

# Rent Review 2021/2022

## Consultation Feedback

In December 2020 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 1,700 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).

### Returns

This year's survey saw an excellent response with 209 replies returned by the 15 January deadline. This is a record number, beating the 164 we received last year, and represents a sample of 10.5% of our eligible tenancies (ie those not let to councils or other charities such as Women's Aid). The majority of responses (79%) came digitally but we also saw more than 40 tenants completing the paper form. A breakdown of responses show:

- 21% of tenants completed the paper survey, compared to 30% last year
- 5% of people completed the survey through Facebook, compared to 8% last year
- 72% completed it using the text message link, a significant increase from 63% last year
- 2% completed it through the website or by email invitation

### 1 **Headline findings**

- **81%** are happy with the services they receive from Melville. This is an improvement on last year when 77% were happy. Dissatisfaction remains low with 4% unhappy with the overall service they receive (compared to 9% last year).
- **83%** are happy with how well informed they're kept by Melville. This is slightly lower than the 85% who were happy with the information they received the previous year.
- **82%** of those who answered said they think Melville's current rent and service charges are affordable. This represents a significant increase from 75% last year.
- **72%** feel that their rent represents good value for money. 6% feel it represents poor value.
- **52%** of those that responded did not receive any Universal Credit (UC) or housing benefit to help pay their rent.
- **61%** of those that responded said they would support increasing rent by a minimum of 1.5%, an increase on the previous year when 55% backed an increase.
- **39%** were opposed to any of the three options presented.

## 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:

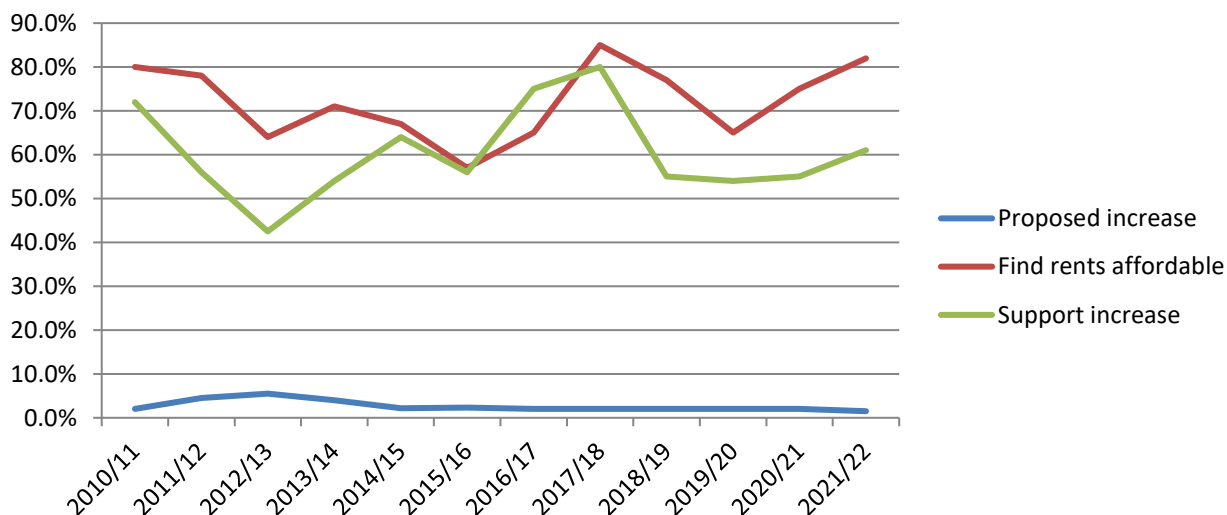
	Overall	UC/HB	Non HB
Satisfaction with overall service	81%	81%	82%
Find rent/service charges affordable	82%	89%	77%
Rent represents good value	72%	74%	71%
In favour of 1.5% increase	39%	37%	42%
In favour of 2% increase	14%	17%	10%
In favour of 2.5% increase	9%	13%	5%
Against any of the options	39%	33%	43%

48% of the responses were from tenants receiving housing benefit or Universal Credit and the vast majority of those (89%) found Melville's rent and service charges affordable (an improvement on 85% the previous year). Of those who receive no government help to pay rent (52% of the respondents) 77% found rents and service charges affordable (a jump from 69% the previous year).

An increase of at least 1.5% was favoured by 67% of those receiving housing benefit/UC and by 57% of those receiving no support. Fewer than half (43%) of those receiving no help with rent supported none of the options compared to a third (33%) 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 significantly higher than last year, with a matching improvement in perceived affordability, continuing a positive trend. At over 10% of the tenant population, this year's 209 replies provides a robust cross section of opinions however we do need to bear in mind that we are continuing to deal with a still limited, and self-selecting, sample.

A selection of tenants' comments are included over the page. Where appropriate, we have replied to individual comments to investigate issues raised and to offer help and support.

4 Comments

good value<sub>property</sub> happy<sub>minimum</sub> housing<sub>everyone</sub> high<sub>every</sub> good  
 said tenants<sub>level</sub> one<sub>need</sub> help<sub>know</sub> rent increase<sub>full</sub>  
 work<sub>rent affordable</sub> think<sub>last year</sub> Melville<sub>also</sub> rent  
 us<sub>year</sub> find service<sub>happy service</sub> pay<sub>garden</sub> people  
 contractors increase<sub>call</sub> will<sub>moment</sub> keep<sub>cost</sub> receive<sub>always</sub>  
 still<sub>overall</sub> service receive<sub>nothing</sub> time<sub>going</sub> helpful

Giving the current situation I think a rent freeze would help hard working tenants, the rent is already £435, I fear an increase would make my home unaffordable.
Think in the current climate, if there has to be a rent increase it should be the minimum.
At the moment the rent is affordable but if it keeps going up then I might struggle.
Rent is hi enough and can't go up just now with the way things are with covid. My husband lost his job and am the only one working he can't get any help as I work.
Both myself and my wife are in full-time employment and receive no benefits. We would be able to pay the rent increase, but would others?
Rent is like taxes, nobody likes paying it, but recognise it as necessary and, as I have found you to be a fair Landlord, not too 'painful.'
I have no issues. You provide excellent value to your tenants.
I love the fact that you give tenants free carpet tiles & paint.
I was working 2 jobs at 1 point just to cover my rent, it is really expensive. I am now on UC and still have to put extra money to my rent every month. If I was just thinking of my own circumstances I'd still think the rent was pretty high but the level of service is great.
I think the services that I receive from Melville is definitely value for money, I'm always being updated on recent services, any increase in rent and services or meetings etc that are happening or have happened, I also like the magazine (and of course the diary/planner for the coming year). I like being a Melville tenant I feel like it's a big family/community.
Been a tenant for over 30years and had a few houses. Work and repairs always carried out on time. Emergencies dealt with promptly. Just wish rent wasn't so high.
Rent, good value. Service good. Keep up the good work.
While the rent is affordable now an increase will add to our financial pressure in uncertain times.
In light of the current situation I think you should freeze rent. I pay full rent and this year we have really toiled. My husband is self employed and has struggled to make an income and I worked full time for 19 years and was on furlough all last year then got made redundant in December. I am stressed trying to pay bills and seeing there was mortgage holidays but no help with rent.
I find the newsletter to be unnecessary. I would much rather Melville stop this to use the money towards keeping rents low/improvements.
Melville always provide adequate maintenance for their properties, therefore the current rent rates are good value for money. The services are of a very high standard. Communication is very good and staff members are polite, courteous and efficient. Thankyou Melville.
In these hard time I believe Melville are good value and try to keep the rent reasonable.
I think the rent increase this year should be kept to a minimum level because of covid.
You wouldn't listen anyway so what's the point?
Very happy with the service. Any issues I have are dealt with efficiently and to a high standard.
We get asked if we are happy with the increase yet if we don't agree it still goes up so what the point in asking us if we are happy with the increase?

Yous are all Legends. My children and I are forever grateful to have Melville as our Landlords.
Always been happy with the rent level, value for money and services provided by Melville.
For how little work Melville carry out in the property rent is pricey.
At the moment the rent is affordable as I am working. I'm happy with services.
Given current climate and no help or leniency with payments an increase would prove difficult.
Rent are comparable to council services are generally higher but since changing from r3 the service has been off lower standard.
I think if the organisation just keep in mind that not everyone do have great paying jobs and often with no pay increase lots if us do just keep our head above the water but we do need good homes to live in which you do provide being practical and realistic is important to us the tenant.
In the grand scheme of things, the rent charge is fair.
Really disgusted that Melville expected full rent to be paid during the lockdown when both myself and my wife were on reduced pay. No one from Melville contacted us to offer any help.
I don't know why rent is increased every year, wages and benefits don't.
I am more than happy with the cost of my rent and the services I receive. Any situation I have faced has been dealt with quickly and professionally.
The rent we have to pay is quite fair.
No complaints, very satisfied with service I receive. Due to the Corona Virus I think a lot of people will struggle with rent increase. It was nice to receive a call from a staff member to ask if i was ok when all this started.
I said no to rent increase at the moment as I am just grateful to have a job but have not had a wage increase for a few years. Our rent is higher than Midlothian Council but I am grateful not to be in a Private rent anymore. A rent increase right now would be harsh.
I think due to Covid 19 and the pressures people are facing, the lowest rent increase is the sensible option this year.
I feel the price is very reasonable. Service is great, problems always dealt with. Checking up on us all through this pandemic was also very thoughtful.
I think, if possible, a freeze on rents would be very much appreciated as this year has been such a terrible one for most of us. However, that said, Melville does give a great service to its tenants.
Well it's not easy when you have one wage coming in and rent and council to pay.
I feel like after the last year everyone has had, Melville does not need to increase the rent. Other bills will be higher than normal. A rent freeze would be an amazing thing for Melville to do.
Rent increase during financial difficulties due to covid will put extra pressure on an already difficult time, we are already stuck at home using more gas and electric I myself will worry.
I am very happy, overall, with Melville. I appreciate the Voice Newsletter and Quids In, that keeps me informed. I am computer illiterate and am glad of receiving information this way.
Council rent is cheapest, why can't you be, sorry,
I don't think that some realise the cost difference between private and social rent, also the difference in the level of service. I've rented privately and had to move schools, Dr's etc because even when you've paid for a couple of years they can ask you to leave and the stress is awful.
I have put down 1.5% but would rather it was nothing. I will not be getting a pay rise this year, instead there is a good chance of making less as they are asking people at my work to take days off to save money. Sadly a bad time for everyone.
I was going to suggest a rent freeze after the year we've had and looks set to continue. As this is not an option the rent rise should be the minimum possible.
I feel the rent I pay is very good for my house and the service I receive is very good. All the staff are always very helpful, even during the Covid 19 outbreak, I received a phone call to see if everything was alright. I feel the rent could still go up a bit, I know this will not please people but Edinburgh Council rents are way higher.
My home is not due any upgrades, blanket rent increases cost me more for no benefit. I cannot afford a rent increase.