

## Housing Services

### Consultation Recording Sheet



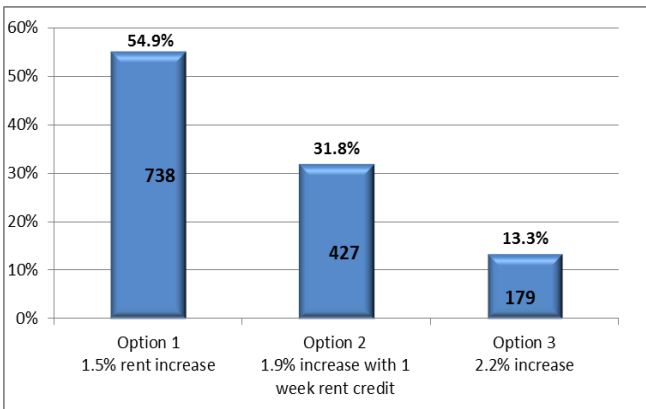
Housing Service ...Housing Development & Homelessness

Person responsible: Janice Rainey and Jane Mack

Consultation Start date: 24/11/20 End Date 20/1/21

1.	The name of consultation / participation exercise?	Rent setting consultation 2021-22
2.	Its aims and objectives?	Discuss and get agreement from tenants on HRA Budget estimates and vote on subsequent rent increase options for 2021/22.
3.	Who did you invite/include? (e.g. all tenants, tenant from the interested tenants register, RTOs, staff)	<p>Virtual public meeting arranged for 24/11/20 and advertised publicly through the WDC website and TP Facebook page.</p> <p>Due to working from home restrictions, direct invites could only be sent to those that we had an email address for -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TRA members</li> <li>• Tenants on our Register of Interested tenants</li> <li>• Scrutiny Panel members</li> </ul> <p>Aim of public meeting was to discuss and agree options for the wider consultation. All tenants then had the opportunity to vote for their preferred option through freepost voting cards or online survey.</p>
4.	What methods did you use to promote/invite stakeholders to get involved? (e.g. letters, posters, website)	<p>The consultation process included a virtual public meeting (24/11/20) and a public survey. Specific invites to members of the above groups inviting them to the public meeting were sent via email. The Council's website and social media was also used to advertise the public meeting.</p> <p>Once the rent options were agreed a specific mailing was sent to all tenants with an A3 page detailing the rent options and giving an outline of what each option meant in terms of service delivery and investment along with the</p>

	<p>free-post voting card and details of how to vote online. Voting could also be done by text or email to help make it as easy as possible for tenants.</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 briefed and asked to encourage their tenants to vote.</p>
5.	<p>Who actually took part? (Number of individuals and or number of tenant organisations represented)</p> <p>10 tenants joined the virtual public meeting on 24/11/20 which included representatives from 6 TRA's as well as individual tenants.</p> <p>1344 tenants voted for their preferred option in the survey –472 using the pre-paid voting card and 872 online votes. Giving a response rate of 13.8%.</p>
6.	<p>What method(s) did you use to obtain their views? (e.g. focus/working group, newsletter, survey)</p> <p>Why did you choose this method(s)?</p> <p>A presentation was given at the virtual public meeting which outlined current performance of Housing Services and a breakdown of proposed spending for 2021/22.</p> <p>Tenant priorities from a recent tenant satisfaction survey were included in the considerations and there was an open discussion on the options.</p> <p>All tenants were encouraged to vote for their preferred rent option with a direct mailing to them and 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. The survey results will be taken into account as part of the Council committee decision -making process when setting rents for 2021/22.</p> <p>The information provided was presented in as clear and understandable way as possible and made available online for any tenant to refer to. Over previous years our Joint Rent Group have worked to make the rent consultation information clearer and as understandable as possible.</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 contact details were also provided for tenants to ask any questions and a number of tenants got in touch. Due to the pandemic and working from home restrictions face to face encouragement and engagement was not possible but all other means of contact were maximized.</p>												
What good practice or minimum standards can you evidence as part of your consultation?	<p>An 9 week consultation period was used to collect views. Freepost voting cards , texting and email options were made available to all tenants as well as the on line survey to make it as easy as possible to vote.</p> <p>The information provided at the virtual public meeting was made available online so that any tenant could read and refer to it.</p> <p>All financial information was presented as clearly and understandable as possible as well as being available on-line for public scrutiny.</p>												
What was the outcome of the consultation?	<p>1344 tenants gave their views in the survey and Option 1, 1.5% rent increase was the preferred option with 54.9%% of votes. The survey results were put forward as the proposed rent increase going for Council approval.</p>  <table><tr><th>Option</th><th>Percentage</th><th>Count</th></tr><tr><td>Option 1 1.5% rent increase</td><td>54.9%</td><td>738</td></tr><tr><td>Option 2 1.9% increase with 1 week rent credit</td><td>31.8%</td><td>427</td></tr><tr><td>Option 3 2.2% increase</td><td>13.3%</td><td>179</td></tr></table>	Option	Percentage	Count	Option 1 1.5% rent increase	54.9%	738	Option 2 1.9% increase with 1 week rent credit	31.8%	427	Option 3 2.2% increase	13.3%	179
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How did you feedback to participants the outcome?	<p>Following the virtual public meeting all attendees were emailed to thank them for attending and making them aware that the public survey was underway. The survey results have been shared with the Joint Rent Group.</p> <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</p>												

	<p>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.	<p>How did tenant involvement influence your consultation?</p> <p>We have continued to increase tenants understanding and opportunity to scrutinise the HRA through our Joint Rent Group which includes tenant volunteer members. Our Joint Rent Group had helped make the financial information being presented as clear and understandable as possible. The rent setting consultation plan was also discussed and agreed with them ahead of the consultation.</p>
11.	<p>Are you able to demonstrate this?</p> <p>Yes - meeting notes and information on webpages</p>
12.	<p>How have you demonstrated to tenants that involvement made a difference?</p> <p>The preferred option for a 1.5% rent increase from the consultation survey is being put forward as the rent proposal to be considered by Councilors.</p>
13.	<p>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 tenant volunteers on the Joint Rent Group have stated that they are pleased with the increased number of tenants getting involved in the rent setting consultation and the high response rate gives more credibility to the tenants voice despite the challenging times that everyone is experiencing.</p> <p>Tenant understanding of the HRA has continued to increase through the Joint Rent Group and the Housing News will be used to help share this information with all tenants to encourage more involvement.</p>

### **What worked well, what didn't work well – or any other comments you have.**

**Comments:** We had less tenants attend the virtual public meeting than normal but had a significantly higher response rate with 1344 tenants voting. Far more tenants voted online this year and that could be because more people are at home and using digital means to keep in touch during the pandemic.

We were also able to use text and email reminders via the new QL housing system. Facebook reminders about the survey were also used and got good reaches.

Hopefully there is also a continuing increase in involvement as tenants see that they can actually influence the outcome and the fact that the survey feeds into the Council committee decision is stated in the consultation.

The pandemic has also put a massive strain on many people's financial situations and rent affordability a concern for many and this might have motivated more people to have their say in the rent setting. The majority of the negative comments received about the consultation were in relation to there not being a 'no increase' option included and many people didn't think that was fair. There were also concerns about not getting value for money when non-essential repairs weren't getting done within restrictions related to the pandemic.