents by 6.3%.

This decision was taken after careful consideration. This included:

- Listening to feedback from tenants on affordability and priorities
- Considering the need for ongoing investment and meet standards such as the Scottish Housing Quality Standard
- Recognising the impact of the current cost of living crisis
- Recognising the Association's financial status is currently healthy and the need to maintain this going forward.
- Operational costs are likely to continue to rise as a result of inflation.
- Our need to meet our financial obligations to lenders.

Impact

In 2021/22 we applied a rent freeze so rents did not increase and in 2022/23 the increase of 2.9% was below the rate of inflation. In 2023/24 the increase of 4% was still below inflation. These decisions were made in recognition of the challenges and difficulties people were facing.

For 2024/25 there were still many challenges in making the rent increase decision. Although the overall difference in the potential rental income raised between a 6.3% and 6.5% increase in only £13,460 this money could have made a real difference in the support we are able to offer tenants. However in recognition of consultation response, the Management Committee has made the decision to go with the lower 6.3%. This is the lowest level of increase feasible for this year. Whilst this is 1% over the rate of inflation (in November 2023) it compares well with increases implemented by other social landlords.

In making this decision it is recognised that some works will be delayed and the investment programme may not move at the pace we would all like to see. However there is investment planned for the remainder of this financial year and coming year including:

- Health & Safety – Fire Door Survey, Legionella Inspections, Electrical works etc
- Painterwork/Planned Maintenance
- Kitchen programme
- Boiler replacement
- Door Entry Installs
- Environmental Works

Impact cont.

We want to be clear with you and tell you that there are still challenges and risks ahead but we want to assure you that the Association is committed to supporting you at this difficult time and we are planning for the long term.

Rent Harmonisation

We've previously told you about a rent harmonisation exercise that consultants Arneil Johnston have been helping us with. Although more work is required before we can implement a new rent setting regime it is our intention to work towards implementing this from April 2025. Intended outcomes from the exercise:

- Ensure rents remain affordable
- Ensure there is a consistent method for calculating rents based on fair principals
- Ensure the rent charged reflects the benefits and / or amenities of each property
- Ensure rents are affordable for the size of each property
- Ensure the method of calculating rent provides enough income to support the delivery of quality services which are value for money.

We're looking for tenants to join the working group being set up to oversee the next stages of the process prior to implementation. If you are interested in joining the group please let us know.

Support

We appreciate that in the current cost of living crisis it might not just be rent that tenants are struggling to pay. Even if you are not in arrears with your rent but are struggling with other costs it is worth contacting us to discuss your situation and the help that might be available.

In recent months the Association has received funding and support from a number of sources enabling us to offer help, advice and practical assistance to both new and existing tenants. This might take the form of physical items (thermal curtains and energy saving lightbulbs for example) to help you save energy, or it might be a referral to the Emergency Energy Fund who can give financial assistance with those struggling to top up pre-payment meters. We even have pre-loaded sim cards (courtesy of Vodafone) where paying your mobile bill is an issue and a little extra help for those struggling to keep their pets at the moment thanks to some funding from Employers in Voluntary Housing.

If you need any further information or want to get involved with our Tenant Participation and Scrutiny Activities, please get in touch with us. Tel. 01324 664966, Email: enquiries@paragonha.org.uk