



Rent & Service Charge Increase 2020/21



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This year we had more respondents than ever to the Association's rent increase consultation and I want to thank everyone who took part - perhaps for the first time.

For us Board members, it means we have a real sense of how Association tenants are feeling and what's important to you. We want to deliver the best services we can while working with the budget available and being clear about what we can do.

Of 605 responses (14% of households) 325 people voted for the lower of the three rent increase options of 2.4%, that's 56% of respondents. Comments from many people said that this would be the most affordable option for them so, having listened to this feedback, the Board approved the 2.4% increase for 2020/21.

Choosing 2.4% means that we will continue to deliver the same level of service as last year. And that a £10m programme of kitchen, bathroom, window, door and heating replacements can go ahead along with environmental works already committed.

Choosing one of the two higher rent increases would have given us more income to expand the improvements programme and complete some works earlier than currently planned. However we must work within our budget and Board members are fully committed to providing you with value for money.

When asked to rank the services and issues important to you, you put a fast, responsive

repairs service at the top of the list. Feeling safe in the neighbourhood, a good local environment and dealing with anti-social behaviour are also very important to you.

I want to say a huge thank you to Association staff who took such a successful new approach to the rent consultation this year, nearly doubling the number of responses when compared to last year. They were very active in encouraging people to complete the survey during house and office meetings. They also held pop-up sessions in community centres. Persuading people to take time out of their day to complete a survey isn't always easy and Board members really appreciate how well this new approach has worked.

I hope it's a positive sign that we can get a lot more discussion going about Queens Cross and its future by getting out and about and talking about the issues that are important to you.

I look forward to having lots more conversations over the coming months.



Marilyn Clewes
Chair



Become a QC Volunteer

For some people volunteering is a chance to give something back or make a difference to the people around them. For others it's an opportunity to gain new skills or build on their experience and knowledge.

Whatever your reasons, we have lots of volunteering roles on offer.

Just get in touch and we'll tell you more.

0808 143 2002 or contactus@qcha.org.uk

What tenants told us about the rent increase proposal

- 325 people, (56%) told us that 2.4% should be applied.
- 128 people (22%) told us 2.9% should be applied.
- 130 people (22%) told us 3.4% should be applied

When asked about their choice, most tenants said affordability was the main reason they chose the lower rate. Tenants who chose a higher rate said they wanted improvements to their property and the local environment.

The services that are important to you

This year 605 tenants responded to the rent increase consultation – last year we had 361 responses. That’s a massive 244 more surveys returned than last year.

People were also asked to rank the services and issues that are important to them and these are listed in the table below.



Rank	Issue
1	A fast response repairs service when things go wrong
2	Security – lighting, doors and door entry system
3	Dealing effectively with neighbour problems and anti-social behaviour
4	Upgraded heating systems
5	New kitchens
6	New bathrooms
7	Improve fuel efficiency
8	Welcoming communal areas – doors and staircases
9	New windows
10	Pleasant local environment – gardens, paths
11	Advice and help with benefits, fuel costs, employment training

We received many comments from tenants

Some were very positive:-

- “I am happy in my home and it keeps the rent low”
- “I live in a 2 bedroom flat and consider an extra £12 per month good value for money (£3 a week)”

Others were quite critical:-

- “Absolutely not value for money in this property maybe yes if was maintained better”
- “Just find it difficult and very much struggling”

Year 4 of the rent restructure

In 2017 we started to restructure rents so that people in similar house types pay the same rent. The majority of rents are now at the right level. For the small number of rent accounts still affected, the Board have approved a 2 year extension to ensure that the outstanding rent accounts continue to be gradually adjusted to the correct level.

- If your **current rent is at the right level** for a property of its type and size your rent will only change by 2.4% - reflecting the annual increase.
- If the **current rent for your home is lower** than the new model rent level when the 2.4% increase is added, you will then have a further increase added to help align your rent to the new model level. The maximum that an individual tenant's rent will increase is £30 per month.
- If the **current rent for your home is higher** than the new model rent level when the 2.4% increase is added, you will then have a reduction in rent to help align your rent to the new model level. The maximum that an individual tenant's rent will decrease is £12 per month.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about your new rent level, please contact your Housing Officer (see our telephone number and email address below).

How we can help

If you are already receiving full housing benefit and your rent is increasing, your housing benefit will cover the increase.

If you are on Universal Credit, you must update your journal immediately to the new rent. Your Housing Officer will be in touch with you at the start of April.

If you would like to discuss the change to your rent, or would like help to check whether you will qualify for help with your rent, please call us on 0808 143 2002 or email contactus@qcha.org.uk

If you pay your own rent and your rent is increasing, you may now be entitled to benefit to help you pay your rent.

We have specialist advisors who can check your entitlement to housing benefit/ Universal Credit and other benefits.

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