

The Highland Council

RENT CONSULTATION

CO-CHOMHAIRLEMAIL 2021/2022



Take part in this year's Rent Consultation.

We would like to start off this Rent Consultation by thanking all our tenants for their patience as we've adapted our services to meet the challenges of the pandemic.

This year, the rent consultation will run until 21 December 2020. Within the current Covid restrictions Council staff will not be able to visit your local area and meet with you in person to find out what you think. Instead, we will be holding several **online webinars** where you can see where we spend your rent money and how we set our budgets. You will also be able to ask David Goldie, Head of Housing, questions about the process.

We will be holding **online** Rent Setting workshops with Tenant Forums and Tenant Groups across Highland where we will look more closely at how your rent money is spent and make sure this truly reflects your priorities.

What happens next?

We will use the feedback received from tenants to prepare a report for Councillors to consider and agree the level of rent and service charges for council tenants for the year 2021/22.

We will write to you at least four weeks in advance to notify you of the new rent and service charges coming into effect for 2021/22.

How do our average rents compare for 2020/21?

£77.70	£76.49	£86.71	£96.09	£92.72	£82.29
Highland Council	Scottish LA Average	Albyn Housing Society	Cairn Housing Assoc.	Lochaber Housing	Lochalsh & Skye HA

Everyone pays rent, even if you receive housing benefit, so it is important that we receive feedback from as many tenants as possible. If you have any questions about the consultation, please do get in touch on 01349 886602 and ask for your Housing Officer or Tenant Participation Officer or you can email tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk

Rent increase proposal for 2021/22

Moladh àrdachadh màil airson 2021/22

We are asking our tenants to select their preferred proposal for 2021/22. Details of the two options can be found on page 3 of this leaflet along with ways to give your feedback.

Please take some time to consider our proposals and let us have your views.

Planned spend for 2021/2022

In **2021-22** we plan to spend the following:

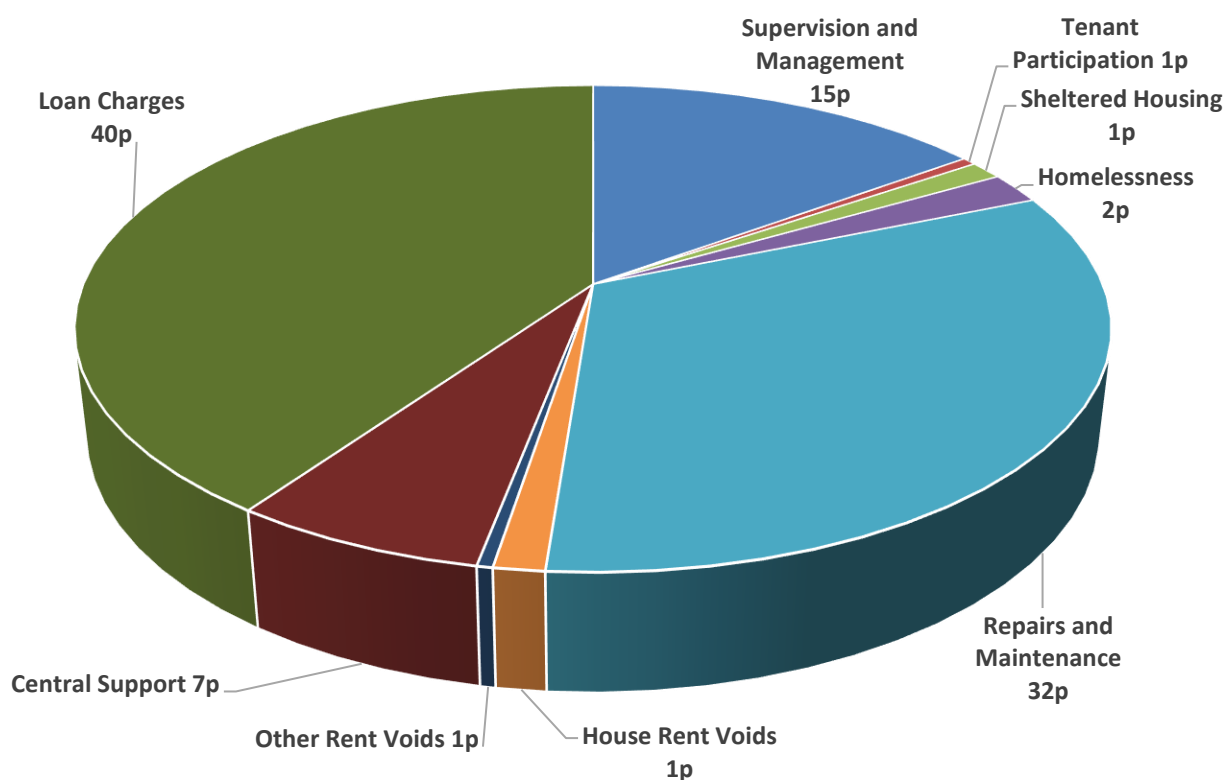
Improvements to your homes. In 2021-22 we plan to invest £15.7m in our housing stock. This includes:

- £1m on adaptations such as walk-in showers
- £4.4m on upgrades/replacements which will include new bathrooms, new kitchens and new windows and doors
- £8.8m on energy efficiency works including new heating systems and properties being externally insulated
- £1.5m on external fabric works such as harling or roofing repairs/replacement

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated delays, it will take longer to complete works on the current year capital programme (2020/21), however all previously planned works will still be carried out. We continue to prioritise the safety of our tenants, staff and contractors when carrying out any planned works.

The delays on the current year capital programme may have a knock-on effect on timescales for delivery of the planned 2021/2022 programme, although we are working hard to minimise any potential delays

Proposed budget spend per £1 of rent in 21-22



Your Views Matter

We want to consult with you on the proposed annual rent increase for Highland Council's houses in 2021/22. We have outlined two options for rent charges for 2021/22 below:

Your rent options for 2021/22

*Based on the average weekly rate in 2020/21

Option 1.

Increase rents by 2%
Average increase of £1.55 per week*

This increase will effectively 'balance the books' and maintain current services and agreed levels of Capital spend

Option 2.

Increase rents by 1%
Average increase of £0.77 per week*

This increase will maintain current services and agreed level of Capital spend but will use £500,000 of the Housing Revenue Account reserve funds, effectively increasing the level of debt to income, and deferring the rent increase. This will mean a larger increase in future years. This approach is proposed as an "one-off" for 2021/22 to reflect the financial issues relating to the covid-19 pandemic.

Have Your Say

Our plans, and how we spend the budget, will have an impact on your home and your community.

We want to hear what you think.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the traditional forms of consultation cannot safely take place. This is our first 'fully digital' rent consultation so we have made some changes to how we'll gather your views and it's now easier for you to have a say.

All you need to do is select one of the following options:

- **By Text:** Option 1 or Option 2 to **07856 957056**

This number will close at the end of the consultation.

- **Online:** by following the Survey Monkey Link

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RC2021W>

- **By email:** tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk



If you are unable to respond using any of these options, please call 01349 886602 between 9am and 4pm Monday – Friday and ask to speak to someone about the Rent Consultation.



As a thank you for taking the time to complete our rent consultation you will be entered into our prize draw. Two lucky winners will win £50 each in shopping vouchers!

Don't delay, give us your views today!

Thank you and good luck!

Rent Consultation – online Webinars and Rent Setting Workshops

Rent Consultation Webinar	Monday 14 th December 2020	10:30am
Rent Consultation Webinar	Monday 14 th December 2020	2:30pm
Rent Consultation Webinar	Monday 14 th December 2020	6:30pm

Tenant Forums, Registered Tenant Groups and Interested tenants will be contacted separately with dates / times for Rent Setting Workshops.

David Goldie, Head of Housing, will be attending the **Rent Consultation Webinars** to answer any questions.

All of the above events will be held via Microsoft Teams and will last for approximately one hour – if you would like to join any of these online meetings please email

tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk or call **07387 234107** to book a place. If you have not used Microsoft Teams before we can support you with getting connected.

Struggling to pay your rent?

It is important that you pay your rent on time and in full. You should contact your **Housing Officer** immediately on **01349 886602** if you are in arrears and have not made an arrangement to clear them.

No matter how high your arrears are, please talk to us – we are here to help.

The Welfare Support Team can help if you are experiencing financial difficulties, but you must get in touch quickly. Call them on **0800 090 1004**