



Housing Services Consultation Recording Sheet

Housing Service ...Housing Development & Homelessness team

Person responsible: Janice Rainey and Jane Mack

Consultation Start date: 15/11/23 End Date 19/1/24

Consultation criteria	Steps taken
1. The name of consultation / participation exercise	Rent setting consultation 2024-25
2. Its aims and objectives	<p>To gather tenant views on 2 proposed rent options for 2024/25.</p> <p>Option 1. 6.7% increase (<i>average weekly increase of £5.94</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining all current services that tenants receive • Delivering our Capital programme of housing investment, including the enhanced programme developed with tenants • Continuing our New Build Housing Programme • Retaining a Tenant Priority Budget of £200k for tenant led improvements • Combined Tenant Support Fund of £150k <p>Option 2. 7.2% increase (<i>average weekly increase of £6.38</i>). This option is as Option 1, except:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined Tenant Support Fund of £400k
3. Who did you invite/include? (e.g. all tenants, tenant from the interested tenants register, RTOs, staff)	<p>The consultation was open to all tenants and those residing in homeless temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Prior to the public survey there was also an opportunity for tenants to get involved in discussions to determine the options being put forward for voting – this too was open to all tenants and advertised through our TRA groups and TP Facebook page.</p> <p>The consultation was launched at a meeting on 15/11/23 in Church Street. Copy of the presentation as well as information</p>

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	on the options was also posted on the Council's website so that it was freely available.
4. What methods did you use to promote/invite stakeholders to get involved? (e.g. letters, posters, website)	<p>Information on the rent options was sent out with the Winter edition of the Housing News on 8/12/23 with information detailing the rationale behind the options and details on each option. Also included a free-post voting card that could be used to vote as well as details of how to vote online, by phone, by text or email.</p> <p>The survey was also promoted regularly through the Council's webpages and social media as well as on our Tenant Participation Facebook account. Email and text reminders were also sent via QL to tenants with contact details.</p> <p>WDC intranet was also used to reach WDC staff who are also tenants to encourage them to vote.</p> <p>Housing officers and Homeless support officers were also sent a briefing note on the consultation details and asked to encourage their tenants to vote.</p>
5. Who actually took part? (Number of individuals and or number of tenant organisations represented)	<p>A total of 1724 tenants responded and voted for their preferred option in the survey giving a response rate of 17.3%.</p> <p>This an increase from the 1173 responses received last year when we got a 12.3% response rate.</p> <p>The 3 public meetings held to determine the rent options on offer were attended by 5 tenants and their input was invaluable in making sure the options for a rent increase were as low as possible and would be clear to tenants in the formal consultation process.</p>
6. What method(s) did you use to obtain their views? (e.g. focus/working group, newsletter, survey) Why did you choose this method(s)?	<p>A quick and easy survey was used to gather tenant's views. All tenants were encouraged to vote for their preferred rent option with a range of voting methods offered to make it as easy as possible – free-post voting card, online survey, texting and email options.</p> <p>These methods were chosen to gather the views of as many tenants as possible in a clear and most accessible way possible. An assurance from the Housing Convener was also given that the survey results will be taken into account as part of the Council committee decision -making process when setting rents for 2024/25 to help encourage people to give their views.</p>

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	<p>The information provided was presented in as clear and understandable way as possible and made available online for any tenant to refer to and paper copies made available on request.</p> <p>We also used staff to promote the survey and to encourage dialogue with tenants and to explain the options being considered. The Tenant Participation Officer's contact details were also provided for tenants to ask any questions and a number of tenants got in touch.</p>									
<p>7. What good practice or minimum standards can you evidence as part of your consultation?</p>	<p>An extended 10 week consultation period was used to collect views. Initial closing date was 10/1 but was later extended to 19/1 to give tenants more time to respond.</p> <p>Freepost voting cards, phoning, texting and email options were made available to all tenants as well as the online survey so that tenants could use a method they were most comfortable with and at no cost.</p> <p>All financial information was presented as clearly and understandable as possible as well as being available on-line for public scrutiny.</p>									
<p>8. What was the outcome of the consultation?</p>	<p>A total of 9973 households were contacted and the 1724 responses received represents a response rate of 17.3%.</p> <p>Of the responses received, 1310 (76%) supported Option 1 (a 6.7% increase) and 414 (24%) supported Option 2 (a 7.2% increase).</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="607 1465 1170 1640"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Option 1 – 6.7% increase</td> <td>1310</td> <td>76%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Option 2 – 7.2% increase</td> <td>414</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>1724</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The clear preference of the tenants who participated was for Option 1, the 6.7% increase and this will be recommended to the Council for approval as the rent increase for 2024/25.</p>	Option 1 – 6.7% increase	1310	76%	Option 2 – 7.2% increase	414	24%	Total	1724	
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9. How did you feedback to participants the outcome?	<p>Once March Council meeting has concluded, the survey results and final rent setting decision will be reported in the Spring Housing News, on the Council webpages and through the TP Facebook account.</p> <p>All rent increases must be notified to tenants in writing with 28 days' notice so all tenants will be advised of the rent increase and how much the increase means for their own weekly and annual rent charge.</p>
10. How did tenant involvement influence your consultation?	<p>We were able to involve tenants right from the beginning of the process this year as previously committed to and 3 meetings with tenants to discuss potential rent options took place- 5/10, 26/10 and 8/11. Despite the financial issues that had to be addressed these meetings were very productive and informed the options put out for voting - the tenant priority to keep any increase as low as possible determined that only 2 options were put forward and no option to increase spending was included.</p> <p>We have continued to increase tenants understanding and opportunity to scrutinise the HRA through our Joint Rent Group which includes tenant volunteers. The Joint Rent Group has also helped make the financial information being presented at rent setting as clear and understandable as possible so tenants can make informed choices.</p>
11. Are you able to demonstrate this?	Yes - meeting notes and information on webpages
12. How have you demonstrated to tenants that involvement made a difference?	The preferred option from the consultation survey is for the 6.7% rent increase and that is being put forward as the rent proposal to be considered by Councilors.

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<p>13. Did you check with participants that they were happy with the opportunities given to make their views known and that they felt that we listened and acted upon them?</p>	<p>The results of the consultation survey have been shared with the tenant volunteers on the Joint Rent Group. There was an increase in responses, 1724 up from 1173 last year and this was helped by additional text and email reminders that we could send from QL and that we now hold more contact details for our tenants.</p> <p>The response rate equates to 17.3% of tenants responding which is a significant number and gives a credible insight into their preference.</p> <p>Tenant involvement in the rent setting process will be promoted in the spring edition of the Housing News and used to help encourage more tenant involvement and reiterate the influence they can have on this important issue.</p>
<p>14. What worked well, what didn't work well – or any other comments you have.</p>	<p>Our increased response rate was helped by the extended consultation period and by additional text and email reminders that we could send from QL where we now hold more contact details for our tenants. More tenants responded after the text and email reminders were sent each time from QL so was an effective way of prompting tenants to vote.</p> <p>Facebook reminders about the survey were also used and got good reaches. We also created a short video reel to highlight the rent setting which also increased engagement.</p> <p>120 freepost voting cards were returned which is less than last year (395) and may reflect more tenants ease to vote electronically or could have been affected as we relied on people opening the Housing News to access them – previously sent out as a specific mailing.</p> <p>The majority of the negative comments received about the consultation were in relation to the affordability of any rent increase.</p>