

Members' Library Service Request Form

Date of Document	09/01/26
Originator	Bex Astin
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Document Title	Proposals to increase Council House Rents - Consultation Exercise

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For Publication

Additional information:

Authorised By	Wendy McGuire
Designation	Head of Housing
Date	09/01/26

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COMMITTEE:	Members' Library Service
MEETING DATE:	February 2026
BY:	Depute Chief Executive – Children and Communities
REPORT TITLE:	Rent Consultation 2026/27
REPORT STATUS:	Public

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with the results and feedback from the rent consultation exercise for council house rents 2026/27.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the consultation feedback detailed within the appendix as part of their consideration for determining the rent increase for 2026/27.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory obligation under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to consult with all tenants when making any proposals to increase rents. In doing so, the Council must:
 - Consult all tenants and registered tenant organisations affected by the proposals), and
 - Have regard to the views expressed during the consultation exercise
- 3.2 A summary of the responses received from those tenants who completed the questionnaire are set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 A summary of rent levels across Scotland are set out in Appendix 2

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The consultation responses are used to inform members' considerations around decisions they will take as part of any rent increase for 2026/27 on 24 February 2026.

5 RESOURCE AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Finance: The consultation results together with the wider budget development exercise are intended to inform the rent setting for 2026/27.

5.2 Human Resources: None

5.3 Other (e.g. Legal/IT): None

5.4 Risk: None

6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 **Select the statement that is appropriate to your report by placing an 'X' in the relevant box.**

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening process has been undertaken and the subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on: equality and human rights; tackling socio-economic disadvantages and poverty; climate change, the environment and sustainability; the Council's role as a corporate parent; or the storage/collection of personal data.

or

The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and impacts have been identified as follows:

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Equality and human rights	
Socio-economic disadvantage/poverty	
Climate change, the environment and sustainability	
Corporate parenting and care-experienced young people	

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Storage/collection of personal data	
Other	

[Enter information on impacts that have been identified]

The Integrated Impact Assessment relating to this report has been published and can be accessed via the Council's website:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210602/equality_and_diversity/12014/integrated_impact_assessments

7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1 – Rent Increase Consultation Report

Appendix 2 – Table of rent levels across Scotland's Local Authorities

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None

9 AUTHOR AND APPROVAL DETAILS

Report Author(s)

Name	Bex Astin
Designation	Service Manager, Strategy, Policy and Performance
Tel/Email	rastin@eastlothian.gov.uk
Date	2 February 2026

Head of Service Approval

Name	Wendy McGuire
Designation	Head of Service – Housing
Confirmation that IIA and other relevant checks (e.g. finance/legal) have been completed	Yes
Approval Date	9 February 2026



Rent Level Consultation

2026/27

Survey Report

**Service Development Team
Housing / Children and Communities
20th November 2025**

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the outcome, following the proposal to increase rents in 2026/27. It summarises the consultation process, tenant feedback, respondent profile and explains what happens next.

Summary of Results

Key headlines

Table 1	
We asked tenants to consider 3 options and tell us what option they preferred	
<i>Option 1</i> Average weekly increase of 7% (average £6.12 rent increase)	66.37%
<i>Option 2</i> Average weekly increase of 8% (average weekly £7.00 rent increase)	19.82%
<i>Option 3</i> I would be open to additional rent increase but no greater than £8 per week.	13.80%
Top spending priority for tenants	Repairs Service
Percentage of tenants who said they were happy with the level of consultation and information they get about the rent consultation	79.33%
Tenants who think the rent they currently pay is good value for money	64.56%
How affordable do you find your current rent? – <i>top answer</i>	Fairly affordable 64.58%
How would a rent increase above 7% affect you? – <i>top answer</i>	Manageable impact 42.26%

A more detailed breakdown of all the responses received are shown later in the report in Tenant Feedback.

Consultation Process

A consultation letter and survey, designed in partnership with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) was sent out to all tenants. Emails were sent to those tenants who had an email address registered with us, directing them to our Consultation Hub where a copy of the online survey and documents were available. All other tenants, received the documents, including a paper copy of the survey with a prepaid envelope, by post.

The consultation started on 1st October and closed on 14th November 2025. During that time, tenants could email us with their views and request a copy of the consultation documents by post, if they preferred. We also provided a freephone number for tenants and contact details for our Financial Inclusion Team, for those who may need financial help.

To help promote the survey and encourage tenants to participate, we issued a press release, posted information on the council website and social media and sent text messages to tenants who had a mobile phone number registered with us.

East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel held an event on 17th September 2025 in the Knox Academy in Haddington to gather views from tenants and their members. The feedback from this event will be provided by ELTRP in a separate report.

Tenant Feedback

The table below shows a summary of all feedback received and methods used.

Table 2	
Total Number of responses received	1685
No. of online surveys completed	1111
No. of paper surveys returned	574
Response rate	18.5%

Detailed responses to questions:

Q1 Please consider the following options and tick the option you prefer.

Option 1 – Average weekly increase of 7% (average £6.12 rent increase)	66.37%
Option 2 – Average weekly increase of 8% (average weekly £7.00 rent increase)	19.82%
Option 3 – I would be open to additional rent increase but no greater than £8 per week	13.80%

Q2 Please tell us what your spending priorities are? Please tick all that apply.

Bathroom upgrade	26.36%	Kitchen Upgrade	32.00%
New doors and windows	51.27%	Upgrade to heating system	26.11%
Building new houses and increase choices and more suitable accommodation for tenants	29.53%	Council house repairs	66.35%
Continue to deliver housing services	39.29%	Energy efficiency measures (e.g. wall/loft insulation)	30.42%

Q3 Are you happy with the level of consultation and information you get about the annual rent increase?

Yes	79.33%	No	20.67%
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If no, please tell us why? (269 respondents left comments, which have been categorised as follows)

Theme	% of those who responded
Issue with consultation	62
Financial	21
Improvements	8
Repairs	7
Allocations	1

Q4 Do you think the rent you currently pay is good value for money?

Yes	64.56%	No	35.44%
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Q5 How affordable do you find your current rent? (taking into consideration your household expenditure).

Very affordable	11.11%
Fairly affordable	64.85%
Difficult to afford	19.15%
Very difficult to afford	4.90%

Q6 How would a rent increase above 7% affect you? (please tick one box)

Manageable impact	46.26%
Significant financial pressure	37.16%
Unaffordable/unsustainable	8.35%
No impact	8.22%

Q7 Do you have any suggestions about how we can improve the housing service?

A total of 669 comments were made, categorised as follows:

Theme	% of those who responded
Repairs	25
Assets	21
Financial	20
Communication	10
Allocations	8
Voids	3

Conclusion

The rent increase consultation has given tenants the opportunity to let the council know what they think about the proposed rent increase and also provided 2 other options for potential higher increases which would bring about more opportunity to invest in our stock.

This report, which includes all the feedback received during the consultation (excluding all the comments and suggestions for improvements which have been listed in a separate document) will be presented to Managers, HRA Group and Elected Members. This will ensure they are informed and take account of our tenants' views on, their preference for a rent increase, spending priorities and how affordable they find their current rent.

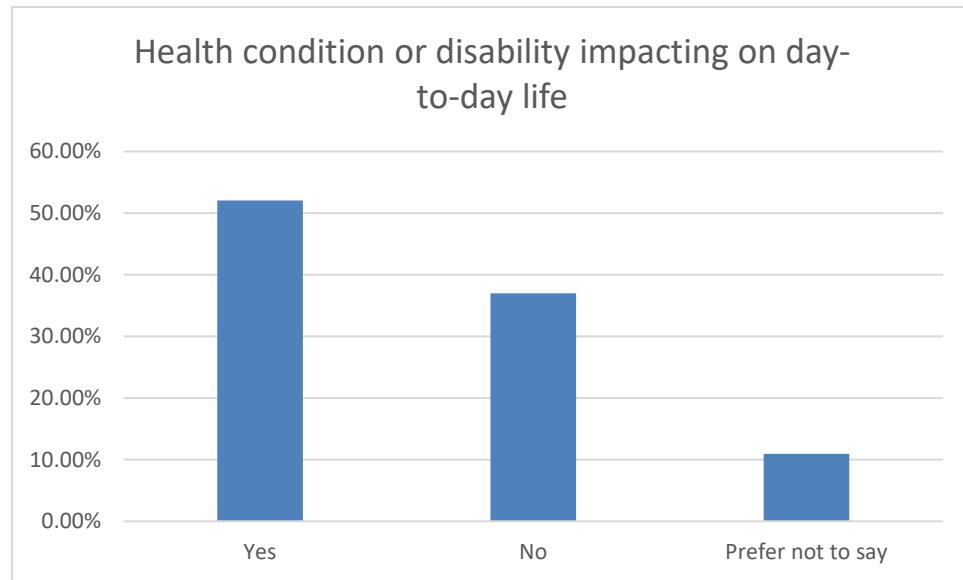
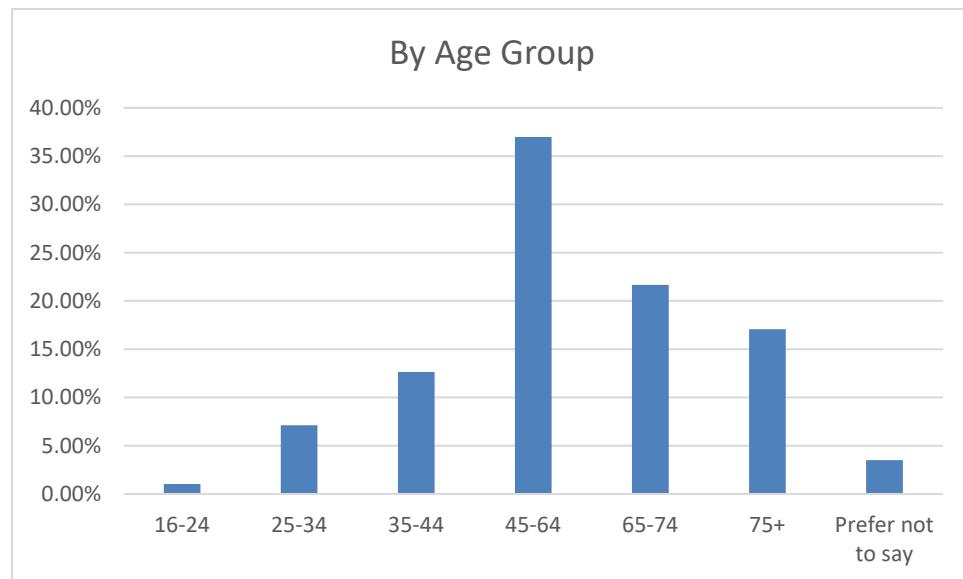
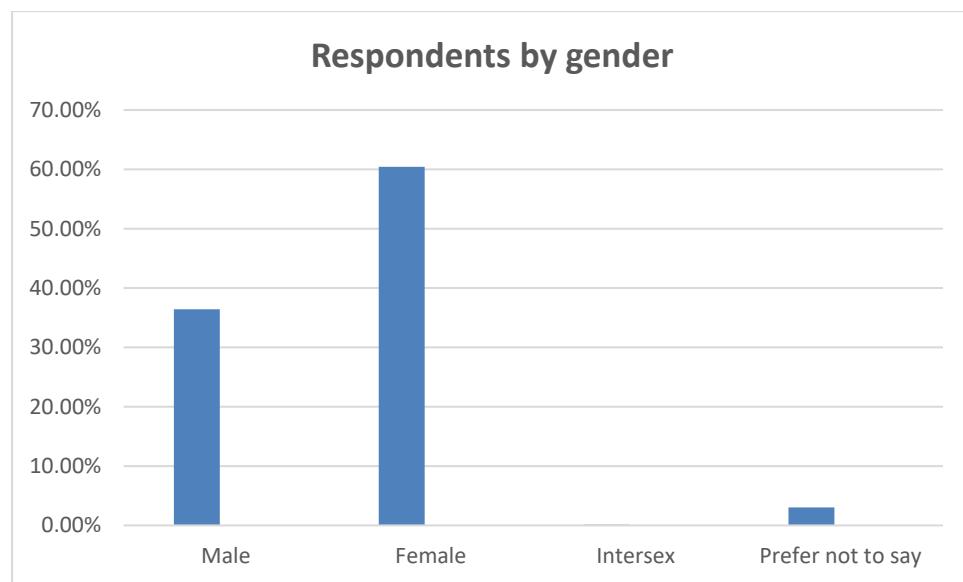
At the Council's budget meeting in February 2026, councillors will determine the rent increase for the 2026/27 financial year. Following this decision, all tenants will be notified in writing of their new rent level. Notification will be issued at least four weeks prior to Monday, 6 April 2026, which is the date the revised rent charge will take effect, in accordance with the Council's decision.

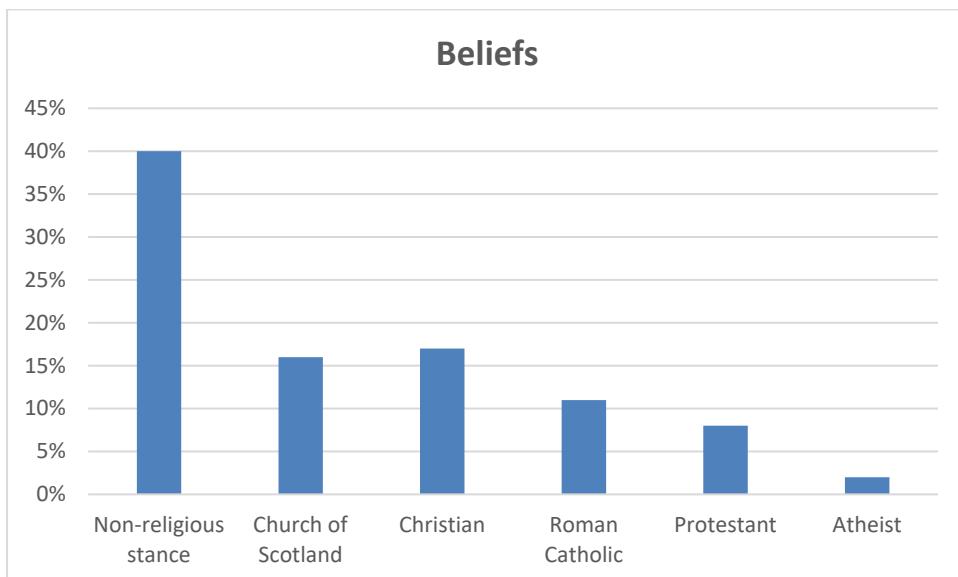
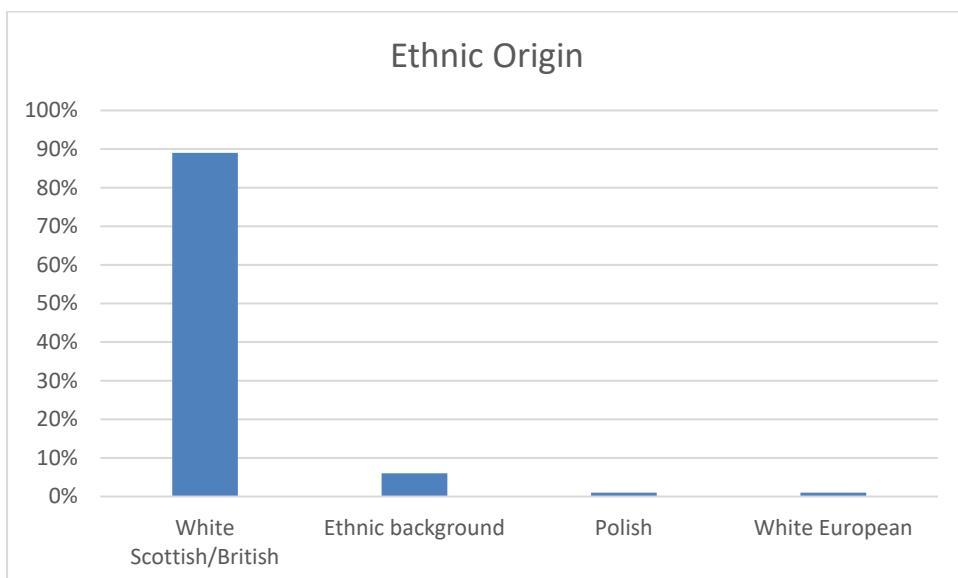
Equalities Information

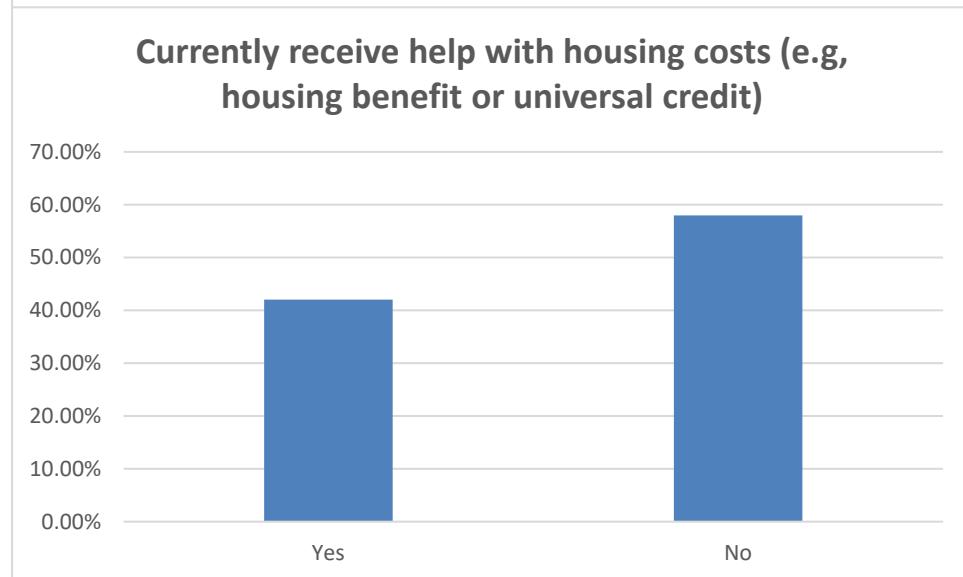
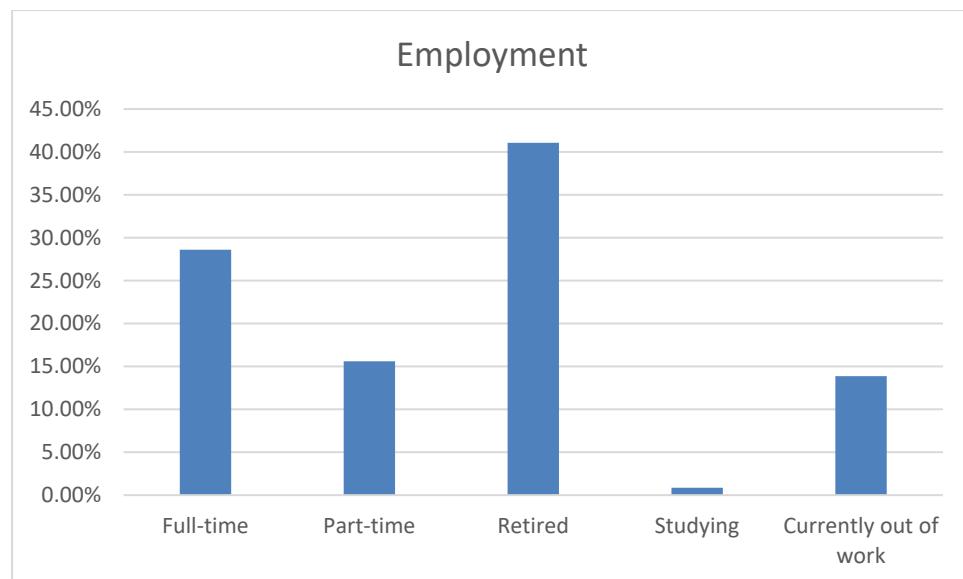
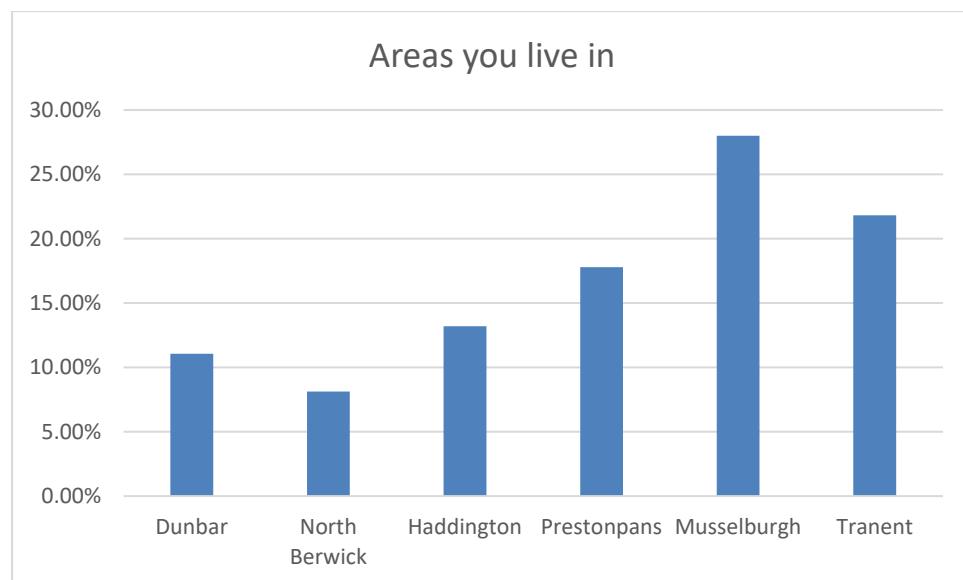
To make sure we are capturing a wide range of views and meeting the housing needs of our tenants, we asked, as part of the survey, several equalities monitoring questions.

Each year prior to the start of the consultation we carry out an Integrated Impact Assessment to make sure we meet the needs of different groups and are proactive in our consultation with tenants.

The information shown below provides a breakdown of the characteristics of the tenants who responded to our survey by e.g. age, religion, belief, area, employment etc.







Appendix 2 – National Rent levels.

Landlord name	2023/24 Average weekly rent	2024/25 Average weekly rent	2025/26 Average weekly rent (Est.)	2026/27 Average weekly rent (Est. with 4.68% increase)
Private Sector Rent - 2 bedroom property	£246.39	£285.60	£303.38	£317.58
Link Group	£192.39	£192.39	£202.97	£212.47
Bield Housing & Care	£148.12	£170.25	£177.91	£186.24
Viewpoint Housing Association	£128.50	£137.25	£146.45	£153.30
Ark Housing Association	£121.56	£133.12	£138.44	£144.92
Blackwood	£108.95	£123.72	£131.14	£137.28
Wheatley Homes East	£111.31	£120.68	£129.01	£135.05
East Lothian Housing Association	£113.83	£122.11	£128.09	£134.08
City of Edinburgh Council	£104.93	£112.07	£119.91	£125.52
Places for People Scotland	£106.22	£106.15	£109.02	£114.12
Aberdeenshire Council	£95.08	£99.88	£104.87	£109.78
Renfrewshire Council	£89.89	£96.51	£103.75	£108.61
Melville Housing Association	£92.49	£98.97	£103.42	£108.26
Homes for Life	£109.68	£97.64	£102.52	£107.32
West Dunbartonshire Council	£88.54	£94.82	£102.41	£107.20
Highland Council	£85.89	£92.94	£100.38	£105.08
Orkney Islands Council	£88.25	£94.87	£98.66	£103.28
East Renfrewshire Council	£95.20	£93.67	£98.26	£102.86
Dundee City Council	£88.45	£94.01	£98.24	£102.84
East Dunbartonshire Council	£86.05	£93.52	£97.26	£101.81
Shetland Islands Council	£86.56	£90.79	£97.15	£101.70

Midlothian Council	£87.65	£90.96	£95.33	£99.79
Aberdeen City Council	£86.18	£88.26	£94.88	£99.32
Clackmannanshire Council	£79.83	£85.18	£93.70	£98.09
North Lanarkshire Council	£80.87	£86.93	£93.02	£97.37
Fife Council	£83.24	£87.40	£92.64	£96.98
West Lothian Council	£83.39	£88.41	£91.50	£95.78
North Ayrshire Council	£82.78	£87.79	£91.16	£95.43
East Ayrshire Council	£79.79	£84.99	£90.94	£95.20
East Lothian Council with 8% increase	£76.73	£82.14	£87.57	£94.58
East Lothian Council with 8% increase (capped at £8.00/week)	£76.73	£82.14	£87.57	£94.47
South Lanarkshire Council	£79.27	£84.44	£89.93	£94.14
East Lothian Council with 7% increase	£76.73	£82.14	£87.57	£93.71
South Ayrshire Council	£80.60	£84.41	£88.21	£92.34
Angus Council	£78.68	£83.81	£88.17	£92.30
Falkirk Council	£76.88	£78.88	£86.37	£90.41
Perth & Kinross Council	£75.51	£79.96	£84.76	£88.73
Stirling Council	£73.68	£78.09	£83.71	£87.63
Moray Council	£67.75	£76.55	£81.14	£84.94

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Supporting Good Decisions

**Promoting Equality and Human Rights;
Reducing Poverty; and
Protecting the Environment**

Integrated Impact Assessment Form

Integrated Impact Assessment Form

Promoting Equality and Human Rights; Reducing Poverty; and Protecting the Environment

Title of Policy/ Proposal	Rent Level Consultation 2026/27
Timescale for Implementation	1 st October 2025
IIA Completion Date	29 th September 2025
Completed by	Deborah Piner
Lead officer	Stephanie Irvine

Section 1: Screening

1.1 Briefly describe the policy/proposal/activity you are assessing.

Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the policy/ proposal/ activity being developed or reviewed (e.g. objectives, aims) including the context within which it will operate.

A consultation is taking place with tenants, tenants and residents' groups and East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) on the council's proposal to increase rents. We have a statutory requirement to consult with tenants, on any proposals to increase rents. We must consider tenants views expressed during the consultation and feed this into the rent setting and budget process.

1.2 What will change as a result of this policy?

Each year we review rents to make sure we can continue to deliver essential services, maintain our homes to required standards and invest in improvements for the future. Rents have to increase to cover inflationary costs, repairs costs and pay for our modernisation and new build programmes. The views of our tenants are a key part of our consultation process, and all feedback received will inform our report to council. Elected Members will decide how much rents will be increased by at the Council Budget Meeting in February 2026.

1.3 Deciding if a full Impact Assessment is needed.

Please answer the following questions:

	Yes	No
1. The policy/ proposal has consequences for or affects people e.g. how they can access a service?	Yes	
2. The policy/proposal has potential to make a significant impact on equality and human rights, socio-economic disadvantage, the council's role as a corporate parent, children's rights, or the council's commitment to tackling climate change?		No
3. The policy/proposal is likely to have a significant environmental impact as defined by the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005?		No
4. The policy/ proposal involves a data processing activity (storage / collection of personal data) that is likely to result in a high risk to individuals as determined by Article 35 of the General Data Protection Regulation?		No

- If you have answered yes to questions 1 and 2 above, please proceed to complete the Integrated Impact Assessment. If you have answered No then an IIA does not need to be completed. Please keep a copy of the screening paperwork.
- If you have answered yes to question 3, you will need to consider whether you need to complete a Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- If you have answered yes to question 4, you will need to consider whether you need to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment. Please seek further advice from the Team Manager Information Governance.

Section 2: Integrated Impact Assessment

2.1 Have those who are directly affected by the policy had the opportunity to comment on new proposals?

We are writing out to all our tenants explaining what their rent money pays for and why we need to increase rents next year. Our letter tells tenants how each £1 of rent is spent and what it is spent on. We provide a questionnaire and ask tenants to give us their views on our proposals, giving them options to consider and tell us what their preference for an increase is. We also ask tenants to tell us what their spending priorities are for the service, how affordable they find their rent and how the increase will affect them. We also support ELTRP to hold a consultation event which invites tenants and ELTRP members to come along and discuss the proposals to increase rents. The ELTRP event this year was held on Wednesday 17th September 2025. Our rent increase consultation this year will run from 1st October to 14th November 2025.

2.2 What information/data have you used to inform the development of the policy to date?

A Project Group comprising of council staff from Housing, Finance, the Cabinet Spokesperson for Housing and representatives from ELTRP have discussed and agreed the approach to our consultation this year after reflecting on last year's consultation outcome. A Sub-Group of ELTRP representatives and council staff drafted the documents which consisted of a consultation letter and questionnaire.

Equalities Monitoring Information is asked each year (on age, disability, sex, race, religion etc.) as part of our questionnaire to help us understand what the demographics of our tenants are.

We take a targeted approach to our consultation and email those tenants who have provided us with an email address and posting out the correspondence to those tenants who we only have a postal address for. We also text tenants who have provided us with a mobile phone number to highlight the consultation and the importance of responding to it and provide information on our social media.

2.3 What does the evidence/ research suggest about the policy's actual or likely impact on equality groups and those vulnerable/ or experiencing socio-economic disadvantage?

Evidence	Comment
Which groups are in particular need of this service?	The proposed rent increase will have an effect on all our tenants.
What level of service uptake/ access is there from protected and vulnerable groups?	We make all our housing, contact centre and financial inclusion staff aware that our consultation is underway. We post and email out our consultation documents and can provide, on request, in another format/language.
Can you identify positive outcomes for service users	If a decision is taken by council to increase rents this will allow us to continue to deliver our services, maintain our properties and invest in them. This consultation gives our tenants the opportunity to give us their views and feedback on our proposed rent increase.
What is the service user experience of those from protected or vulnerable groups?	We operate a freephone service for tenants to contact us and make our Contact Centre aware of staff within housing who can help tenants, who contact us, with any enquiries or support requirements they may have. In previous years we have had enquiries from tenants about housing benefit, financial inclusion help, and those who have requested assistance from staff to complete and return their consultation questionnaire.
What opportunity have those from protected groups had to co-produce or comment on the service/ plans?	A range of ELTRP representatives are involved with us when we are discussing our approach to the consultation. As part of the consultation, we ask tenants what their priorities are and if they have any suggestions about how we can improve our service.

2.4 How does the policy meet the different needs of groups in the community? Please note that where children will be affected by the policy or activity a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact assessment must additionally be completed. [Children's Rights and Well-being Impact Assessment - completion guidance and template | East Lothian Intranet](#)

Equality Groups	Comments
Older people, people in the middle years	
Children and young people children	
Women, men and transgender people (includes issues relating to pregnancy and maternity)	The proposed rent increase will have an effect on all our tenants. The increase will allow the council to continue to deliver services, maintain our properties and invest in them.
Disabled people (includes physical disability, learning disability, sensory impairment, long-term medical conditions, mental health problems)	
Minority ethnic people (includes Gypsy/Travellers, migrant workers)	Tenants receiving benefits will be encouraged to contact our financial inclusion team and advised on how they can get help or information on additional benefits that they may need.
Refugees and asylum seekers	
People with different religions or beliefs (includes people with no religion or belief)	Tenants can contact the Service Development Team who are leading on the consultation for support and assistance during the consultation and may be signposted to other services or agencies for assistance and advice.
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people	
People who are unmarried, married or in a civil partnership	
Those vulnerable to falling into poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed • People on benefits • Lone Parents 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care experienced children and young people • Carers (including young carers) • Homeless people • Those involved in the community justice system • People with low literacy/numeracy • Families with 3 or more children • Those with a child/ children under 1 	
<p>Geographical communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural/ semi rural communities • Urban Communities • Coastal communities • Those living in the most deprived communities (bottom 20% SIMD areas) 	
<p>People with communication needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaelic Language Speakers {refer if necessary to the Council's Gaelic Language Plan} • British Sign Language (BSL) users {refer if necessary to the Council's BSL Plan} • English as a Second Language • Other e.g. Deafblind, Plain English, Large Print 	<p>Tenants who require information in another format/language can receive this, on request, from the council.</p>

2.5 Are there any other factors which will affect the way this policy impacts on the community or staff groups?

All the feedback received during the consultation will be made available to Managers within the service and Elected Members to advised them on the outcome of the consultation exercise. Demographic information requested as part of the consultation is included in this. This information will also be shared with ELTRP. This sharing of information will be done in advance of the budget meeting in February 2026, informing the council and members prior to a decision being made on the proposed rent increase.

2.6 Is any part of this policy/ service to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors?

If yes, how have you included equality and human rights considerations into the contract?

The Tenants Information Service (TIS) are currently contracted to provide the independent development support to tenants, tenants groups and ELTRP. TIS are an Equal Opportunities Employer and promote equal opportunities and this is contained within their current contract document. This contract follows our procurement guidelines and process.

TIS are a tenant-led organisation committed to supporting tenants and landlord organisations across Scotland. The staff working within our Development Support Project in East Lothian support and help build the capacity of their members and tenants to work with the council and participate with us. This support enables and assists tenants and ELTRP to engage and participate in our work and this consultation.

2.7 Have you considered how you will communicate information about this policy or policy change to those affected e.g. to those with hearing loss, speech impairment or English as a second language?

Yes, we will communicate the outcome of this year's rent consultation and council's budget meeting to all our tenants by way of letter, email, by posting information on the council website and will then follow up with information in our tenants' newsletter, Homefront.

These publications and methods of communication will provide tenants with the option to request the information in alternative formats e.g. braille, large print, and audiotape or in their own language.

2.8 Please consider how your policy will impact on each of the following?

Equality and Human rights

- Promotes / advances equality of opportunity e.g. improves access to and quality of services
- Promotes good relations within and between people with protected characteristics and tackles harassment
- Promotes participation, is inclusive and gives people control over decisions which affect them
- Preserves dignity and self-respect of individuals (does not lead to degrading treatment or stigma)
- Builds support networks, resilience, community capacity

Comments:

Neutral impact as our consultation on the proposed rent increase includes all our tenants. The rent increase will make sure the council can continue to deliver our housing services, maintain and improve our properties.

Those who require assistance can contact us and we will proactively engage through our staff to provide any additional support or help required. We will signpost to other services and agencies when required and work in partnership with ELTRP to encourage tenants to take part in our consultation.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage / reducing poverty

- Maximises income and/or reduces income inequality
- Helps young people into positive destinations
- Aids those returning to and those progressing within the labour market
- Improves employability skills, including literacy and numeracy
- Reduces the costs of taking part in activities and opportunities
- Reduces the cost of living

Comments :

Neutral impact as the increase enables the council to continue to deliver housing services, maintain our existing stock and continue with planned maintenance programmes and our new build programme.

Council staff can assist in a number of ways, for example by making referrals to our housing teams and Tenancy Support Officers. Signposting tenants to our Financial Inclusion Team and other agencies to seek advice and support and also to advise on maximising income making sure tenants are receiving all the benefits that they are entitled too.

Tackling Climate Change

- Reduces the need to travel or increases access to sustainable forms of transport
- Minimises waste / encourages resource efficiency / contributes to the circular economy
- Ensures goods / services are from ethical, responsible and sustainable sources
- Improves energy efficiency / uses low carbon energy sources
- Protects and/or enhances natural environments / habitats / biodiversity
- Promotes the transition to a low carbon economy
- Prepares and/or adapts communities for climate change impacts

Comment:

Increasing the rent will enable the council to continue to maintain our properties to Scottish Quality Housing, Energy Efficiency Standard (ESSH) and any new future energy efficiency measures.

We no longer post out our rent consultation documents to all our tenants and email these to the tenants who have provided us with an email address.

Corporate Parenting and Care Experienced Young People

- Impacts on care experienced young people
- Provides opportunities or reduces opportunities to participate in activities which are designed to promote the wellbeing of young people
- Adversely affects the wellbeing of young people
- Adversely impacts on outcomes for care experienced young people

Comments:

We regularly post information about the consultation on our website and social media and provide support and assistance to those tenants who request it. We make sure our staff are aware that the consultation is underway so that they can provide information, encourage engagement and signpost tenants to other services or agencies.

Section 3. Action Plan

What, if any changes will be made to the proposal/ policy as a result of the assessment?

Changes to be made	Expected outcome of the change	Resources Required	Timeline	Responsible person
None required.				

For consideration of the Head of Service

Can you identify any cumulative impacts on equality groups or vulnerable people arising from this policy, when considered alongside other changes across other services?

We will learn lessons from this year's consultation and build in any changes to future consultations that we carry out with our tenants.

Sign off by Head of Service

Name: Wendy McGuire

Date: 4th February 2026