



Rent Setting Consultation Report of Findings

January 2020

“The Tenants Information Service is the leading organisation in Scotland promoting and inspiring innovative tenant participation practice. We achieve this by providing independent advice, support and training for tenants and landlords”.



1. Introduction

The Tenants Information Service (**TIS**) were appointed by Whiteinch & Scotstoun Housing Association (**the Association**) to provide an independent consultation service, supporting tenants to share their views on the Association's proposed options for the 2020/21 rent levels to be charged from April 2020.

This report provides details of the consultation process that took place, and a summary of the consultation outcomes.

2. Scope of the consultation

The consultation took place throughout January 2020 and was structured to provide all residents, a variety of ways to participate, including:

» **Newsletter & Survey**

The Association circulated a special version of the 'News Action' newsletter dedicated to the rent consultation process to all of the 1271 properties that were occupied at that time of posting. The briefing provided details of how the Association spends its rental income, what improvements future income will pay for, what a rent increase might look like at proposed levels and where residents can go for help if they are worried about their income.

The newsletter included a short survey, designed to give residents the opportunity to select which of **three** options they would like to see adopted for 2020/21 and provide any extra comments about the rent setting process.

Residents were also invited to provide their details if they would like to be involved in a rent setting focus group that would work throughout the year ahead to consider service priorities and value for money and help shape the rent level options for future years.

Tenants were provided with a FREEPOST envelope to return the complete surveys.

» **Door-Knocking Exercise**

A sample of addresses was drawn from each of the 4 estate management areas. For each area approximately 60 addresses were identified at random, with a split in property size designed to reflect the composition of the stock in each area:

- 1 beds – 50% of sample
- 2 beds – 33% of sample
- 3 beds – 17% of sample

Each 2 hour session was organised to take place at different times of the day. Across the 4 areas, a total of 38 households answered, of these 18 individuals completed surveys, a further 2 advised they had already completed and returned via FREEPOST and 6 requested a copy of the survey and newsletter in order that they might read over and respond at a later date.

» **Telephone sessions**

The TIS Freephone number was provided, and residents were invited to get in touch with TIS staff to discuss the option in more detail, and share their views and opinions.

3. Consultation Feedback

In total 68 residents responded to the consultation, either by post, telephone or via the door-knocking exercise. This is a response rate of around 5%. The responses have been analysed and the findings are detailed here:

Q1: Which option do you think the Committee should approve for the annual rent increase?

60 respondents (88%) selected one of the 3 options included in the consultation. These respondents have been included in Figure 1 below:

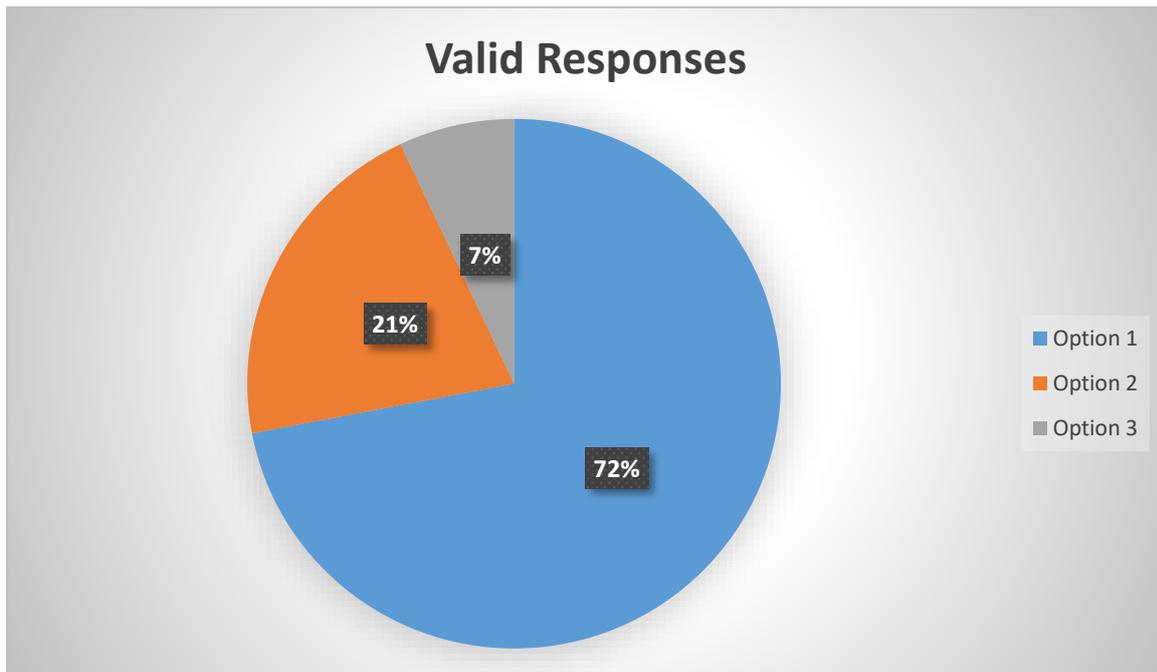


Figure 1

- » 72% of respondents selected option one – 2.8% increase
- » 21% of respondents selected option two – 3.1% increase.
- » 7% of respondents selected option three – 3.7% increase.

However, a proportion of respondents (12%) didn't select any of the three options that were set out in the survey. Instead, they took the opportunity to advise the association that they would like no rent increase to be applied.

These respondents have been included in Figure 2 below:

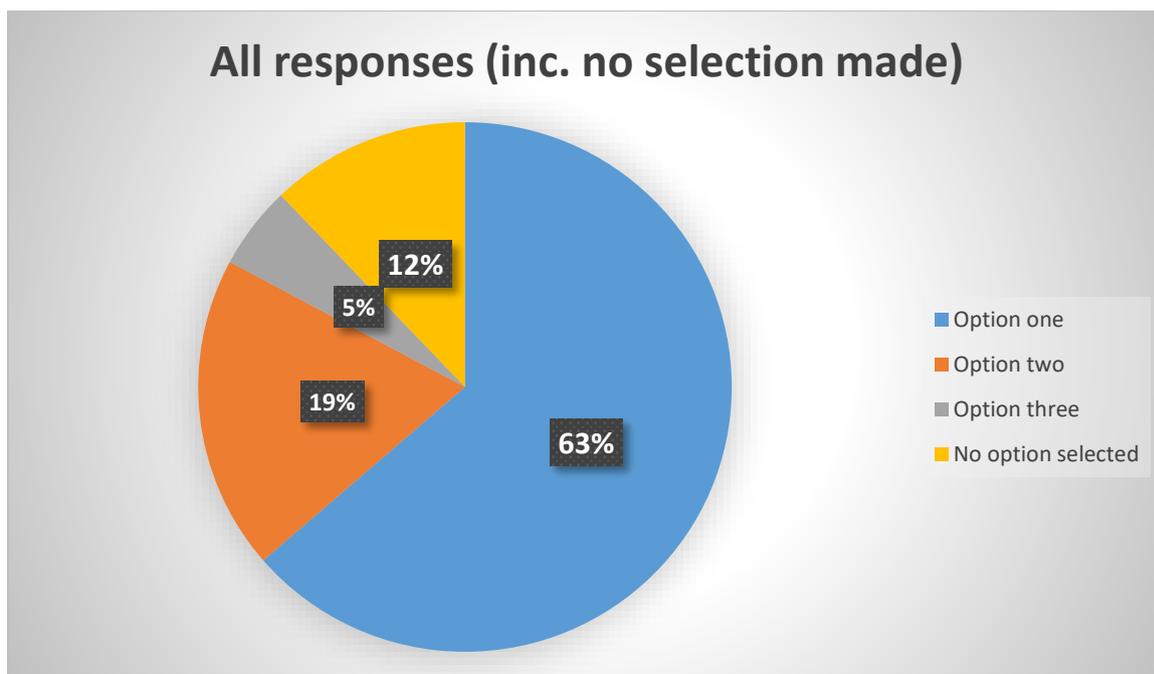


Figure 2

- » 63% of **all** survey respondents selected option one – 2.8% increase
- » 19% of **all** survey respondents selected option two – 3.1% increase.
- » 12% of **all** survey respondents did not select any of the options detailed.
- » 5% of **all** survey respondents selected option three – 3.7% increase.

Q2: Do you have any comments about the option you have selected?

33 respondents commented on the option that they had selected. The full responses are set out in Appendix 1.

Analysis of the comments received identified a number of themes, or key issues, that were identified by a number of respondents. Most prevalent were concerns about the impact of increased rents on people with or stagnant incomes, and dissatisfaction with the state of the estates.

The comments recorded at Q2 varied according to the response given at Q1 and these have been further reviewed and are detailed here:

No option selected:

The 8 respondents who chose not to select one of the options took the opportunity in the comments section to clarify that they did not support any rent increase at all. The reasons given are split fairly evenly across 3 themes:

- Falling or stagnant income & wages and concerns about the wider economy
- Dissatisfaction with the standard of accommodation and other services
- Belief that the current rent is too high

Options one selected:

18 of the respondents who selected option one took the opportunity to explain their selection further. Most of these respondents advised that while they were selecting the lowest option they had concerns about the impact of an increase and would select a freeze if this were an option.

Option two selected:

Those who commented about their support of option two indicated that they felt the middle option would be appropriate if it meant improvement works scheduled for their property were carried out faster.

Option three selected:

Comments made by one of the respondents selecting the 3.7% option suggested that they would support an increase that supports the organisation's future plans and delivers improvements to properties.

Q3: Would you like to be involved in a rent setting focus group to help shape our priorities and deliver value for money for all tenants?

No respondents indicated that they would like to be involved at this time.

5. Consultation Outcomes

1. A rental increase of 2.8% for 2020/21 is the option supported by a large majority of respondents to the survey (72% of those who selected one of the options identified and 63% of **all** respondents).
2. 24% of **all** respondents indicated support for an increase beyond the lowest option.
3. A proportion of those who responded (12%) took the opportunity to request that no increase be applied at all.
4. Residents have identified concerns about their incomes and increasing costs and how rent increases will affect their income.
5. The issue of estate appearance and tidiness was raised by a number of residents, with rubbish and fly-tipping identified as a concern in some areas. The association should continue to work with tenants and other agencies to tackle these issues.
6. Issues around rent affordability were identified by a number of respondents, and the Association should continue to strengthen its evidence and understanding of local incomes and levels of affordable rent in order that it is well placed to respond to these issues.
7. Those who support a higher increase acknowledge that increased rental income is needed to maintain/improve the current level of service.
8. Some issues around the current standard of accommodation have been reported, particularly by those respondents who requested no increase or supported option one.

Appendix one: All comments recorded at Q2

Becoming increasingly difficult to afford rent on p/t wages and services are not being delivered. There's nowhere to put bikes - told not to put things on landing
services ok
Windows need renovated
They keep putting it up
I would prefer no increase - no thought about the impact on non-benefit recipients
Opt for middle one if it means more services
Don't know how to go about this otherwise everything's fine.
Rent is getting beyond control for families that are on the poverty line!
As it is the lowest and safest level this would be my choice
I really don't think there should be any increase, I can't see what improvements have been made in the 3 years I've been living in Whiteinch - what does the money go on? My gable end flat is freezing and the windows let draughts in. The street mess with the garages hoarding tyres and cars everywhere that I can't always get parked on the road. The backs are a disaster with rubbish lying everywhere when the bin men don't collect - with is a regular occurrence. The close is grubby looking and needs painted. The front entrance door doesn't always close. Do you send staff round the area to check it out?
Although struggling financially I understand the rent increase, I've noticed properties are getting new showers installed and I am begging for my flat to be considered. I've got to take two baths a day which is not helping my energy bills and cannot afford to install one myself.
None off the above our rent is high enough. Our bins never get emptied our blue bines have not been emptied for about 3 months our street Earl St is like a slum they bring rubbish out on a Tuesday and it's still there the next week. I'm embarrassed to bring people or friends to my house because of the state of the Street. As for spending money on new bathrooms I've lived here for 26 years and my bathroom is a mess so were the housing are spending money it's not on the old houses. It's all on the new houses. The rent is a joke for a 2 bedroom I'm paying nearly £450 month to tell you the truth the housing is a joke one off the highest paying rent and the street is a mess so are the back courts. These houses aren't even worth £300 month never mind £450 GHA are probably the best and cheaper. P.S Hope your company help with this. Thank You P.S The whole street feel the same and are starting a petition about these matters
They could not approve any of these rent increases as a lot of tenants are already in financial difficulties. The H/Association will have to cut staffing levels.
Last year I asked for option 4 which I added with zero % increase but my flat rent jumped! This year I'm looking for option 3 which is MINUS 3.7%. Please my flat rent is £393.45 and I assume it's going to be around £37.98 please.
1st - our wages do not rise each year, as much as our rent does. loose close tiles not repaired, damp on close ceiling not treated " after 7 months reported" back courts not kept up to standard considering the rent that we pay how? no increase
As someone who is waiting for improvements to be done in a my home I think this option will help the association to get these achieved more quickly
I think any increase is ok if we are getting more for our money such as a new bathroom as I think in this day and age we should all have showers
Would very much like it if the rent didn't increase one year
wish pensions went up also
I would be happy to option 3, if money could be spent on measures to prevent dumping of rubbish, furniture ect underneath my block. It would be good if these areas could be gated off after appropriate consultation etc.
Didn't have a lower option. Rents rise every year, would be great if rents stayed the same for a least one year.

Obviously most tenants will opt for the lowest rent increase, I never understand why we get asked this question as I feel it won't play a part in the decision that is made
NONE Don't agree with above options why not an option for freeze!!!
As someone with a disability and only working 2 days a week I am on a limited budget
Best option for future plans and up keep of properties
I think 2.8% or less should be the way forward. The association say they cannot recommend a rent freeze because this would mean planned programmes of work would be delayed. I have been told for the last 6 years that I am in line for a new bathroom and kitchen and I am still waiting. This is while the rents continue to increase each year. I therefore do not accept your reasons for rent increases and disagree with it.
Not an option for no Increase!!! Give your paying tenants a break Rent Freeze.
Stop allow people to sub - let your houses and create illegal sub-lets and HMC you won't? As long as get rent. Also your rent is getting very near to private sector rent. So you will likely only get DSS tenants not that you care Only Money
Chose option 1 Because the rent is far too high as it is
To be honest rent shouldn't be increased as it is already ridiculously high with service charges e.g. window cleaning, close cleaning. In my almost 10 years being here I have never seen a window cleaner. Also close cleaning (looks dirtier than it was to begin with) Close repair needing done for over 3 months already reported still not fixed and bin area a mess all the time because bins don't have lids
I think in today's climate (financial) there should be no increase therefore I have selected option 1
Yes, I just simply won't pay for a higher rent increase due to the on-going litter and fly tipping underneath my property, it's absolutely disgraceful
None of above! The rent is already too high!