



Housing Services Consultation Recording Sheet

Housing Service ...Finance / Housing Development & Homelessness team

Person/s responsible: Jim McCarron and Jane Mack

Consultation Start date: 30/10/25 End Date: 23/01/26

Consultation criteria	Steps taken
1. The name of consultation	Rent setting consultation 2026-27
2. Its aims and objectives	<p>To gather tenants' views on four proposed rent options for 2026/27.</p> <p>Option 1: 6.7% rent increase (average weekly increase of £6.84) This option will mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining all current services that tenants receive • Delivering our New Build housing programme • Delivering our Capital Investment programme to improve existing Council homes • A Tenant Priority Budget of £200k for tenant led improvements <p>Option 2: 6.95% rent increase (average weekly increase of £7.09) This option will mean the same as Option 1 plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional expenditure of £140k to re-instate open space maintenance to 2024/25 funding levels <p>Option 3: 7.2% rent increase (average weekly increase of £7.35) This option will mean the same as Option 1 plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional £3.6m of Capital Investment during 2026/27 expanding the Buy Back Scheme to deliver 24 additional Council homes for rent <p>Option 4: 7.45% rent increase (average weekly increase of £7.60) This option will mean the same as Option 1 plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional expenditure of £140k to re-instate open space maintenance to 2024/25 funding levels • An additional £3.6m of Capital Investment during 2026/27 expanding the Buy Back Scheme to deliver 24 additional Council homes for rent.

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3. Who did you invite/include?	<p>The consultation was open to all tenants and those residing in homeless temporary accommodation.</p> <p>The consultation was launched at a public meeting on 30/10/25 in Church Street which was open to all tenants and was widely publicised. An evening, online meeting was also held on 4/11/25, at 7pm. A copy of the presentation given and information on the options being consulted on was also posted on the Council's website so that it was freely available.</p>
4. What methods did you use to promote/invite stakeholders to get involved? (e.g., letters, posters, website)	<p>The public meetings to launch the consultation were advertised on the Council's events webpage, intranet, Tenant Participation Facebook account as well as a direct invite sent to all TRAs, the WDTR0, Sheltered Housing Forum members and tenants on the Interested Tenant Register.</p> <p>Information on the rent options was also sent out with the Winter edition of the Housing News on 15/12/25 with information detailing the rationale behind the options and details of each option. Also included was a free-post voting card that could be used 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 as well as on our Tenant Participation Facebook account.</p> <p>Email and text reminders were also sent directly to tenants for whom we have contact details.</p> <p>Posters promoting the consultation with information on the ways to vote were put up in Multi-storey flat noticeboards.</p> <p>WDC intranet was used to raise staff awareness of the consultation and encourage WDC staff who are also tenants 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 1246 tenants responded and voted for their preferred option in the survey giving a response rate of 12.1%.</p> <p>The number of responses to the rent consultation has decreased for the second year running. Last year 1669 votes were registered which equated to a response rate of 16.6% and for the 2024/25 consultation, 1724 responses were received which equated to a 17.3% response rate.</p> <p>Even with a declined response rate, a 12.1% response rate is still a significant response.</p>

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<p>6. 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 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 which included free-post voting cards, online survey, text, 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.</p> <p>The information provided was also presented in a clear and understandable way 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>A 12-week consultation period was used to collect views which is longer than the statutory 8 weeks but as we had to consult over the Christmas period it was reasonable to provide more time for tenants to participate.</p> <p>Freepost voting cards, phoning, text, 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 to themselves.</p> <p>All financial information was presented as clearly and understandably as possible as well as being available online for public scrutiny.</p> <p>The consultation information was shared with the Resettlement team so they could encourage and explain it to the Afghan, Syrian and Ukrainian tenants they support. A version that was translated into Dari was available to any tenant on request.</p>
<p>8. What was the outcome of the consultation?</p>	<p>A total of 10,268 households were contacted and the 1246 responses received represents a response rate of 12.1%.</p> <p>Of the responses received,</p> <p>Option 1 (6.7% increase) got 825 votes = 66.2%</p> <p>Option 2 (6.95% increase) got 174 votes = 14%</p> <p>Option 3 (7.2% increase) got 116 votes = 9.3%</p> <p>Option 4 (7.45% increase) got 131 votes = 10.5%</p>

Consultation criteria	Steps taken										
	<div data-bbox="591 268 1425 709" data-label="Figure"> <table border="1"> <caption>Rent setting consultation outcome</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Option</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Option 1</td> <td>67.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Option 2</td> <td>14.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Option 3</td> <td>9.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Option 4</td> <td>10.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <p data-bbox="505 772 1495 884">The clear preference of the tenants who participated was Option 1, the 6.7% increase and this will be recommended to the Council for approval as the rent increase for 2026/27.</p>	Option	Percentage	Option 1	67.0%	Option 2	14.0%	Option 3	9.0%	Option 4	10.0%
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<p data-bbox="110 919 472 1024">9. How did you feedback to participants the outcome?</p>	<p data-bbox="505 919 1511 1062">Once the 4 March 2026 Council meeting has concluded, the survey results and final rent setting decision will be reported in the Spring edition of the Housing News, on the Council webpages and through the TP Facebook account.</p> <p data-bbox="505 1079 1503 1188">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>										
<p data-bbox="110 1224 418 1329">10. How did tenant involvement influence your consultation?</p>	<p data-bbox="505 1245 1507 1461">With the continuing pressure on the Housing Revenue Account, the main focus was on keeping the rent increase options as low as possible. An option to increase spending on grass cutting was included on request from Councillors and an option to increase the number of Buybacks was also included to help address the declared housing emergency.</p> <p data-bbox="505 1499 1498 1642">Whilst there was no direct tenant involvement in developing the actual options, the rent setting consultation practices that we have developed over the last few years were still put into place in terms of promoting and making the consultation as accessible as possible.</p> <p data-bbox="505 1680 1490 1896">We have continued to increase tenant understanding and provide the opportunity to scrutinise the HRA through our Joint Rent Group which includes tenant volunteers, housing and finance staff and the Housing Convener. The Joint Rent Group has also helped make the financial information provided in the rent setting consultation as clear and understandable as possible so tenants can make informed choices.</p>										

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	<p>Involvement was promoted by additional text and email reminders being sent directly to tenants we hold contact details for. This has helped increase response rates in recent years and means that more tenants are having their say on this important issue.</p>
<p>11. Are you able to demonstrate this?</p>	<p>Yes - rent setting communications and information on webpages.</p>
<p>12. How have you demonstrated to tenants that involvement made a difference?</p>	<p>Tenants were advised during the consultation that their views would be taken into account when Councillors made their decision and that this was a key decision that they could influence. The tenant's preferred option from the consultation is for the 6.7% rent increase and that is the recommendation being made to Councillors.</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>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>There was a decrease in responses this year, 12.1% response rate compared to a response rate of 16.6% last year which was disappointing and the second year there has been a decrease.</p> <p>The TP officer's contact details were given in promotional material, and a number of tenants contacted them but less than in previous years. Some voiced concerns about any increase in rents and about what they get for their rent charge. Twenty-six tenants actively refused to vote for any option after opening the survey and many added comments about concerns around affordability of any increase which was a similar number to the previous year.</p>

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<p>14. What worked well, what didn't work well – or any other comments you have.</p>	<p>By starting the consultation earlier this year, it meant that we could give tenants 12 weeks to vote. This does include time over Christmas and New Year which is not an ideal time to consult on any issue but is necessary to fit in with Council budget setting.</p> <p>Our response rate was helped by the additional text and email reminders that we can send to tenants we have contact details for. There were spikes in voting after the text and email notifications and reminders were sent so was an effective way of prompting tenants to vote.</p> <p>Facebook reminders about the survey were also used and got good reaches.</p> <p>109 freepost voting cards were returned which is less than the increased number received last year (189) but means it is still a preferred method of voting for a reasonable amount of people (8.6%). Access to the voting cards also relied on people opening the Housing News– previously were sent out as a specific mailing but including with the Housing News is more cost effective. The Housing News was out for delivery from 15/12/25, which is close to Christmas, and a busy time for many.</p>