

# Rent Review 2025/2026

## Consultation Feedback

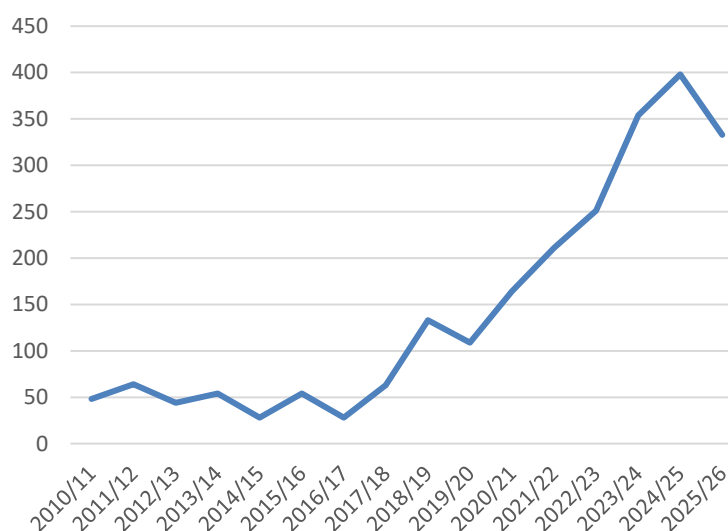
As is now the norm, this year's consultation was carried out almost entirely digitally using email, SMS, Facebook and Melville's website. The survey ran for five weeks, starting at the beginning of December and ending on 9 January.

The survey was shared by:

1. Email to about 1,600 tenants that we have addresses for
2. SMS to about 1,900 tenants for whom we have mobile numbers
3. Facebook and Melville's website
4. Word of mouth from staff when talking to tenants as part of day-to-day work

Those unable to complete the online survey were given the option of passing on their views over the phone or by having a paper survey sent to them. These alternatives were given in the Christmas issue of our Voice newsletter.

### 1 Returns



This year's survey saw another excellent response, continuing to justify the switch to digital. There were 333 replies and although this falls short of the record number of returns over the past couple of years (354 in 2023 and then 398 in 2024), those recent returns were heavily influenced by the cost-of-living crisis, the 4-day week plan and then a much higher than usual proposed increase last year. It represents a sample of almost 16% of our eligible tenancies (ie those not leased to councils or organisations such as Women's Aid).

### 2 Headline findings

- **74%** are happy with the services they receive from Melville (the same as last year). Dissatisfaction has risen slightly with **10%** (8% last year) unhappy with the overall service.
- **77%** of those who answered said they think Melville's current rent and service charges are affordable. This represents a fall from 82% last year.
- **62%** feel that their rent represents good value for money (down from 65% last year), with **11%** feeling it represents poor value. This is an increase from 9% last year and represents a trend over recent years (see section 4).
- Returns were pretty evenly split between those who receive some Government help (Universal Credit or housing benefit) to pay their rent (**51%**) and those that don't (**49%**).

37%	support increasing rent by 4.5%
8%	support increasing rent by 5%
7%	support increasing rent by 5.5%
48%	were opposed to any of the three options presented

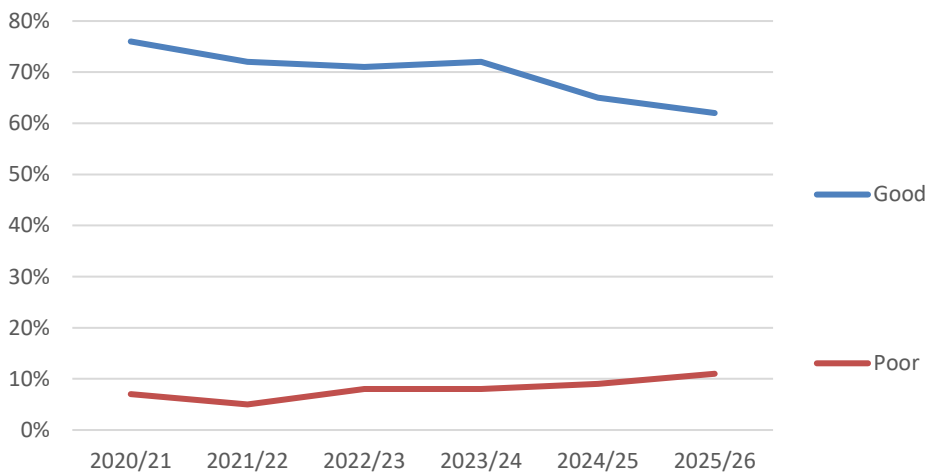
### 3 Breakdown of key findings

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	74%	79%	70%
Find rent/service charges affordable	77%	78%	77%
Rent represents good value	66%	70%	62%
In favour of 4.5% increase	37%	43%	30%
In favour of 5% increase	8%	11%	6%
In favour of 5.5% increase	7%	7%	6%
Against any of the options	48%	39%	57%

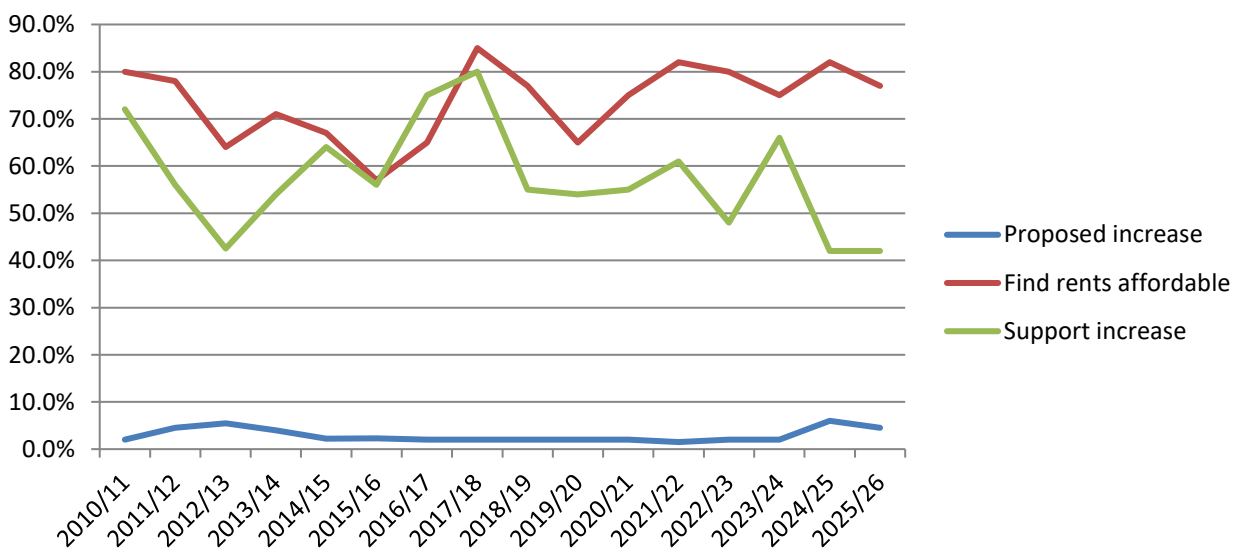
The main difference between the two groups is the support for the proposed increase. In the non-benefits group, support for any of the three options was very low, with the majority against any of the options. In the benefits group far more were in favour of the lowest increase and considerably fewer against any of the options presented.

### 4 Value for money



We've been using the rent survey to ask about value-for-money since 2020. While value-for-money is a question of perception there is a clear trend developing with a significant fall over the past 6 years. 76% of those responding in 2020 said their rent represented good value for money while 7% said it was poor. This year those figures are 62% and 11%.

### 5 Comparison with previous years



This chart illustrates how this year's main findings compare to those in previous years. Support for any of the increase options remains low while perceived affordability has dipped. At almost 16% of the tenant population, this year's 333 replies provides a robust cross section of opinions however as ever we are dealing with a limited, and self-selecting, sample.

## 6 Comments and recurring themes

Surveys like this are an excellent opportunity to tease out wider issues affecting our customers and as well as very good quantitative data we also received more than 100 individual comments on a range of topics, not just rents. A selection are included here and, where appropriate, we have replied to investigate issues raised and to offer help and support.

We can group comments into overall themes to look for patterns. Significant and repeated issues raised were:

1. Estate management and neighbour problems. These was the most commonly raised issues.
2. Complaints about the overall quality of homes and questioning how/where rent money is spent.
3. Issues with repairs and planned maintenance. It should, however, be noted that dissatisfaction with the repairs service is down significantly since the switch to R3.
4. Ongoing issues with energy efficiency in homes and several requests for:
  - o New windows
  - o Solar panels
  - o Boiler replacements
  - o Better insulation
5. Issues with damp and mould.
6. Queries over service charges, what they pay for and how they are justified.

1	This is a waste of time. Don't think Melville take tenants point of view where rent increase is concerned. You just put them up anyway. I'm sorry if this sounds cheeky it's not meant to just my point of view.
2	Every year the same survey which I always say no to rent rises and know I'm not alone and every year they increase so why bother asking just to do it anyway. Just a tick box Melville survey to cover their backs.
3	None of the figures mentioned here reflect the figures that were mooted at the last rep meeting. If memory serves, 3% was bandied about. Even the lowest figure mentioned here is almost twice the current rate of inflation.
4	You cannot be serious about such a big rent increase again in 2025, given the HUGE raise imposed this year!
5	Except from the odd repair I have had nothing done to my property to warrant an increase in rent. Melville has done nothing in 13 years to improve my property so why should I pay any increase in rent.
6	Rents are going to continue to increase no matter what tenants say, we didn't even get a break during Covid, the cost of living crises was also not taken into consideration the rent just continues to rise. It does not reflect the service.
7	Rent goes up every year but our wages don't.
8	Can't afford the rent if I was to work on my own.
9	I am happy with my rent that I am paying just now, I may struggle with a significant increase as I have had to start from scratch again following a 24 yr abusive relationship, so sadly, for now, money is extremely tight.
10	If on full UC you should be exempt from choosing the rent increase. If an individual isn't seeing the money coming out of their own pocket it would be natural to pick the highest increase giving the best service. Also, whilst it's understandable rents have to increase to a point, last year was approx 7% and if this years is a minimum 4.5% that's 11.5% in a short time frame when some of us haven't had a wage increase in several years.
11	I consider the proposed rise in rent excessive when I get nothing back in return.
12	Think the rent is pretty high compared to other council/ housing associations. Houses are very cheap in the way they are built.

13	I support increases which help create more available homes and improve the quality of homes. However, I've been a tenant for 6 years, in what I would describe as a lower quality home, and I haven't had any improvements made at all. It appears any investment programmes are geared towards certain areas only. It would be interesting to understand and have sight of what improvement or investments are actually planned, otherwise it would appear the increase of money I pay is being directed to areas which have no benefit to me.
14	Please don't put the rent up - life is already so difficult to afford.
15	I stay on my own. I work 40+ hours a week. I am starting to find it harder and harder to pay these increases. If the rent goes up anymore then i will have to consider giving up my flat. I think it's a joke every year the payments go up. All you are doing is making it harder for hard working people. The quality of housing isn't good enough to keep demanding more and more money.
16	You don't do anything. Last year's increase came with the statement that it was partly due to improvements that you were going to do through the year. To date you haven't done anything in my area.
17	Your rent prices are substantially higher than the local council, even though you are the biggest social housing landlord. Having been on sick pay, losing my job and UC money worries are at all time high for me.
18	Service would probably be better if your staff worked a full working week like everyone else.
19	My friend's mortgage is cheaper than my rent! There's been an increase every year since I've moved in but no wage increase. So not only will we have a rent increase we will also have a council tax increase.
20	Try keeping the rents at same price for few years. I'm working but if I become unable to work would have to rely on benefits to pay my rent so would not like to be in that position. Many of us are struggling at the moment with the cost of living.
21	Housing officers are amazing and rent is great value for money.
22	Sorry the lowest % of rent increase is higher than the % I got as a wage rise. Which means again by the time you and the council take their cut off my wages I'll have less than last year to live on. There is going to be a time when paying for the rent is going to get that high it's going to have people choosing between rent or food and heating.
23	I think the rent with Melville housing is excellent value for money, never had any problems with getting any repairs and find the Melville housing staff very helpful.
24	Rents should stay static in South Lanarkshire, we don't require new kitchens/bathrooms, heating is too expensive to run especially for pensioners like myself, to put the rents up monthly you're talking an extra £20pm. Get a meeting held in Forth for tenants and not Dalkeith or better still come and speak to us personally, my door is always open.
25	Just wondered why you MUST increase rent every year is it just so staff can have a wage rise.
26	With the cost of living ever increasing it is getting harder to survive.
27	I really think Melville housing is amazing compared to council.
28	Rent should remain fixed as everything is far too expensive and it's spiralling out of control.
29	I think it's a difficult time to be increasing rents with the cost of living still very high and the pending increase of the energy price cap. The current rent is reasonable for the house i reside in but the cost of heating this house with windows that are well out of date, terrible insulation and the issues of metal framed houses means that I have to have the heating on all day as it will be cold again not long after turning it off. Melville do give a good service when things need repaired but more needs to be done to bring houses up to current building standards.
30	I would not mind paying more if my house was getting work done fairly.
31	Given the current cost of living crisis putting the rent up again is taking food of the table for kids!! I can already barely afford to feed my daughter for the month.
32	No, every year it increases. The amount of those on benefits and have rent paid out weighs the full rent paying tenant.