

# Rent Review 2020/2021

## Consultation Feedback

In early December 2019 we sent out a paper survey to all tenants, accompanying the Christmas issue of our Voice newsletter. The survey explained options for rent levels in the coming financial year, with the consultation period lasting approximately four weeks. Every tenant that replied was also entered into a £50 prize draw.



### Online survey

In addition to posting out hard copies of the survey we also encouraged tenants to complete the form online as well as promoting it through digital channels. This included:

1. A Facebook post about the consultation, with a direct link to the questionnaire on the Survey Monkey website. A follow-up post a week before the consultation closed which generated additional responses.
2. Featuring the rent consultation as a news story on the homepage of our website which contained a link to the Survey Monkey questionnaire.
3. About half way through the consultation period sending a mass text message to the 1,600 tenants we have mobile numbers for. The text highlighted the chance to win £50 and included a link to the online survey (which can easily be completed on a smart phone).

Staff from Housing and Corporate Services also encouraged tenants to complete the survey at reception and through day-to-day contact.

### Returns

This year's survey saw an excellent response with 158 replies returned by the 17 January deadline. This is a record number, beating the 133 we received in 2018, and represents a sample of 8% of our eligible tenancies (ie those not let to councils or other charities such as Women's Aid). The majority of responses (71%) came digitally but we also saw almost a third completing the paper form. A breakdown of responses show:

- 30% of tenants completed the paper survey, compared to 45% last year
- 8% of people completed the survey through Facebook, a big fall from 27% last year
- 63% completed it using the link in the text message, a big increase from 27% last year

### 1 **Headline findings**

- **77%** are happy with the services they receive from Melville. This is very similar to last year when 78% were happy. Dissatisfaction remains low with 9% unhappy with the overall service they receive
- **85%** are happy with how well informed they're kept by Melville. This is slightly lower than the 93% who were happy with the information they received the previous year
- **75%** of those who answered said they think Melville's current rent and service charges are affordable. This represents a significant increase from 66% last year
- **76%** feel that their rent represents good value for money. 8% felt it represents poor value
- **57%** of those that responded did not receive any Universal Credit (UC) or housing benefit to help pay their rent

- 55% of those that responded said they would support increasing rent by a minimum of 2%, a slight increase on the previous year when 54% backed an increase
- 45% were opposed to any of the three options presented, the same as the previous year

## 2 Breakdown of key findings

The key findings, broken down into how those receiving housing benefit/UC and those paying their rent themselves answered, show the following:

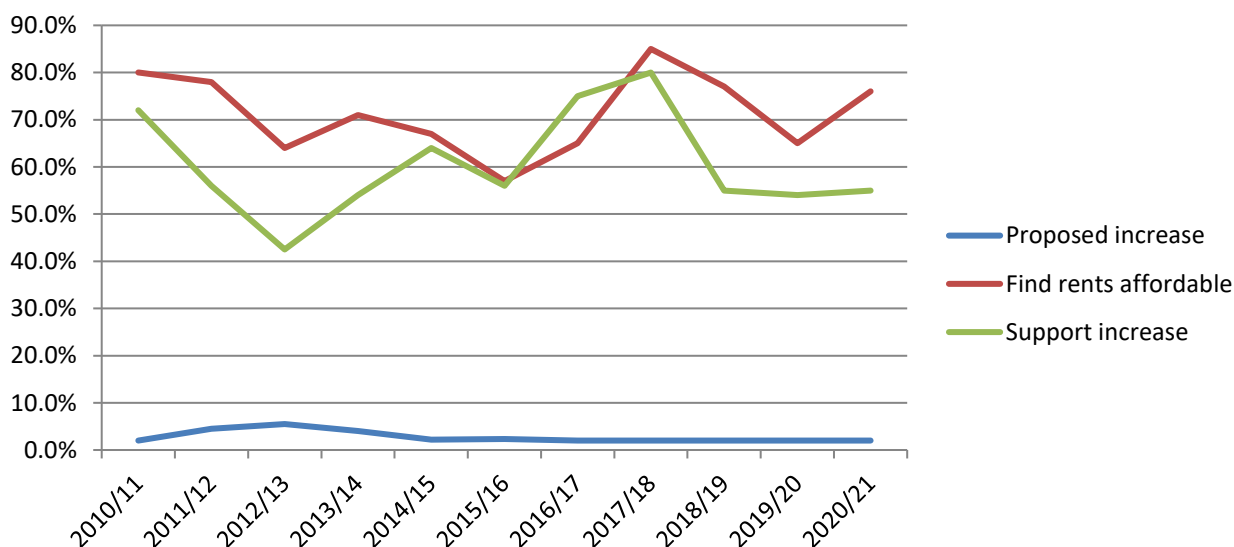
	Overall	UC/HB	Non HB
Satisfaction with overall service	77%	85%	70%
Find rent/service charges affordable	75%	85%	69%
Rent represents good value	76%	83%	71%
In favour of 2% increase	34%	40%	29%
In favour of 2.5% increase	9%	3%	13%
In favour of 3% increase	12%	17%	10%
Against any of the options	45%	41%	49%

43% of the responses were from tenants receiving housing benefit or Universal Credit and the vast majority of those (85%) found Melville's rent and service charges affordable (previous year 75%). Of those who receive no benefits to pay rent (57% of the respondents) 69% found rents and service charges affordable (a big increase from 54% the previous year).

An increase of at least 2% was favoured by 59% of those receiving housing benefit/UC and by just over half (51%) of those receiving no support. Just under half (49%) of those receiving no help with rent supported none of the options compared to 41% of those on housing benefit/UC.

## 3 Comparison with previous years

The chart below illustrates how this year's findings compare to those in previous years. Support for the proposed increase is very similar to last year, at slightly more than half of those that replied, with similar reasons given including rising living costs and stagnant wages. The significant improvement in perceived affordability, reversing the trend of the previous two years, was reassuring, given the work carried out around value-for-money in recent years, however wider concerns remain about benefit cuts and the cost of living. We also need to bear in mind that we are continuing to deal with a very limited, and self-selecting, sample.



## 4 Comments

door neighbours bathroom flat rent increase tenants put struggle new last years US keeping rent  
increase lower rise repairs think area good month help home going next  
pay cost year also rent back house enough Melville bills  
feel pay rent work say lot Maybe people every year take tried high receive  
new bathroom benefits support pay full rent without waiting still always

*If there has to be a rise a 2% increase seems fair in todays climate, although I imagine it's a bit of a struggle for some people.*

*I don't understand why everyone has to pay extra for a small % of people to get a new bathroom then next year rent will rise again. But not everyone will benefit from it. I still have the old heating system so paying a lot more to heat my home than my neighbour's who also have a new bathroom getting put in this year. I feel that it's unfair that my rent went up yet I haven't had the benefit from it.*

*People are struggling, so I would support the lowest rate possible, I reported my roof, got a temp job done, was supposed to hear back but nothing.*

*Yes, I think Melville are really good, not just about the price of rent. It's more outside the box in what they do, my housing officer has helped me out with several issues with threatening neighbours and I reckon this should get recognised more than the value of the rent to the property that we have, thank you.*

*Property conditions is extremely poor. Repairs are carried out at poor standard. Everything done on the cheap. Rent is expensive given lack of quality and would not consider paying rent increase for same poor standard. I would however consider paying higher rent for better quality home.*

*Still no pay rise it's getting more difficult as a private pensioner as the Brexit mess. Still waiting to see what going to happen next.*

*I'm self employed so when you suggest rise my wages don't always go up with it so I'd feel the pinch if rents rise although I do feel at present we are getting good value for money.*

*Help lower cost by keeping rent the same. I tried to work and got into rent debt and have just finished paying it back so if I walk into work again I would be in more debt with all the yearly increase so don't really support any increase.*

*I feel for where I live if I was getting the same upgrades ie bathrooms as everyone else in my area ie next street from myself instead of waiting 3 to 4 years for my upgrade especially after having my bathroom fixed 3 to 4 times in the space of 2 weeks and a flood through the kitchen from the bathroom. if all upgrades were to apply to us as other tenants in our street I would be happy to pay a rent increase.*

*I am very happy with the rent costs, I know I am a U.C but I do think they are good value for money in comparison to other H.A. and councils and the private sector. I have had a new kitchen and bathroom put in and new central heating. I have been a Melville tenant for 27 years and have*

*always got value for money, also I have been able to use the welfare services and think that they are fantastic and a BIG Thank you to Andrew Collinge for all his help and support.*

*I am happy to pay more to have improvements done to the house, but I also expect Melville to have more done to bring the house up to standard.*

*This house hasn't been updated in 10/20 years and I have spend hundreds inside to improve it... 3% increase would be more than welcome if this property was in line with others around us.*

*Few words, we are satisfied with rents and the overall services.*

*Keep rents down by no increase only way.*

*I am very grateful for the services I receive from Melville. I feel the whole company want to help in every way, not just with the tenancy.*

*I really feel the rent is high already without it going up more there has to surely be a cap where it says enough and can't increase like myself. I work get no help and half my wage goes to rent you say it to give us new bathrooms kitchens etc some have had the same ones for years and told has to be so many years before a new 1 is put in a lot end up in rent arrears like myself as we struggle on 1 wage without it going up anymore. I don't understand why council are lower rent can't you reduce it instead of going up?*

*Melville has a fair rent system, we had our kitchen, bathroom and heating all done in the last few years more than a lot of other landlords would do and fantastic quality and service.*

*I've been in this house for nearly 11 years. My rent has gone up every year, twice in one year. I think giving us 1 year without a rent rise is long overdue.*

*Rent seems to be going up a lot year in year out and I have reported repairs etc and never been done our wages don't go up enough to complete with rise in rent each year its hard enough paying for it each month without increasing the rent and comparing to Midlothian council rent there is about £100 off a difference.*

*I could have purchased my little flat 2 times over for the monthly rent you charge and customer service is terrible.*

*Go in-house with repairs stop having away days.*

*Melville are on the ball when you are needing anything done.*

*Rents a lot dearer than Midlothian Council. We are now pensioners and pay full rent due to having small private pensions. More or less planning for our retirement. People who have not planned and now pensioners are better of than us due to the benefits they receive.*

*I think for the house I say in rent is ok. A mortgage would be dearer so all fair for the moment.*

*I would support rent increase if an up to date, modern central heating system was installed. The present system is outdated and expensive to run.*

*I pay full rent as I am in full time work and have never not paid my rent. The whole time I've been in my house (12years) I find the price for myself is a little too high. I stay on my own. I'd be really annoyed if the price went up more.*

*As I pay full rent and tax, I would find it difficult if the rents were increased any more.*

*I feel that the people who are on benefits and do not pay are being asked if they think the rent should increase, it doesn't matter to them as the benefit pays it.*

*Always increases by at least 2% each year and confused on how you come to this conclusion. Why ask people what they want when you increase every year! I'm on housing benefit but in the future I'll be working. I'm cheaper getting a mortgage. Very high rent and it always increases.*

*Maybe consider taking a deposit on the houses/flats so the chance of them being returned in a decent state is higher.*

*Love being a Melville tenant I was with Edinburgh council before and they was rubbish didn't help with anything. I highly recommend Melville.*

*I think there should be a scheme where if you would like a new bathroom / kitchen you could pay for it by adding few extra pound to their rent account. Not everyone has spare money, and I know I would rather use the money to buy food than get a new bathroom.*

*I feel that my rent is at a perfect level for the accommodation I have through Melville. Had a couple of problems with getting some of the issues resolved that I have raised and still waiting on some to be taken forward from December but all in all it's been good.*

*Maybe take a leaf from Midlothian council's book. Their services are much better and repairs over Melville's.*

*I have voted for 3% rise hoping I will get my ""Bathroom"" done after 25 years of waiting! This would be nice!*

*It's not something that can keep rents down but it would be helpful to the tenants such as the pensioners and the disabled I also know that it will have to be done in stages and over time and that is installing Solar Panels on the property as it can help to reduce the cost of heating the homes. It would also help to reduce our Carbon Footprint. It is something that I support and I think it shows that you are trying to help all the tenants.*