

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the Coat of Arms of the City of Edinburgh. The crest includes a crown with four thistles, a shield divided into four quarters (top-left: a saltire, top-right: a stag's head, bottom-left: a ship, bottom-right: an eagle), and a motto scroll at the bottom with the text 'ANE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 4

Housing Revenue Account & Council House Rents 2024-25

Title: Housing Revenue Account & Council House Rents 2024-25

Meeting: Falkirk Council

Date: 31 January 2024

Submitted By: Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information to enable the rent charges for council house rent to be set for 2024-25.
- 1.2 The delivery of quality and affordable housing directly impacts on each of the Council's three priorities,
 - (i) supporting stronger and healthier communities
 - (ii) promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities
 - (iii) supporting a thriving economy and green transition
- 1.3 The Housing Investment Programme, also on this agenda, is based on the proposed rent increase and therefore must be considered when setting council house rent charges.

2. Recommendations

Council is asked to:

- 2.1 **Agree a rent increase of 5% for 2024-25 and the resultant rent charges as set out in Appendix 3.**
- 2.2 **Approve the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2024-25 as set out in Appendix 2,**

3. Climate Change Implications

- 3.1 The setting of rent directly affects the level of Housing Investment.
- 3.2 Improving energy efficiency in council houses will reduce carbon emissions as well as fuel costs for tenants. The Programme supports Local Heat and Energy Strategies and aims to reduce tenant's energy costs to help prevent and reduce fuel poverty.

- 3.3 The Programme includes projects that have a positive impact in reducing carbon emissions and these are included in the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

4. Background

- 4.1 Falkirk Council is landlord to approximately 16,200 tenancies. The cost of providing council housing must be self-financing from house rents and other income (in Falkirk Council this is called the Housing Revenue Account or HRA). There is a statutory requirement to review council house rents annually.
- 4.2 When considering the review of council house rents, it is important for Members to be aware that 30% of council tenants currently receive Housing Benefit. In addition, around 33% of tenants receive support with Housing Costs via Universal Credit. This means around 10,200 (63%) of our tenants, on the lowest household income, are fully protected from any rent increase.
- 4.3 Housing Benefit is in process of being phased out and replaced by Universal Credit, for those of working age. However, at present, it continues to be available for individuals who have reached pension age or reside in specified or temporary accommodation. Universal Credit is paid on a monthly basis and includes the claimant's housing expenses within their total Universal Credit award.
- 4.4 Tenants in financial hardship are offered assistance by their Housing Officer, Advice and Support Hub staff, and ultimately Welfare Benefits and Debt Advice Teams. This helps them maximise their income and address any debt or budgeting issues.

5. Performance

- 5.1 Falkirk Council's average rent for 2023-24 stands at £74.92 per week.
- 5.2 Appendix 1 illustrates a breakdown of what tenants pay for. 70% of rental is directed to repay borrowing costs and day to day maintenance and improvements. The remainder pays for the costs of managing tenancies.
- 5.3 The Scottish Government will shortly publish comparative data for 2022-23 setting out the rent levels and expenditure for all Local Authorities. Provisional data shows that Falkirk Council had:
- The 6th lowest Council house rent.
 - The 7th highest level of repairs and improvement expenditure per house.
 - The 3rd lowest tenancy management costs.

6. Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)

- 6.1 The Housing Asset Management Plan sets out a strategic and planned approach to maintaining and improving our housing stock. The Plan ensures that the Council can deliver the investment programme and respond to new legislative requirements introduced over the lifetime of the plan.
- 6.2 Capital and revenue funding is aligned with future investment requirements to ensure that the Council's housing stock continues to meet the required standards. This is key to the development of the Housing Investment Programme and corresponding revenue budget decision-making.
- 6.3 During 2024-25 it is estimated that £53m is required to maintain and improve the housing stock and associated estates. This investment covers both internal and external work to the housing stock, along with environmental improvements to estates and other housing assets, including garage sites and lockups.

7. Housing Revenue Account

- 7.1 The main movements in the proposed Budget are summarised below: -

- (i) Employee Expenses (+£0.677m)
Employee expenses are expected to increase by £0.677m (6.9%) due to the full year effect of the 2023-24 pay award, pay inflation, offset by reduced employers' pension contributions, due to the recent valuation of the pension fund.
- (ii) Property Expenses (+£1,168m)
Property costs are set to increase by £1.168m (4.1%) mainly due to the full year effect of the pay award for Building Maintenance staff and inflation. This is a very volatile area nationally with inflation and labour shortages having a significant impact on the cost of maintenance work.
- (iii) Supplies & Services (+£0.827m)
The increase of £0.827m reflects an increase in the base budget for the loss of rental income from void properties.
- (iv) Loans Charges (+£3.415m)
The Investment Programme requires borrowed capital funding resulting in loan charges called Capital Charges. The high level of investment in the Programme coupled with high interest rates is leading to a projected increase in capital charges of £3.4m.
- (v) Council House Rents (-£3.969m)
The number of houses available for letting is also a significant factor in determining rent levels. Provision for additional houses from new build (117) and buy-backs (80) has been included in the estimated stock figures for 2024-25 and future years. A 5% rent increase will increase gross rental income by £3.97m

- 7.2 The Housing Revenue Account provides funding of £0.95m per annum to the Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board for aids and adaptations to the housing stock.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, requires to consult with tenants on changes in rent. Compliance with consultation requirements is monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator.
- 8.2 Consultation with tenants for rent level setting was carried out between August – September 2023 and offered 3 options for rent increase, based on the Housing Investment Programme presented to Council on 23rd February 2023.
- 8.3 Options included, 4%, 4.5% or 5% increase. Each option provided information on the planned housing investment for each rent rise. However due to rising costs and interest rates a 5% increase is now necessary to achieve the required level of investment to maintain housing stock to the required standard and meet the affordable housing supply target.
- 8.4 Over the last 3 years rent increased by 2% each year, well below inflation over the same period. As a result, income has fallen behind the cost of delivering the service. While the indication is that a minimum of a 5% increase is required in the coming years it may be that the 2025-26 increase has to exceed this to ensure rental income covers the revenue, and capital borrowing, costs.
- 8.5 If a 5% increase is applied in 2024-25 the cumulative rent increase over 4 years (2021-22 to 2024-25) will be 10.3% below cumulative inflation over the same period. The September Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases are the basis of increases applied to working age state benefits.

Year	Inflation	Rent increase applied	Cumulative Inflation	Cumulative Rent increase	Difference
2021-22	0.50%	2.00%	0.50%	2.00%	1.50%
2022-23	3.10%	2.00%	3.62%	4.04%	0.42%
2023-24	10.10%	2.00%	14.08%	6.12%	-7.96%
2024-25	6.70%	5.00%	21.72%	11.43%	-10.30%

Inflation based on Consumer price Index as at the September before each rent increase.

- 8.6 We will consult for 2025-26 rent level setting during the second half of 2024. Consultations will be issued by post and online to all tenants and Housing Services will also facilitate engagement with easy to miss groups to ensure that the consultation is inclusive for all.
- 8.7 We expect that, as a minimum, an increase of 5%, or 3% above inflation (whichever is higher), will be required in 2025-26. This will be discussed as part of our consultation.

- 8.8 In addition to the consultation for the rent level setting, the findings from other consultation exercises, such as the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, inform the Programme. This makes sure we are improving what matters to tenants, as well as delivering the statutory housing requirements.

9. Rent Affordability and Arrears

- 9.1 The affordability of rent, balanced with the need for investment in new and existing homes, is critically important. The Scottish Housing Regulator also requires us to consider affordability when setting rents.
- 9.2 Housing Services have applied the Rent Affordability Tool provided by Housemark Scotland to assess affordability for tenants. This tool is updated annually with new income and rent data. Findings from the Rent Affordability Tool shows that the 5% increase for rent charges during 2024-25 is affordable for tenants.
- 9.3 Rent arrears continue to be higher than historical levels. This is a national concern and is consistent with the experience in other local authorities. The financial challenges faced by some tenants due to rising living costs and poverty has also impacted on rental income.
- 9.4 To support tenants and reduce rent arrears we introduced a “Matched Payment Scheme” in July 2023 with a budget allocation of £250,000. This scheme remains in place and will be subject to further review.
- 9.5 Tenants provided with hot water and heating by the Combined Heat and Power system are currently charged £527.69 a year for a 1-bedroom property and £637.38 a year for a 2-bedroom property. This increases by the December Consumer Price Index inflationary measure, which, at time of writing, is expected to be between 4 and 5%.

10. Rent Charges Options

- 10.1 As the Housing Revenue Account must be self-financing from rents, the financial implications of each different rent option must be met from changes in expenditure and/or utilisation of reserves.
- 10.2 In considering utilisation of reserves, we must consider how and when these are used, as they can only be used once. Use of reserves must also comply with the Council’s reserves policy. The level of reserves is projected to be £6.7m by 31 March 2024. A reserve balance of c£5m-£6m is considered to be prudent to meet future revenue and capital investment requirements.
- 10.3 Based on current cost and income projections, we will use £1.85m from reserves in 2024-25. This leaves a projected balance of £4.95m, which is just below the recommended threshold.

- 10.4 The following table summarises the impacts of different rent options for 2024-25.

	Increase 4.0%	Increase 4.5%	Increase 5.0%
Average Weekly Rent Increase	£3.00	£3.37	£3.75
Average Weekly Rent	£77.92	£78.29	£78.67
Rental Income Impact	+£3,329,000	+£3,645,000	+£3,969,000

- 10.5 The rent consultation indicated that tenants preferred option was a 4% increase in 2024-25. Of the 762 responses to the preferred rent increase question 66% selected the lowest increase (4%), 20% selected the middle option (4.5%) and 14% selected the highest increase (5%) that is proposed.
- 10.6 Appendix 3 outlines the house rental charges by house size, based on each rent increase option. In considering the rent increase options for houses, consideration is also required in relation to non-housing rental charges i.e.: lock-up rent charges; garage sites and Castings Hostel rents.

11. Implications

Financial

- 11.1 Expenditure on the draft Housing Revenue Account for 2024-25 is estimated to be c£76.6m, based on maintaining housing investment levels to ensure our stock meets housing standards and delivers a programme of additional affordable homes to help meet demand. A summary of the Housing Revenue Account is shown at Appendix 2.
- 11.2 A range of rent increase options are set out in section 10.4 above.

Resources

- 11.3 The Housing Revenue Account budget sets out the estimated resources required to ensure that the Council continues to invest in its housing stock and deliver quality services to our tenants.

Legal

- 11.4 No legal implications are anticipated.

Risk

- 11.5 Some tenants continue to experience financial challenges and poverty. This may impact their ability to pay their rent and may reduce our rental income. Access to additional advice and support has been put in place to assist affected tenants.
- 11.6 Ongoing uncertainty in relation to rates of inflation and interest rates add further risk.

Equalities

- 11.7 A full Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment has been completed with no equality implications identified. The rent setting exercise for 2024-25 is a single year increase proposed after wide consultation. Section 10 of this report provides commentary on the affordability assessment of the 2024-25 rent increase. The approach for the 2025-26 consultation exercise is in the planning stages.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 11.8 There are no sustainability or environmental implications anticipated. However, the amount of rental income that the Council receives directly impacts on the funding available to invest in the Programme. The projects in the Programme will impact positively on the Council's carbon footprint and therefore any reduction in investment could in turn have a negative impact.
- 11.9 The Council's 50-year Housing Revenue Account model ensures that recommendations to Members are sustainable in the context of medium and long term financial planning. A balance must be struck between sustainability for the Council and affordability of tenancies.

12. Conclusions

- 12.1 Increasing rents is the only way Falkirk Council, as landlord, can continue to have a sustainable investment programme to maintain and improve its housing stock. This approach is consistent with that taken by other Local Authorities.
- 12.2 The proposed 5% increase in rent will allow our investment programme to continue whilst prioritising affordability for tenants. We recognise that it is likely an increase of more than 5% will be required in future years.

Director of Transformation, Communities & Corporate Services

Authors – Kenny Gillespie, Head of Housing & Communities,
kenny.gillespie@falkirk.gov.uk
Paul Ferguson, Snr Service Manager – Housing
paul.ferguson@falkirk.gov.uk
Danny Cairney, Senior Corporate Finance Manager,
danny.cairney@falkirk.gov.uk

Date: 11 January 2024

Appendices

1. What Tenants Pay For – 2023-24 Revenue Budget Analysis
2. 2024-25 Housing Revenue Account
3. 2024-25 Rent Level Options
4. Full EPIA

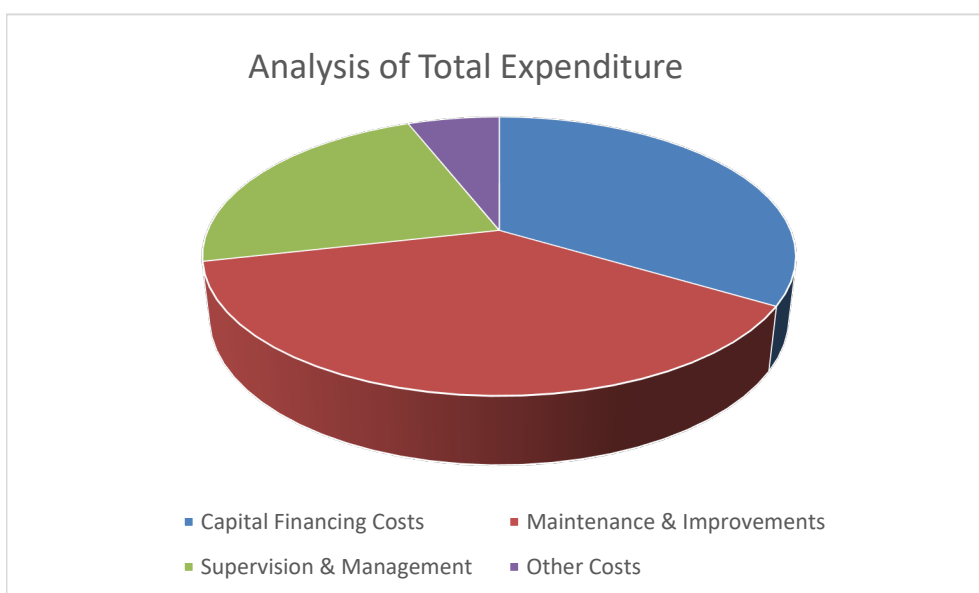
List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

None

WHAT TENANT PAYS FOR
2023/24 REVENUE BUDGET

	£ per week	%
Capital Financing Costs	26.74	34
Maintenance and Improvements	30.23	38
Supervision and Management	18.01	23
Other Costs	4.75	6
Total Expenditure	<u>79.73</u>	<u>100</u>
 <u>Less :</u> Income	 4.81	
Average Weekly Rent	<u>74.92</u>	



Falkirk Council

Housing Revenue Account Budget 2024/25

	2023/24	2024/25
	£000	£000
Employee Expenses	9,781	10,458
Property Expenses	28,339	29,507
Transport Expenses	33	33
Supplies & Services	4,606	5,433
Third Party Payments	2,438	2,438
Support Services	4,908	4,908
Loans Charges	22,880	26,295
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	72,985	79,072
Council House Rents	64,103	68,072
Other Income	9,002	9,217
Use of Reserves	(120)	1,783
TOTAL INCOME	72,985	79,072
Estimated Housing Stock	16,454	16,641
Annual Rent Increase	76.24	182.00
Weekly Rent Increase (£)	1.47	3.50
Weekly Rent Increase (%)	2.0%	5.0%
Weekly Rent	£74.92	£78.67
HRA Reserves		
Opening Balance	6,617	6,737
Surplus/(Deficit) above	120	(1,783)
Closing Reserve Balance	6,737	4,954

RENT CHARGES 2024/25

CURRENT AVERAGE RENT		£74.92	Increase
			5.00%
AVERAGE WEEKLY INCREASE			£3.75
MAXIMUM INCREASE			£6.00
WEEKLY RENT			
1 BEDROOM			£65.01
2 BEDROOMS			£77.32
3 BEDROOMS			£87.32
4 BEDROOMS +			£99.96
AVERAGE			£78.67
NOTE:			
Rent is charged over 24 fortnights and no rent will be payable during the following periods:			
	FROM		TO
Rent Weeks 13 and 14	24th June 2024		7th July 2024
Rent Weeks 39 and 40	23rd December 2024		5th January 2025

OTHER RENTAL CHARGES	CURRENT	Increase
		5.00%
Lock-Up Garages (average, weekly)	£7.41	£7.78
Garage Sites (fixed, annually)	£93.32	£97.99
Castings Hostel (fixed, daily)	£27.38	£28.75

Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment 00639 (Version 1)

SECTION ONE: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Service & Division:	Corporate & Housing Services Housing & Communities	Lead Officer Name:	Paul Ferguson
		Team:	Revenues and Benefits
		Tel:	01324 506983
		Email:	paul.ferguson@falkirk.gov.uk
Proposal:	Annual HRA Revenue Budget - Rent setting	Reference No:	

What is the Proposal?	Budget & Other Financial Decision	Policy (New or Change)	HR Policy & Practice	Change to Service Delivery / Service Design
	Yes	No	No	No

Who does the Proposal affect?	Service Users	Members of the Public	Employees	Job Applicants
	Yes	Yes	No	No

Other, please specify:	Impacts on tenants of council (HRA) homes
-------------------------------	---

Identify the main aims and projected outcome of this proposal (please add date of each update):

31/01/2024	Enable balanced HRA Revenue budget to be agreed by members
04/03/2024	All tenants to be formally notified of the increase at least 28 days before increase applied
01/04/2024	Increase to be applied to all rent accounts

SECTION TWO: FINANCIAL INFORMATION

For budget changes ONLY please include information below:			Benchmark, e.g. Scottish Average
Current spend on this service (£'0000s)	Total:	72,985,000	
Reduction to this service budget (£'0000s)	Per Annum:		
Increase to this service budget (£'000s)	Per Annum:	79,072,000	
If this is a change to a charge or concession please complete.	Current Annual Income Total:	64,103,000	
	Expected Annual Income Total:	68,072	
If this is a budget decision, when will the saving be achieved?	Start Date:	01/04/2024	
	End Date (if any):		

SECTION THREE: EVIDENCE

Please include any evidence or relevant information that has influenced the decisions contained in this EPIA. (This could include demographic profiles; audits; research; health needs assessments; national guidance or legislative requirements and how this relates to the protected characteristic groups.)

A - Quantitative Evidence

This is evidence which is numerical and should include the number people who use the service and the number of people from the protected characteristic groups who might be affected by changes to the service.

Tenant Profile Information

Falkirk Council has around 16,200 homes occupied by secure tenants. All residents living within the home will benefit from the Housing Investment Programme, which is funded by Housing Rental income, within the life cycle of improvements.

Our equalities data on the protected characteristics of our tenants is extremely limited. Work is ongoing to improve that during 2024/25 via Housing Online. We hold significant data on those who are actively seeking Housing but these are not current tenants nor impacted by the proposed rent increase.

Who is protected?

While we have around 16,200 mainstream tenancies at present (allowing for Voids and properties used by Housing needs) the majority are protected from any rent increase as follows:

- 4,583 (30%) are in receipt of Housing Benefit. These are predominantly pension age tenants but includes those working age tenants who have been on legacy benefits for a significant period (over 6 years) and have not moved to Universal Credit. Amongst working age this is predominantly those with disability.
- 1,720 (10.6%) are in receipt of Discretionary Housing Payment. These are working age tenants who receive Universal Credit but 'under-occupy' their home
- 3,361 (22.4%) do not receive Housing Benefit or Discretionary Housing Payment but do receive Universal Credit, including Housing Costs.
- **This means that 10,204 (63%) tenants are protected from any increase**

B - Qualitative Evidence

This is data which describes the effect or impact of a change on a group of people, e.g. some information provided as part of performance reporting.

Social - case studies; personal / group feedback / other

The Housing Investment Programme has been developed to include feedback from Tenants from the "Tenant Satisfaction" survey which asked what was important to them. Responses should they valued the window and door replacement programme and a budget of £15m has been assigned to this programme of works.

More recently extensive consultation took place with for the Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 during 2022-23. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy setting out strategic priorities and plans for the delivery of housing related services. The Equality Act 2010 also requires the involvement, consultation, and engagement with as wide a range of residents as possible'.

Consultation included an online survey which returned 937 responses 195 from private sector surveys (85 private tenants survey), 81 (landlord and letting agents survey) and 29 (Scheme of Assistance-Elderly and Disabled services). The general survey had 742 responses.

A Citizen Space online questionnaire was created with the assistance of the Editorial Panel, a group consisting of volunteers to gain the views and feedback from local people on Housing and Housing Services in Falkirk. The format consisted of questions covering five topics including Improving Neighbourhoods, Homelessness, Housing and Support for vulnerable people, Improving Housing Conditions and Reducing energy costs and climate change. Each section also provided space for comments to be added. The survey also asked further questions seeking opinions on Housing Issues in Falkirk and Digital inclusion.

The questionnaire was made available on Falkirk Council's website and publicised via social media and other distribution networks including Local News Outlet, Registered Tenants Organisations, Community Learning & Development, Social Work, Education, Forth Valley College, People's Panel consultation list and further existing consultation registers.

Promotional material was sent to local community centres and food pantries. The survey was also made available in hardcopy format to these groups with pre-paid envelopes attached for ease of return. The survey was available for translation if required.

"Focus Group" sessions were held with "quiet voice" members of the community. This included sessions with representatives [from](#) (add link survey findings)

- Syrianian Resettlement Programme
- Homeless Assessment Centre (Castings) residents
- Older People Centres
- Community Cafe and Food Pantry
- Young People
- Young Parents
- Community Day Care Centres
- Military Matters (army veterans)

The views, values and opinions of attendees were reflected in the Local Housing Strategy which underpins the Housing Investment Programme.

As part of our ongoing commitment to Tenant Participation and Engagement Falkirk Council is supported by the How Your Money is Spent group. This is a tenant led group and they are involved in the development of the Housing Investment Programme. No equalities data is currently available regarding the representatives of this group. This will be collected during 2021.

Maintaining investment, funded by increased rental charge, aligns with the feedback received through engagement. For those not protected from the increase, outlined in section 3A, the average increase will be £3.75 pw.

Best Judgement:	
Has best judgement been used in place of data/research/evidence?	No
Who provided the best judgement and what was this based on?	
What gaps in data / information were identified?	
Is further research necessary?	No
If NO, please state why.	Rent increases are applied annually and the process is well established for doing so - with appropriate protection/mitigation in place for those households struggling financially

SECTION FOUR: ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with individuals or organisations affected by the policy or proposal must take place

Has the proposal / policy / project been subject to engagement or consultation with service users taking into account their protected characteristics and socio-economic status?	Yes	
If YES, please state who was engagement with.	A rent consultation exercise was carried out in advance of preparing the budget. Projects and priorities have been discussed with tenants on the Housing Asset Management Group. Engagement with tenants in the off-gas areas has determining the programme for alternative heating. Tenants Satisfaction survey findings and Local Housing Strategy consultation findings as detailed in Section 4.	
If NO engagement has been conducted, please state why.		
How was the engagement carried out?		What were the results from the engagement? Please list...
Focus Group	Yes	Tenant on the Housing Asset Management Group report back to the Tenants Forum on current progress and planned investment in the councils housing stock. Local Housing Strategy consultation findings from focus groups detailed in Section 3.
Survey	Yes	Consultation on rent increase issued to all tenants in August 2023
Display / Exhibitions	No	
User Panels	No	
Public Event	No	
Other: please specify		
Has the proposal / policy/ project been reviewed / changed as a result of the engagement?	Yes	
Have the results of the engagement been fed back to the consultees?	Yes	
Is further engagement recommended?	No	

SECTION FIVE: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

Equality Protected Characteristics: What will the impact of implementing this proposal be on people who share characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 or are likely to be affected by the proposal / policy / project? This section allows you to consider other impacts, e.g. poverty, health inequalities, community justice, carers etc.

Protected Characteristic	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide evidence of the impact on this protected characteristic.
Age		✓		Specific investment in new social housing projects are aimed at improving housing for older people. Younger people with complex care needs will be better catered for through partnership working to develop suitable property types and provision. Options being considered as part of the Local Housing Strategy include Core and Cluster and Closer to Home
Disability		✓		5% of council new build home will be fully wheelchair accessible. New social housing projects are designed to meet the Housing for Varying Needs design standards. The quality of their homes will be improved. Additional provision is made for lifts, electric scooter charges and other design factors that aid people with a physical disability.
Sex	✓			The rent increase will impact all tenants equally (excluding those protected financially)
Ethnicity	✓			The rent increase will impact all tenants equally (excluding those protected financially)
Religion / Belief / non-Belief	✓			The rent increase will impact all tenants equally (excluding those protected financially)
Sexual Orientation	✓			The rent increase will impact all tenants equally (excluding those protected financially)
Transgender	✓			The rent increase will impact all tenants equally (excluding those protected financially)
Pregnancy / Maternity	✓			The rent increase will impact all tenants equally (excluding those protected financially)
Marriage / Civil Partnership	✓			The rent increase will impact all tenants equally (excluding those protected financially)

Public Sector Equality Duty: Scottish Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance quality of opportunity and foster good relations. Scottish specific duties include:				
				impact on those who have an income above this level but have little, or no, disposable income.
Care Experienced	✓			The rent increase will impact all tenants equally (excluding those protected financially)
Other, health, community justice, carers etc.		✓		Housing plays a vital role in people health and wellbeing. Providing stable homes enables people to attain more through education, training, employment and access health and other services. A sense of belonging and connection with the community where they live and environmental outdoor space improvements also aids improved health and wellbeing.
Risk (Identify other risks associated with this change)				

	Evidence of Due Regard
Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):	This is a universal increase that is well established and is executed in line with legal requirements contained within missives and Housing Regulator expectations. It does not eliminate unlawful discrimination. However council homes (including new build) are allocated fairly through the agreed allocation policy.
Advance Equality of Opportunity:	Council homes (including new build) are allocated fairly through the agreed allocation policy.
Foster Good Relations (promoting understanding and reducing prejudice):	

SECTION SIX: PARTNERS / OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Which sectors are likely to have an interest in or be affected by the proposal / policy / project?		Describe the interest / affect.
Business	Yes	Economic opportunity for business to tender for and be awarded contracts to undertake projects in the programme.
Councils	No	
Education Sector	Yes	New affordable homes could have an impact on school capacity. This is controlled and mitigated through the statutory planning process. Improving the quality of homes has a direct correlation to improving educational achievements.
Fire	Yes	Fire safety is an integral part of the Housing Investment Programme in both the council new build design and ensuring robust fire safety in existing homes.
NHS	Yes	Adequate supply of good quality homes of varying size and type that meet peoples needs helps the NHS by:- - people can be discharged from hospital sooner, having a positive impact on NHS resources, - safe homes helps in good repair can prevent slips, trips and falls, reducing the need for NHS services - help people to live independently at home for longer, reducing pressure on NHS services. Improving the quality and energy efficiency of homes can have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of tenants.
Integration Joint Board	Yes	The IJB which is responsible for planning, resourcing and the operational oversight of a wide range of health and social care services which overlap with housing, this includes the management of the Disabled Adaptation Scheme across tenures.
Police	Yes	All new council homes are designed to meet Secure by Design Standards.
Third Sector	Yes	Third Sector are involved in the delivery of new affordable housing projects.
Other(s): please list and describe the nature of the relationship / impact.	Health & Social Care Partnership - joint working through the Local Housing Strategy and the Housing Contribution statement to meet shared aims to improve peoples quality of life, this can be through disabled adaptations to meet peoples needs or project design and delivery to meet specific client group needs, such as those with complex care or physical disability.	

SECTION SEVEN: ACTION PLANNING

Mitigating Actions: If you have identified impacts on protected characteristic groups in Section 5 please summarise these in the table below detailing the actions you are taking to mitigate or support this impact. If you are not taking any action to support or mitigate the impact you should complete the No Mitigating Actions section below instead.

Identified Impact	To Who	Action(s)	Lead Officer	Evaluation and Review Date	Strategic Reference to Corporate Plan / Service Plan / Quality Outcomes
Increased cost to households in Poverty, who are not protected	Households on moderate to low income not currently in receipt of Housing Cost support	Promotion of support (via Housing Officers, Household Support Officers, Advice and Support Hubs, and all written contact with tenants of the support available	Paul Ferguson	31/03/2024	(i) supporting stronger and healthier communities (ii) promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities (iii) supporting a thriving economy and green transition

No Mitigating Actions

Please explain why you do not need to take any action to mitigate or support the impact of your proposals.

Are actions being reported to Members?	Yes
If yes when and how ?	Via Income Maximisation Strategy

SECTION EIGHT: ASSESSMENT OUTCOME

Only one of following statements best matches your assessment of this proposal / policy / project. Please select one and provide your reasons.		
No major change required	Yes	There is no evidence to suggest any material negative impact on protected characteristic groups.
The proposal has to be adjusted to reduce impact on protected characteristic groups	No	
Continue with the proposal but it is not possible to remove all the risk to protected characteristic groups	No	
Stop the proposal as it is potentially in breach of equality legislation	No	

SECTION NINE: LEAD OFFICER SIGN OFF

Lead Officer:			
Signature:		Date:	12/01/2024

SECTION TEN: EPIA TASK GROUP ONLY

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF EPIA:	Has the EPIA demonstrated the use of data, appropriate engagement, identified mitigating actions as well as ownership and appropriate review of actions to confidently demonstrate compliance with the general and public sector equality duties?	Yes
ASSESSMENT FINDINGS If YES, use this box to highlight evidence in support of the assessment of the EPIA If NO, use this box to highlight actions needed to improve the EPIA	Consultation and engagement has been carried out with tenants. Although limited data has been provided, there is a commitment to improve this going forward.	
Where adverse impact on diverse communities has been identified and it is intended to continue with the proposal / policy / project, has justification for continuing <u>without making changes been made</u>?	Yes	If YES, please describe: As this is a universal increase that is established and is executed in line with legal requirements contained within missives and Housing Regulator expectations.

LEVEL OF IMPACT: The EPIA Task Group has agreed the following level of impact on the protected characteristic groups highlighted within the EPIA		
LEVEL		COMMENTS
HIGH	No	
MEDIUM	No	
LOW	Yes	Majority of tenants (approximately 63%) of tenants are protected from any increase, and there is a commitment to provide further information regarding support available for all tenants.

SECTION ELEVEN: CHIEF OFFICER SIGN OFF

Director / Head of Service:			
Signature:		Date:	12/01/2024