

Note of meetings held 12th and 13th December 2023

Subject: Rent Increase tenant focus groups (HYBRID)

Venue: Aberdeen office

People present: Judith Sutherland – Director of Housing
Rebecca Davidson – Customer Service Manager
Samantha Hough – Customer Participation Officer
KH – tenant, Stonehaven
IT – tenant, Aberdeen
RB – tenant, Aberdeen

Background

The purpose of the meetings were to open conversations with tenants about the rent increase 2024. We wanted to discuss our planning and considerations when we embark on the annual process of setting our rents and proposing a rent increase.

Our agenda included:

- Budget reviewing and planning
- Affordability
- Financial help and benefit system

Discussion points

The following table covers the main points raised at the meeting.

Item discussed	Notes
Process for review – budget preparation	Discussion about how Langstane sets budgets and the use of industry specific tools to make sure rental charges are kept within affordability guidelines. Budget setting also considers maintenance and material costs, staffing, legal fees, and inflation levels. The highest spend was in property maintenance and compliance and from these tenants were informed of number of completed jobs in 2023 which include 76 kitchens, 125 boiler installations and 111 bathrooms.
Income and expenditure and affordability	Tenants attending were shown projections for income and expenditure. Tenants were also shown examples of what a proposed 5% (percentage was not confirmed at this point) would look like in real terms to provide a clearer guide on what a proposed increase would mean. Discussion with tenants about their concerns regarding inflation and an overview of what we know our peers are consulting with their tenants about in comparison to ours. From this JS explained that Langstane would be in the lower category of rent increases compared to our peers. JS also confirmed the date when our Board of Management was due to meet and decide upon this year's increase options and that we would be consulting with all Langstane tenants in January 2024. Also discussed was our Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy and how we use these guidelines to set rents based on the consumer price index (CPI), rent

	<p>matrix and current levels of inflation. Inflation is currently at 4.6%. JS also discussed the threshold for affordability and how the association works to make sure rent levels do not increase beyond 30% of tenants income.</p>
<p>Financial Help and the Benefit System</p>	<p>RD provided an update to the group regarding help and support available to tenants who are struggling. This includes referrals to our own Housing Support Service and our Tenant Welfare Advisor along with our continuing partnerships with Scarf, AberNecessities and C-fine. We still have some funds from the £61,000 we were awarded over a year ago to help our tenants tackle fuel poverty. The award is from the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund which is funded by the Scottish Government. We talked about the referral process and that all this extra help and support is to help our tenants during the ongoing cost of living crisis.</p>

Once the presentation was complete there was a discussion with tenants to answer a few general questions along with discussion about the Joseph Rowntree Report 2023 on poverty in the UK.