



Dear tenant,

We know the decisions we make about your rent, and how we spend the money we collect, are extremely important; particularly during these uncertain times. We are writing to all our tenants directly as we want you to have a say and influence the decisions we make.

Each year we consult our tenants on the level of rent increase which we are considering as it is vital we get feedback on this from you. This feedback, as well as influencing the decision on the rent increase, will also impact on our budget and the money we have available to spend, on your behalf, on our housing stock and housing services.

There are several issues we need to consider in setting rent levels. We need to ensure sufficient funds are available to help us deliver our obligations to you under your tenancy agreement. We need to ensure our services perform well, meet your needs and are improving. We also need to invest in and maintain the quality of our houses, your homes, and meet Scottish Government standards. Importantly we need to consider how we can balance all of that with making rent as affordable as possible to you, our tenants.

Not everything is under our control or influence as we respond to increasing costs, changes to housing standards and expectations, and rising inflation, whilst working out how we all operate as we move forward from the pandemic.

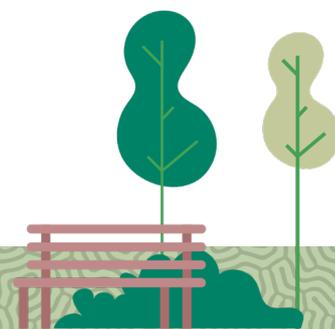
Please help us try to get these decisions right by giving us your feedback and comments on the consultation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Mackenzie".

David Mackenzie

Link Housing Managing Director





LINKHOUSING

Investing in our communities

Your rent choices for April 2022

It is important we set rents at a level that enables us to deliver excellent housing and tenancy support services. Over the course of the pandemic, we have supported people and families impacted by Covid-19 and we will continue to help tenants who are still negatively affected.

Whilst inflation is forecast to rise to between 4% and 5% next year, we are very keen to minimise rent increases for you. We are therefore consulting on two options for rent increase both of which we have kept below inflation – 3% and 3.5%. We also want to hear how the pandemic has impacted you and how we can support you.

We will invest in your homes and communities by providing quality housing, repair and advice services.

Rent affordability is very important to us and this document sets out how we try to balance that with providing you with high quality services now and in the future. Whilst the continuing impact of Covid-19 is resulting in rising costs in particular of building materials, we remain committed to investing in your homes and providing the wider community supports that we know many of you value.

A key focus for us is to continue to provide money and benefit advice and other tenancy support services.



£2.64m

secured by Link in 2020/21 for tenants using our advice services



99%

of customers were satisfied with our advice services

We provide free benefit, debt, and money advice, so if you have had a change in your financial circumstances or are having difficulties in paying your rent, please call our Customer Support Centre on **03451 400 100** as soon as possible and your Housing Officer will get in touch. We recently secured extra funding to enhance this service with the addition of mental health support from trained self help coaches for people struggling with mental wellbeing.

Our advice services are here to help. Information and additional contact methods can be found at www.linkhousing.org.uk/tenants/link-tenants/get-advice/



What we delivered in 2020-21

Improvements to homes and communities

Our repairs team continued to deliver reactive and emergency repairs throughout lockdown restrictions, in line with government guidance.



16,120

reactive repairs completed

£4.6m

spent maintaining homes



106 bathrooms

103 kitchens

91 heating systems

84 window/door upgrades

202 adaptations

[delivered during the pandemic]



£1.74m

spent on gas servicing,
ventilation, emergency
lighting and safety measures



236 new homes built for
social rent



High quality homes

97% properties meet EESSH

[Scottish average 89%]



£1.29m invested

through planned
maintenance

Building new homes and better communities

We are building 2,529 properties to deliver much-needed, affordable homes to communities.



Delivering excellent customer service



90% of tenants are satisfied with our overall service [Scottish average 89%]



94% of tenants say Link is good at keeping them informed about services and decisions completed [Scottish average 91.7%]



3,614 benefit issues addressed for tenants



£2.63m added income for tenants engaging with our advice service



£47,000 in crisis grants across 380 households



487 iPads and free data provide to customers through Connecting Scotland funding



£40,000 Scottish Government grant secured for 400 homes in fuel debt



261 tenants helped with debts to improve finances and mental health



Link customers benefited from employability training and support through our Link Academy



How rent was spent in 2020/21

Below is a breakdown of how we spent your rent and met your priorities:



The above shows the percentage of how every £1 of rent we receive is spent.

KEY

Investing in your homes includes repairs and planned replacements of kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors and other major upgrade works. It also includes the cost of properties over their lifetime (called *depreciation*).

Staff provide a range of housing, property and advice services to manage neighbourhoods and support tenants to maintain and afford their home.

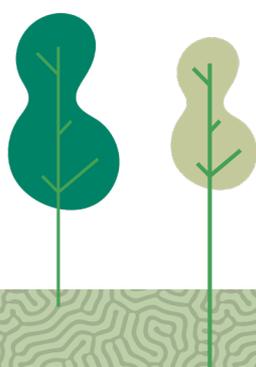
Loan payments include interest costs of borrowing.

Other debts are related to unpaid rent arrears.

Voids are homes empty between tenancies.

Our plans for investment in 2022/23

In the most recent customer survey, you told us **your top priorities for investment are windows, kitchens and bathrooms.**



Options for next year's rent

Option one: increase rent by 3%

Average rents would go up by £2.66 per week

This option means we can deliver the commitments made to you in this document.

Option two: increase rent by 3.5%

Average rents would go up by £3.10 per week

If you choose this option, we will make sure the additional money will be invested in services for people and communities who need it most.

We would like to hear from you about any additional services you would benefit from.

What happens next?

We have appointed an independent research company, Research Resource, to carry out the consultation in November. To take part you can:

- fill out the survey online at www.researchresource.co.uk/linkrentsurvey.html; or
- call freephone 0800 121 8987
- For more information, or if you require any support to take part, contact our Customer Service Centre on 03451 400 100 or csc@linkhaltd.co.uk.

We will collect your views and the Link Group Board will use these to inform our rent setting for next year. We will continue to monitor inflation and if it is lower than currently forecast when we make our final decision, we will review the increase.

We commit to keeping the increase as low as possible for you.

We can produce information in Braille, Audio Tape, Large Print and Community Languages. Call 03451 400 100 to find out more.

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