



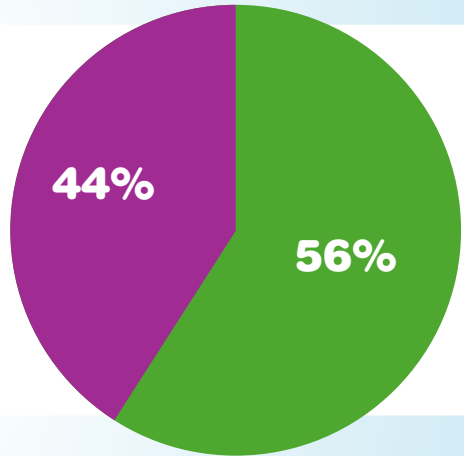
**Rent**  
**Consultation**  
**Feedback**  
**2025/26**



Our 25/26 Rent Consultation was open from 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024 – 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

## Consultation Responses

We received **106 responses** (12.8% of all tenants) with **56% agreeing** with the rent increase of 3.3% and **44% disagreeing**.



We want to let tenants know the feedback we received in this consultation, give more information on our services and let you know what our plans are for moving forward based on the responses we received.



## Feedback From Consultation

Some tenants felt that their response had been 'ignored' in previous years and rents were increased even if they disagreed.

### Information

We want to reassure anyone who takes the time to respond to a consultation, that their views are carefully considered. All responses are collated (anonymously) and shared with our management committee – there are a number of tenant members on our management committee. They consider a vast range of information in making their decision on whether or not to increase the rent, including the everyday costs to provide core services such as repairs, financial forecasting, planned investment in properties, the current economic climate, affordability and tenants' views from the consultation. They must balance all of that information and make what is often a very difficult decision. If rents are frozen or increased by less than what is in the business plan, there are serious consequences which could impact whether or not the Association could continue to deliver key services. Whilst the Management Committee may decide to increase rents, they will often make decisions to mitigate the impact on tenants – such as continuing to have a Tenancy Support service who can assist with fuel debt or committing to a permanent Welfare Rights team within the organisation.



## Feedback From Consultation

A number of tenants were concerned about affordability, rising costs of living in general and comparisons with monthly mortgage costs and private rents.

### Information

In our preparations for the rent increase consultation, we carry out benchmarking and use an affordability assessment tool to establish how our rents compare to other social landlords and if they are deemed as affordable within the scope of the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's (SFHA) tool, powered by Housemark. We have found that we have comparably lower rents than our registered social landlord 'peer group' organisations and the average of all registered social landlords across Scotland.

Local authorities do have cheaper rents but this can be attributed to a number of factors such as quality of housing stock, planned investment and economies of scale in having larger stock numbers.

In terms of comparisons with owner occupiers, each individual mortgage is based on a number of variables and so there are no figures which can be used to compare.

However, our rents are significantly lower than the average private rent for East Dunbartonshire. Provisional figures from the Office for National Statistics show the average private rent in East Dunbartonshire reached £1,084 per month in the year to October 2024 – up 6% from £1,025 a year prior.

In terms of affordability, the only area which the SFHA tool highlights as an area for concern is where a household consists of one adult on minimum wage. All other household makeups pass the affordability test with proposed rent levels and our affordability scores have been improving year upon year in recent years.

It is important to note that rent is determined entirely by the property size and amenity as per our Rent Setting Policy, rather than by the nature of the household which occupies the property.

## Feedback From Consultation

A number of tenants were concerned about affordability if there was a rent increase and did not feel there was enough support available.

### Information

We do appreciate that the cost-of-living crisis has had a significant impact on our community and so our tenants will find any increase in costs difficult to manage. To this end we are committed to supporting our tenants if they are struggling:

- Rental income and appropriate increases to rent charges have allowed for the Welfare Rights Team to be a permanent service within Hillhead Housing Association and access to this service is available for all tenants and residents. Housing Associations do not have any legal or statutory obligations to provide tenants with benefit and money advice, but we recognise that this service supports a large number of our tenants and the wider community. In 2023/24 Morag, our Welfare Rights Officer, and Heather, our Income Maximisation Assistant, brought in £376,972.64 in financial gains for our tenants.
- Additionally, Morag and Heather apply for additional funding throughout the year in order to support our tenants with the expenses of fuel, food and household items. For example, in June 2024 they secured £20,000 of lottery funding which allowed us to issue food and fuel vouchers to tenants as well as hygiene packs containing key household necessities to help alleviate living costs for our tenants experiencing hardship.
- Rental Income also allows us to purchase a Tenancy Support Service from the Simon Community. This service is delivered by Angela Taylor. Angela provides vital support to tenants to make sure they are happy in their homes and able to continue in their tenancy when experiencing any issues. She helps with:
  - Setting up a new tenancy
  - Dealing with gas and electricity companies
  - Accessing essential furniture and carpets
  - Support during times of poor mental health and stress
  - Accessing local services and support

## Feedback From Consultation

Some of the responses to our rent consultation noted that they were not due any major investment works and so were not happy their rent would increase.

## Information

Delivering your everyday repairs service to a high standard continues to be a priority for 25/26 alongside larger planned investment works such as new kitchens and new boilers. However, even delivering the everyday reactive repairs service comes at significant cost and Hillhead have continued to deliver strong performance in response times and satisfaction in this area, ensuring the service is efficient and good value for money for all tenants. For example, our emergency repairs response time was 1.4 hours in 23/24, compared the Scottish Average of 4 hours and our non-emergency repairs response time was 2.6 days, compared with the Scottish Average of 9 days.

In 25/26 money collected from rent will fund: your repairs service costing an estimated £500k+; over 120 boilers; over 150 kitchens; over 800 gas safety checks; almost £50k of painting works; an area Landscaping service; and much more.

**If you would like to be more involved in shaping and improving the services of Hillhead Housing Association, please contact Paula McCann on 0141 578 0200.**

