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Authorised By	Wendy Mcguire
Designation	Head of Housing
Date	15/01/25

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REPORT TO: MEMBERS' LIBRARY SERVICE

MEETING DATE: January 2025

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: Proposals to increase Council House Rents – Consultation Exercise

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To note the results of the rent consultation exercise on the proposals to increase the Council House Rents in 2025/26.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are advised to note that meaningful consideration of the consultation results are a key element in setting rents for 2025/26 and beyond.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory obligation under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to consult with all tenants when making any proposals to increase rents. In doing so the Council must:

- consult all tenants and registered tenant organisations affected by the proposal(s), and
- have regard to the views expressed during the consultation exercise.

- 3.2 A summary of all the responses received from tenants who completed the questionnaire is shown in Appendix 1.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The consultation results will inform the Council's decision-making process in terms of any rent increase in 2025/26 and beyond.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 A full integrated impact assessment on equality groups has been undertaken and published on the Council's website.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – These results, together with ongoing budget development, will all be factors in determining the actual rent increase.
- 6.2 Personnel - None.
- 6.3 Other – None.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Summary of responses received during the Rent Increase Consultation Exercise 2025/26

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DATE	15th January 2025

Appendix One

Introduction

The council are required to carry out a consultation with its tenants on any proposals to increase rents. This includes consulting with all tenants, tenants and residents' groups and registered tenant organisations and must take into account the views expressed in the consultation feedback.

The consultation was open from 18 November to 20th December 2024 and explained that the council were considering a proposal to increase rents by 7%. The consultation documents were designed by a Working Group of council officers and members of East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) and consisted of a letter, information sheet and questionnaire.

The letter explained how each £1 of rent money is spent, what these costs cover and encouraged tenants to have their say on the potential rent increase. The information sheet gave details on how to contact someone about the proposals and where tenants could get advice or financial help if they needed it. The questionnaire asked tenants some key questions and for any suggestions about how the housing service could be improved.

The approach, agreed by the Working Group was that the documents would be emailed to those tenants and tenant organisations who had an email address registered with us and posted out to all others. The consultation was posted in the council's Consultation Hub and promoted through social media channels. Tenants who we had a mobile phone number for received a text message to highlight the consultation and encourage them to respond. A second text message was sent again to those tenants during the last week of the consultation.

All tenants had the opportunity to complete the survey online, those tenants who received by documents by post, could complete and return a paper copy of the questionnaire (a prepaid envelop was provided) if they preferred.

ELTRP held a consultation event in December 2024 to gather views from tenants and their members, a separate report on this event has been published by ELTRP.

Summary of Results

A total of **2103** responses were received to the consultation, which consisted of **1360 online responses** and **743 paper questionnaires**. (an increase on last year's consultation of 446 returns – 368 more online responses and 78 postal).

Most of the online responses were received in the first week of the consultation and during the weeks when the text messages were sent out to tenants.

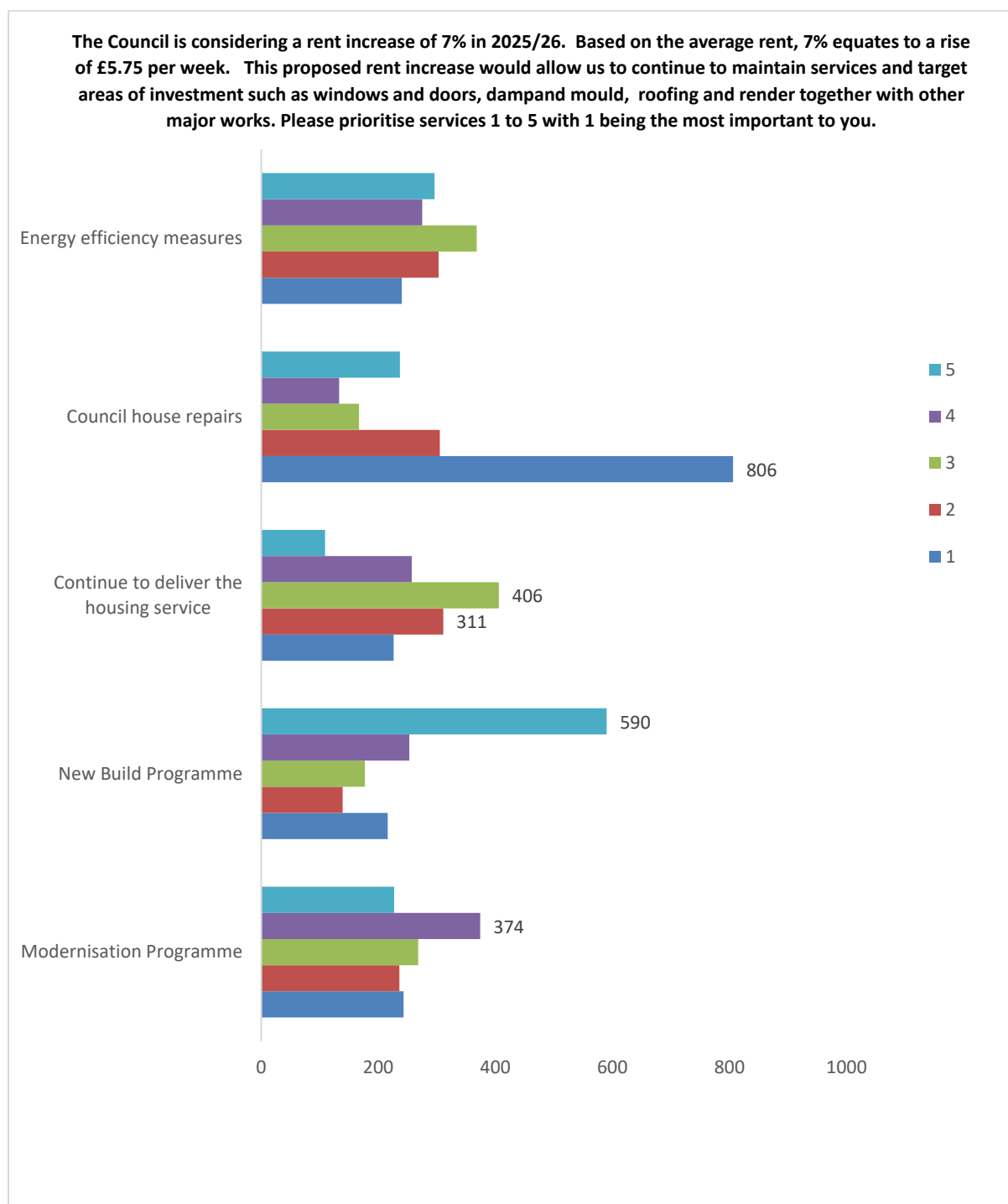
Table 1 below is a summary of the responses received to the key questions in the rent consultation questionnaire.

Question	Answer	
	YES	NO
Do you agree with the proposed increase of 7%	36%	63%
If we don't increase our rents by 7%, we are likely to have to reduce some of the services we provide, do you think it is right to increase our rents?	50%	49%
Do you think the rent you currently pay is good value for money?	75%	24%
Are you happy with the level of consultation and information you get about the annual rent increase?	79%	20%

One of the other questions, in the questionnaire, explained that in considering a 7% increase which equates to a rise of £5.75 per week. This proposed increase would allow the council to continue to maintain services and target areas of investment such as windows and doors, damp and mould, roofing and render together with other major works. Tenants were then asked to prioritise the services 1 to 5, with 1 being the most important and 5 the least.

In summary, **council house repairs** was the most important priority one, 2 was **continue to deliver the housing service**, 3 again **continue to deliver the service** (with energy efficiency a close second), 4 was **modernisation programme** and 5, **new build programme**.

Table 2 below shows the detail of all responses received to this question.



Suggestions for improvements

We also asked tenants if they had any suggestions about how we could improve the housing service. We received a total of 849 suggestions from tenants, these comments have been grouped into common themes.

Table 3 suggestions for improvements

Suggestions	No. of comments received
Repairs	268
Staffing	173
Modernisation	131
Voids	51
Positive	22
New Build	20
Blanks (No, N/A other comments which didn't fall into any of the above categories)	184
Total	849

Table 4 shows the top three repairs, staffing and modernisation, and some examples of the comments received.

Repairs	Staffing	Modernisation
It is sometimes difficult to get a repair done	More telephones answered	More upgrades
Quicker repairs once reported	Employ more Tradesmen	Replace windows
Follow through on repairs	Employ more council workers instead of Contractors	I got promised a kitchen over 10 years ago, also windows to be told I wasn't on the list
Provide more repairs and update bathrooms and kitchens old and causing mould	Housing Officer being more reachable	Look after council houses you have, then look into new builds once the council is back on their feet
Fix things at the time, don't wait till they fall apart	By giving elderly disabled tenants more help and thoughts	Be more proactive than reactive

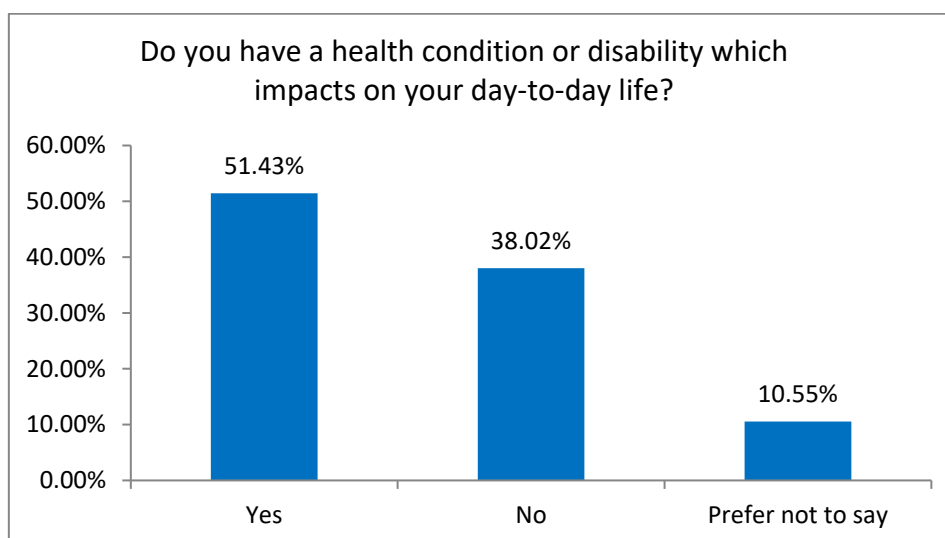
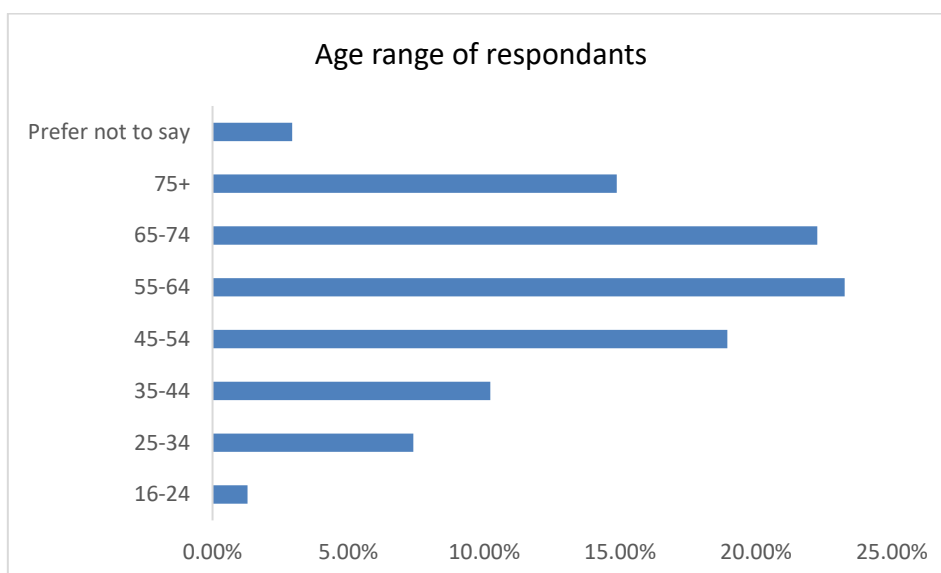
A full list of the all the comments received can be found in Appendix One.

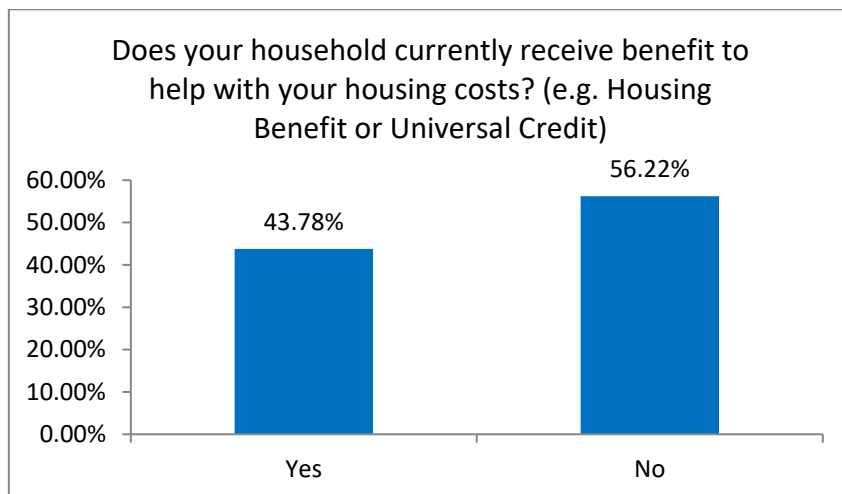
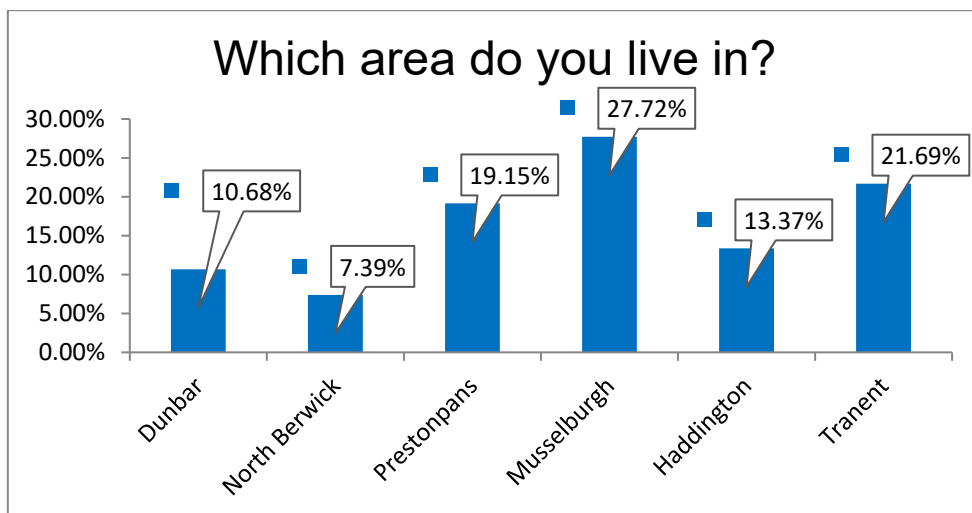
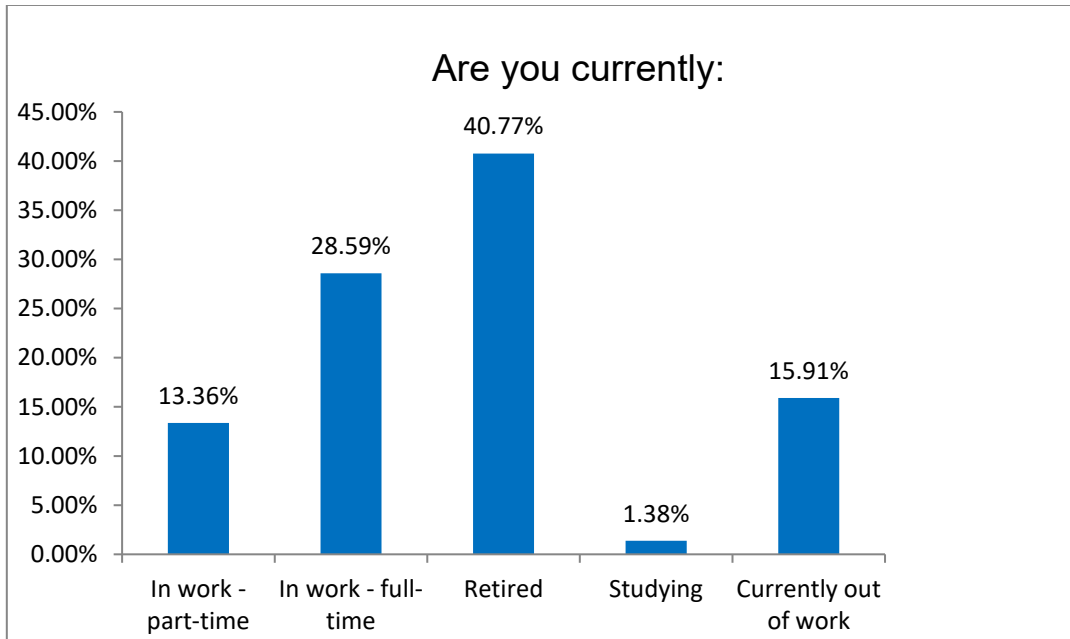
Equalities Monitoring

To make sure that we are capturing a wide range of views and meeting the needs of our tenants, as part of the survey we asked tenants a number of questions about their age, gender, race, employment status etc.

Table 5 of those who responded:

Female	1247	59.81%
Male	734	35.20%
Intersex	4	0.19%
Prefer not to say	52	2.49%





This report will be presented to the HRA Group at their next meeting and Council for a special budget meeting in February 2025 when Councillors will decide the level of rent and service charge change for council tenants in the year 2025/26.

