



# CONSULTATION

on rent charges for East Ayrshire  
Council properties in 2020-2021



## Dear Tenant

I am writing to ask you to take part in this year's Rent Consultation.

As you know, East Ayrshire Council consults annually with tenants, tenants' and residents' groups and the East Ayrshire Federation on our proposals relating to rent setting.

This year, the Rent Setting consultation period will run from 9 December 2019 until 10 January 2020 inclusive.

We will use the feedback to prepare a report for a meeting of the Council's Cabinet Committee in February 2020 at which Elected Members will decide the level of rent increase for Council tenants in the year 2020-21.

We will then write to inform you what your new rent charge will be for 2020-21 at least four weeks in advance of any changes that may occur.

## Putting people at the heart of everything we do

Last year the Council set out two options for increasing rents and undertook a comprehensive consultation exercise between December 2018 and January 2019.

82.7% of respondents said they preferred Option 1, which was to increase rents by 1.5%. As part of the rent setting process a report, which contained details of the consultation and feedback, was discussed and a proposal to increase rents by 1.5% was approved by Elected Members at the February 2019 Cabinet meeting.

This year, **we would encourage** even more people to take the time to respond to the consultation, we will be asking tenants, tenants' and residents' groups and the East Ayrshire Federation to help promote the consultation.

## How to provide feedback

You can provide feedback using any of the following ways:

- Complete the questionnaire at the back and return it to: Customer Liaison Team, FREEPOST RSEY-XHST-JHGL, Civic Centre North, John Dickie Street, KILMARNOCK, KA1 1HW. (Please note, no stamp is required),
- Complete an online\* survey at [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/4QU4Q/](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/4QU4Q/)

*\*If you would like to respond via the online survey but don't have internet access, contact your local Housing Team to assist with this. You may also access use of internet at libraries.*

## Paying your Rent / Universal Credit

The Council recognises that many tenants are still feeling the pressures caused by the economic situation and the impact of the continuing implementation of Welfare Reform. We are therefore aiming to get the right balance between affordable rents and delivering the high quality housing services and improvements that you want. Paying rent is the most important part of a tenancy agreement and it's important that rent is **paid on time** and **in full**.

Our Customer Service Centres have moved to more efficient payment methods including direct debit, online transactions and card payments. Find out more at <https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Housing/CouncilHousing/Paying-your-rent/Payingyourrent.aspx>. Remember, you may be entitled to Housing Benefit / Universal Credit. To find out more, please call 01563 554400 or email [benefits@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@east-ayrshire.gov.uk) or contact your local Housing Office.

If you are claiming Universal Credit then as part of your UC claim you may be entitled to help with your rent payment. The rent payment is paid directly to you and not the Council, therefore you must pay your rent to the Council. Remember your UC claim is made on-line and paid in arrears. To make a claim go online to [www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit)

If you are experiencing financial difficulties, having problems making a claim on-line, need help budgeting or just need advice then we can help. Just call our Universal Support Team, who will be able to provide you with help managing your budget or if you are experiencing difficulties making a claim for UC, call today on 01563 503280.

**Don't be afraid to ask for help and don't delay.** Friendly and experienced officers are available to help you deal with concerns confidentially and sensitively and will make sure that you get the help and support you need. We can also refer you to the Financial Inclusion Team who can help you with any other benefit issues.

## Ways to pay:

Our Customer Service Advisers will be on hand to provide support and advice on payment including:

### DIRECT DEBIT

- choose from a range of payment dates
- covered by the DD guarantee scheme
- no transaction charge
- automated payment
- secure and convenient
- most cost effective for the Council



### ONLINE

- payment by card
- accessible 24/7
- secure and convenient
- no transaction charge



### PAYPOINT

- extended opening hours
- multiple payment locations
- no transaction charge
- only cash accepted
- maximum transaction £300
- processing requires barcoded payment card or invoice



### CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE

- pay any amount by card
- quick card processing
- maximum cash transaction £300
- separate cash payment queues
- cash option removed by 9 November



### BY PHONE

- payment by card
- accessible 24/7
- secure and convenient
- no transaction charge



## Harmonising rents

Tenants remain strongly supportive of continuing to harmonise rents. Through this process, all Council tenants across East Ayrshire are moving towards paying the same rent for properties of the same size and type. April 2020 will see the 5th of 7 harmonisation adjustments made to rent charges. The 6th and 7th adjustments will be made in April 2021 and April 2022, at which point the rent harmonisation will be complete.

Depending on how your current rent compares to the “target” rent for the property size and type, your individual rent may go up by a little more, or a little less, than the percentage recommended by the consultation.

After the consultation and approval process is complete we will write to everyone with the new rent charges for 2020/2021.

## Budget headlines

To pay for the significant investment required and based on our plan to improve existing Council houses and provide more new homes, we must borrow money and make repayments over a number of years. Part of the money you pay goes towards servicing these loan charges so we can deliver the modernisation and new build programmes. The Housing Capital Investment Programme sets out how much money the Council plans to spend on improving existing Council houses and providing new ones. Our spending commitment for 2019/20 is shown below:

Housing Capital Investment Programme (£million)	
Modernisation/Extensions	£17.680m
House Building	£13.793m
Demolitions & Disposal	£ 2.390m
New Affordable Housing	£ 0.200m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£34.063m</b>

Last year as part of our budget and rent setting process, we increased rents by 1.5% for 2019/20.

The total budgeted income from housing rents for 2019/20 is £46,118,410.

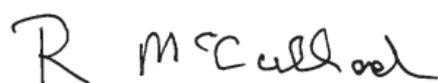
## Additional information

If you would like more information about our proposals set out in this leaflet, please use any of the methods below:

- Telephone: 01563 553591
- Email [housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)
- Write to Housing Service, Civic Centre North, John Dickie Street, Kilmarnock, KA1 1HW.

We will be able to deal with your enquiries until **Friday 10 January 2020**.

I would like to personally thank you for taking the time to take part in this consultation. Your views are important to us.



Yours sincerely

**Robert McCulloch**

Acting Head of Housing & Communities

## For every £1 spent in 2019/20



Bad debt provision	£0.03
Other Expenditure (Aids & Adaptations, Council Tax Voids, SP Protected Tenants Con, Council Helpline)	£0.03
Rent loss due to empty properties	£0.05
Debt Repayment, interest and expenses	£0.18
Contribution to Housing Improvement Programme	£0.14
Supervision & Management	£0.24
Repairs and Maintenance	£0.33

## Average weekly rent levels for 2019/20 (£)

You will see from the chart that the rent levels in East Ayrshire are below the Scottish average. The graph on the right shows how our average weekly rent compares with other local authorities in Scotland.

(Source: 2019/20, Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers, Average weekly rent levels – based on a typical weekly rent (52 weeks average for all stock))

### Average weekly rent levels 2019/20

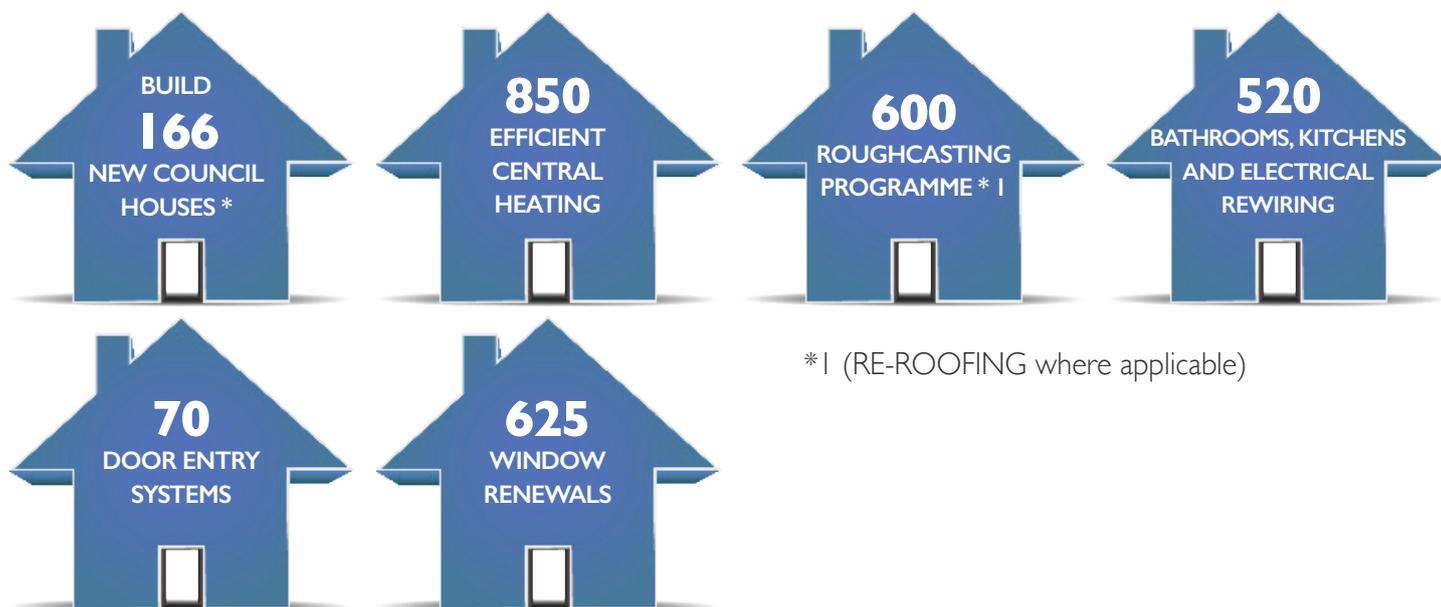
Edinburgh	100.02
Aberdeenshire	82.43
Orkney	79.68
West Dunbartonshire	79.65
East Renfrewshire	78.82
Renfrewshire	77.84
Aberdeen	76.29
Dundee	75.85
East Dunbartonshire	75.83
Midlothian	75.45
South Ayrshire	75.45
Clackmannanshire	74.44
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>74.26</b>
Fife	73.25
West Lothian	72.92
<b>East Ayrshire</b>	<b>72.72</b>
North Ayrshire	72.29
East Lothian	71.81
South Lanarkshire	70.07
Pert & Kinross	68.81
Angus	68.56
Falkirk	68.35
Stirling	67.75
Highland	67.58
North Lanarkshire	67.43
Moray	57.35

## Consultation on rent charges for East Ayrshire Council properties

We have outlined the two options for rent increases and want to gather your opinions and feedback.

### Option 1 - Increase rents by 1.5%

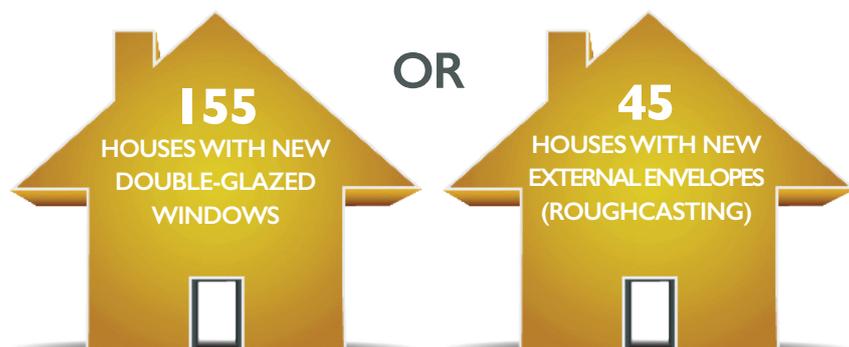
Rents would increase weekly by: £1.19 per week over 48 weeks (£1.10 over 52 weeks).



### Option 2 - Increase rents by 2.5%

Rents would increase weekly by: £1.98 per week over 48 weeks. (£1.82 over 52 weeks).

As well as all of Option 1, the additional £455,000 generated from the increase would be used to install 155 houses with new double-glazed windows or 45 external envelopes (roughcasting)\*2



\* As part of the strategic housing investment plan 2020-25 our aim is to deliver 985 new homes and is indicative

\*1 this includes new gutters, downpipes, window sill covers and cavity wall insulation (The replacement life cycles for each product, as well as its condition, and the historical installation dates of previous programmes dictates the numbers of units planned for replacement of over the next 5 years.)

\*2 Additional windows have been identified as priority due to historical installation dates and External Envelope due to the condition of existing render across the authority.

# YOUR VIEWS:

We would be delighted if you could take a few moments to complete the online survey at: [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/4QU4Q/](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/4QU4Q/)

Alternatively, please complete and post back the form below.

Please tick your preferred option:

Option 1: 1.5%  Option 2: 2.5%

Do you have any comments on the options? .....

Do you think that the rent you pay is good value for money? Yes  No

If No, please tell us why? .....

Are you happy with the level of consultation and information you get about the annual rent increase? Yes  No

If No, please tell us why? .....

Please tell us what you would like us to do more of and what we can do better?

Your priorities: What would you like the Council to spend future rent increases on?

(please tick one box)

Housing Improvements  New Council Houses  Environmental Improvements  Other

If other, please detail.....

Would you like to become involved in decision making around rent expenditure? If yes please tick box below and complete contact details. Yes  No

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone (daytime)..... (evening).....

Email.....

Please use this space if you have any other comments specifically about the rent setting consultation

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.**

Please return this form to the freepost address below or email it to [housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

**FREEPOST RSEY-XHST-JHGL**  
Customer Liaison Team, John Dickie Street  
Kilmarnock, KAI IHW



## Energy efficiency standard for social housing

The Council is also working hard to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESHS) by 2020. This aims to improve the energy efficiency of all social housing in Scotland through a range of measures including boiler replacements, insulation and new technology.

It will help to reduce energy consumption, fuel poverty and the emission of greenhouse gases. This requirement will result in the Council surveying some Council houses to gather information which will help with our plans to meet this target.



**Clean, Green and Vibrant** is an innovative approach which brings services from across the Council and the local community together, ensuring they are a vital part of all housing improvement works.

We want East Ayrshire to be clean and green and our towns and villages to be vibrant. By working together we will ensure that service delivery always meets, and where possible exceeds, the needs of local people.

## Changes to tenancy

As part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 from 1 November 2019 there will be new notification and residency requirements that have to be met for changes to your tenancy. Please see:

<https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/changeoftenancy>

## Winter safety

Winter weather can be severe and can quickly disrupt our lives. Being aware and better prepared can help us, our families and our communities to stay safe, warm and healthy throughout the winter months.

Visit: <https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/CouncilAndGovernment/Winter-Advice/Winteradvice.aspx> for more info

## Fire safety

Every Hour of Every Day there is a House Fire in Scotland – so, please make sure you are protected!

Cooking accidents, overloaded sockets, faulty appliances, smoking and drinking are just some of the reasons why there are so many house fires in Scotland. One lapse such as leaving a pan unattended or failing to put out a cigarette or candle properly, could change your life forever.

Scottish Fire and Rescue can provide free home fire safety visits, offering advice and guidance on fire safety and can fit smoke alarms free of charge if your home requires them. If you want to know more call 0800 0731 999 or text "FIRE" to 80800 from your mobile or visit the Scottish Fire and Rescue website for more information on fire safety.

**Plan your escape route and make sure everyone knows how to get out in a fire.**

## Housing teams

### Kilmarnock North Housing Team

North West Area Centre, Western Road,  
KILMARNOCK KA3 1NQ. Tel: 01563 555670.  
Email: [housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

### Kilmarnock Central & South Housing Team

Civic Centre North, John Dickie Street,  
KILMARNOCK KA1 1HW. Tel: 01563 576618.  
Email: [housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

### Irvine Valley & Ballochmyle Housing Team

Civic Centre North, John Dickie Street  
KILMARNOCK KA1 1HW. Tel: 01563 554650.  
Email: [housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

### Cumnock Housing Team

Rothesay House, 1 Greenholm Road  
CUMNOCK KA18 1LH. Tel: 01290 427727 / 427728.  
Email: [housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

### Doon Valley Housing Team

Dalmellington Area Centre, 33 Main Street,  
DALMELLINGTON KA6 7QL. Tel: 01292 552887  
Email: [housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)