

# Rent Review 2022/2023

## Consultation Feedback

In December 2021 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. Two Facebook posts about the consultation, with a link to the questionnaire on the Survey Monkey website.
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 tenants we have mobile numbers for. The text highlighted the chance to win £50 and included a link to the online survey (which can be easily completed on a smart phone).

### Returns

This year's survey saw an excellent response with 246 replies returned by the 21 January deadline. This is a record number, beating the 211 we received last year, and continuing the trend of increasing returns in recent years. It represents a sample of 12% of our eligible tenancies (ie those not let to councils or other charities such as Women's Aid). The vast majority of responses (87%) came digitally. A breakdown of responses show:

- 13% of tenants completed the paper survey, compared to 21% last year and continuing the steady decline in paper survey returns
- 2% of people completed the survey through Facebook, compared to 5% last year
- 76% completed it using the text message link, an increase from 72% last year
- 9% completed it through the website or by email invitation

### 1 **Headline findings**

- **75%** are happy with the services they receive from Melville (down from 81% last year). Dissatisfaction has also increased with 9% unhappy with the overall service they receive (compared to 4% last year).
- **67%** are satisfied with the overall quality of their home. 15% are dissatisfied. This is the first time we've asked this question as part of the rent consultation.
- **80%** of those who answered said they think Melville's current rent and service charges are affordable. This represents a slight fall from 82% last year.
- **70%** feel that their rent represents good value for money (compared to 72% last year). 9% feel it represents poor value (compared to 6% last year).
- **47%** of those that responded did not receive any Universal Credit (UC) or housing benefit to help pay their rent.
- **48%** of those that responded said they would support increasing rent by a minimum of 2%, a significant decrease on the previous year when 61% backed an increase.
- **52%** were opposed to any of the three options presented.



## 2 Breakdown of key findings

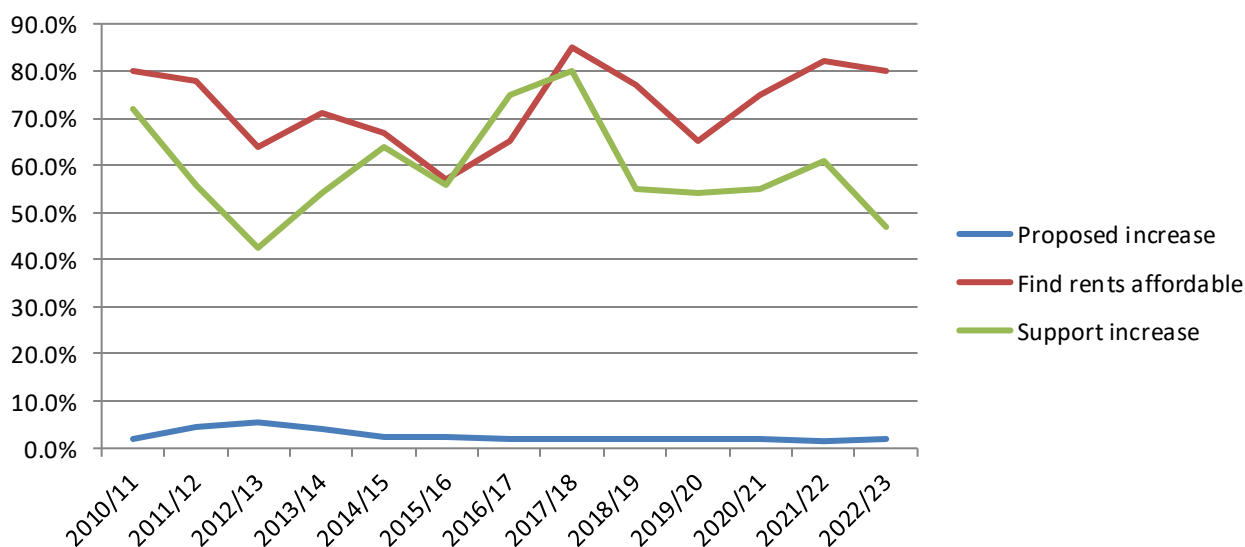
The key findings, broken down into how those receiving housing benefit/UC and those paying their rent themselves answered, show the following:

	Overall	UC/HB	Non HB
Satisfaction with overall service	75%	77%	73%
Find rent/service charges affordable	80%	85%	74%
Satisfied with home	67%	73%	60%
Rent represents good value	70%	74%	68%
In favour of 2% increase	32%	33%	31%
In favour of 2.5% increase	10%	8%	10%
In favour of 3% increase	6%	9%	3%
Against any of the options	52%	50%	56%

53% 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 (down slightly from 89% the previous year). Of those who receive no government help to pay rent (47% of the respondents) 74% found rents and service charges affordable (a slight fall from 77% the previous year). More than half of those replying were against any of the increases presented.

## 3 Comparison with previous years

The chart below illustrates how this year's main findings compare to those in previous years.



Support for the proposed increase is significantly lower than last year, with a small reduction in perceived affordability. At over 11% of the tenant population, this year's 246 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.

keep boiler know neighbour happy raise paid service problems  
 us repairs sort living meet tenants lived house provided time  
 work full time service found going one think s years  
 prices rent money house pressure good bills people  
 rising every year need come back Melville put rent cost  
 pandemic heating wants increase save money re family  
 new bathroom will work something help coming support

If you can keep them as low as possible to help people like us who are self employed and trying to rebuild our business after covid which has caused no end of stress and pressure on us.
I don't support a rent rise as its every year and struggling with all increases in rent gas electric etc.
The rent goes up but my wages didn't.
At the present rate of £369pm, just over £90pw, this must be the highest in South Lanarkshire, we've already had, kitchen/ bathroom upgrades, heating upgrades, so if you're going to raise rents by 2% what upgrades is there, considering a majority of your tenants are in Mid Lothian.
Every year the rent increases. It worries me greatly that you, a fantastic landlord, will eventually become unaffordable. What then for us tenants with nowhere else to go?
You saved money with the lock down so why do you have to put up rent at all.
I find it extremely hard to pay full rent on top of full community tax which keeps rising every year.
I think this year you have to take into account the high cost for energy, the overall cost of living is hitting people hard. I would of liked to have seen zero rise in rent this year to help people try and cope with all the extra financial cost, hence why I voted for the lowest rise.
Value for money is apparent to us as it pays for all my needs and my family throughout our changing lives.
I find the rents and services are excellent and the help with benefits is brilliant.
I think the rent is too high.
In these difficult times with so many costs increasing, I don't support any of these increases. Also expecting large hike in council tax in April. If there has to be an increase it should be 1% maximum to ease pressure on tenants.
I am hoping a rent increase will be as minimal as possible because I don't have a high income but still pay full rent. I think a 2% increase is fair. I do appreciate the opportunity to participate on the rent increase surveys.
I am very lucky to rent from a housing association. I could not afford private rent. Without reasonable rent prices Melville offers I could not afford certain equipment and services my ASN (additional support needs) son needs. Takes the pressure off.
Think the rent is good value. But we also struggle to pay as don't receive any help.
I feel given the state of things just now to put your rent up again is unfair. I know a few people who are already struggling with their payments.
At the end of the day these services have to be paid for especially if tenants want good ones. I have found that the services provided by Melville are very good.
Poor value for money due to length of time repairs take to be sorted and most of time half botched job and I have to re-decorate myself and end up out of pocket.
We are very happy with the house and service provided by Melville, for the rent we are paying

Given the pandemic and extra costs to families and most of your staff have been able to work from home saving money to Melville I think any rent increase would cause families into further financial difficulties.
I would like a year or two without rent increases as pay is not going up accordingly. It has been a hard year for everyone.
Stop raising rent on your run down old flats, why should we pay basically the same amount as a Melville new build upstairs downstairs house with front and back gardens and driveway? Raise the rent for these lucky people.
I think it's a bit unfair to raise rent as a lot of the home improvements ie bathrooms etc haven't been done yet because of the covid impact there has been rent increases during this but the bathrooms etc not been completed as advised so I think rent increase should be frozen .
Do something about energy efficiency in homes. The house loses heat quicker than I can heat it. In my opinion our house types have poor cavity insulation and the windows are very drafty thus increasing my overall expenditure on energy bills.
My house is freezing there's no thermostat.
I have now lived in this house for nearly 27 years and over all I have lived with Melville for 28 years. I really think the quality of my house is poor. Walls roofs windows plugs and fittings etc. Also my heating system is very poor. I still have one of the old gas fires and back boiler which costs a fortune .. also the houses are rubbish at being green. Cold air seems to get in everywhere...
Have no problems with Melville, always quick to sort any problems.
There's so many things that the extra money from rent could sort to benefit all. But instead it goes to bathrooms and other things that not everyone wants or needs.
Rent increases in my opinion are not open to residents pushing back. Large proportion of rent is paid by the state so the residents paying full rent opinions, although canvassed will never matter and rent will continue to rise. Annual increases certainly don't yield the kitchen and bathroom replacements stated. Property up keep is questionable.
Would be good if you could bring solar panels to help with rising costs of energy prices as we are family of 4 and finding it really challenging and a more energy affect boiler as mine is over 15 years old and energy rates are one off lowest on boiler.
I know you have to put rent up but all my money goes on gas. This house is absolutely freezing in the winter.
Have had new heating, kitchen and bathroom fitted over the past few years, all to a poor standard and all have actually cost me a lot of money. If the people carrying out these refurbishments took pride in their work or worked to a suitable standard, tenants might be happy paying the expensive rent and tenants might actually look after their homes and gardens.
Melville provide a good service to their tenants. I feel I have had good support with Melville staff over the last few months from everyone one involved. I like to thank them all for that. The rent from Melville is set at a rate I feel is value for money in the service that's provided.
The rent at the moment is high compared to council property and with heating bills rising in April this is going to be a squeeze on my cost of living, at the moment I get universal credit as I was made unemployed through Ill health and finding it hard to get employment because of this so I think a freeze on the rent would be good not just for me but for the low paid workers as well.
Due to the increase in national insurance and no wage increase it is time we looked at having a year with no or low increase in rents. I do not qualify for any help but it would be nice to not be worse off every year. The housing association needs to take into account the increase in prices for gas and electricity every year I see myself paying out more for no increase in incomes.
Rents go up cost of living goes up but my salary unfortunately doesn't. Help decorate as it's a whole house of wood chip and I've never been able to afford to do this however thankyou for the contribution disruption payment when my fire and heating was changed.