



Rent Increase Consultation 2020 Consultation Results

1. Consultation Process and Feedback

The consultation process consisted of the following:

- A rent consultation document and Business Reply envelope were sent to all tenants with a copy of the Winter edition of Rural Matters in the first week of December 2019. The consultation document was updated and designed to be eye catching with limited text.
- A special Tenants Gathering took place on Saturday 25th January, at which tenants were asked for their views on the proposed rent increase. This year Invitation Post Cards were sent out to all tenants on the 3rd January 2020. Text invites were sent on the 13th and 20th January 2020.
- The consultation process and Tenants Gathering were promoted on the website and in the reception area of the office.
- Tenants were offered the opportunity to speak directly to the Chief Executive or the Housing Services Manager.

2. Consultation outcome

3.1 Questionnaire responses

The closing date for responses was the 20th December 2019. This period was extended to Friday 7th February 2020, following feedback from the Tenants Gathering on the 25th January 2020, suggesting some tenants in Station Road, Callander did not receive the rent consultation. Additional copies were hand delivered to all Station Road tenants on Thursday 30th January 2020.

- **Graph 1 (below)** illustrates response rates to rent increase questionnaires over the last three years. The response rate for the 2020 rent increase questionnaire was 7%. This equates to 43 out of a possible 608 responses. This is markedly lower than response rates in previous years and disappointing given changes made to the consultation document and additional time for responding.
- Of the 43 responses received, **graph 2 (below)** illustrates 58% agreed and 42% disagreed with a 2.4% rent increase for 2020/21. Comparison with the previous two years results show a consistent split of approximately 60/40 in favour of proposed rent increases.

Of the eighteen respondents who did not agree, seventeen commented as follows:

- Two responses related to single people finding the rent difficult to afford along with other costs such as council tax.
 - Six responses centred around yearly rent increases being too high, one of whom stated 2.0% would be more in line.
 - Two stated they did not agree with the increase because of poor property management.
 - Two felt because their flats were small & the block of flats has a lack of facilities.
 - One stated savings should be made in management costs if they represent 40% of overall cost.
 - One suggested that the new build property they were living in should not have had as many maintenance problems as it has.
 - One felt rents were higher than in some cities with little option to increase earnings living in the rural area.
 - One stated nobody wants a rent increase when you don't get any more for it.
 - One commented, that the proposed increase would represent a 25% increase in rent over the last ten years and suggested cutbacks and attention to tenant's needs were necessary.
- The Consultation Questionnaire asked tenants if they felt their rent represented value for money when taking account of improvements to service identified from the 2019 Tenant Satisfaction Survey. **Graph 3 (below)** illustrates 60% felt their rent represents value for money. This is a drop of 10% from 2018 when the question was last asked as part of the rent consultation process.

Respondents who felt rent did not represent value for money were asked to tell us what changes they felt were needed to improve value for money. fourteen of the sixteen respondents who felt rent did not represent value for money commented as follows:

- Eight stated property maintenance improvements were needed. Of these six mentioned improvements to heating systems and windows. Four mentioned poor customer service with repairs issues.
- Two were unhappy with waterlogged gardens & dampness.
- One commented that income should be spent on improving tenant services not managing the Association.
- One felt rent should be aligned with Stirling Council rents.
- One needed more storage space in the property.
- One felt there had been too many maintenance issues in their new flat.

3.2.2 Tenants Gathering 25th January 2020

Ten tenants attended the Tenants Gathering at which the proposed rent increase of 2.4% for 2020/21 was an agenda item.

Graph 4 (below) illustrates attendance was higher than in 2019 and similar to 2018. Further analysis of 2017 and 2016 attendance rates of twelve and seven respectively indicate a reasonably static attendance rate, averaging nine attendants over the last five years.

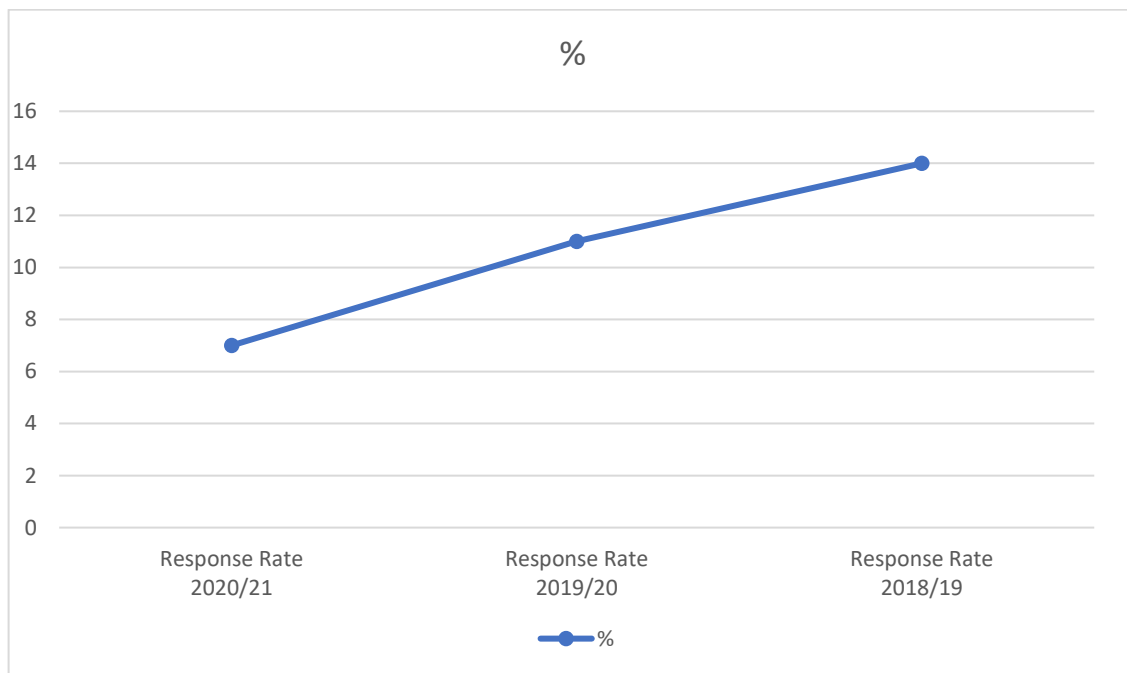
Attendee feedback was as follows:

- Overall attendees understood the Association needs to increase rents to cover rising costs and there was general agreement to the proposed rent increase of 2.4%
- There was a consensus that rent increases would be more acceptable if there was a sense of value for money.

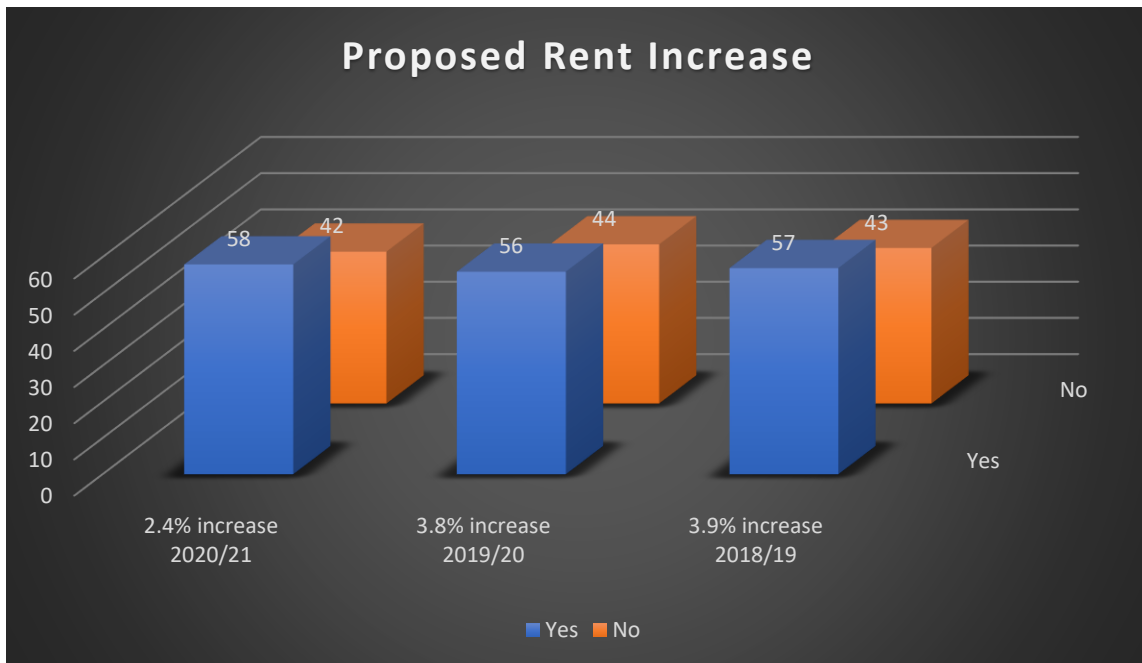
All felt the repairs and maintenance service needed to improve. In particular communication and at times standard of work from contractors was felt to be poor. Communication was also considered problematic at the front line, with concerns raised about repairs being reported but not recorded or actioned.

There was some discontent with timescales for certain aspects of the planned maintenance service and it was felt that older properties were not being maintained as well as they should be. Poor heating & new windows/doors were highlighted as particular concerns.

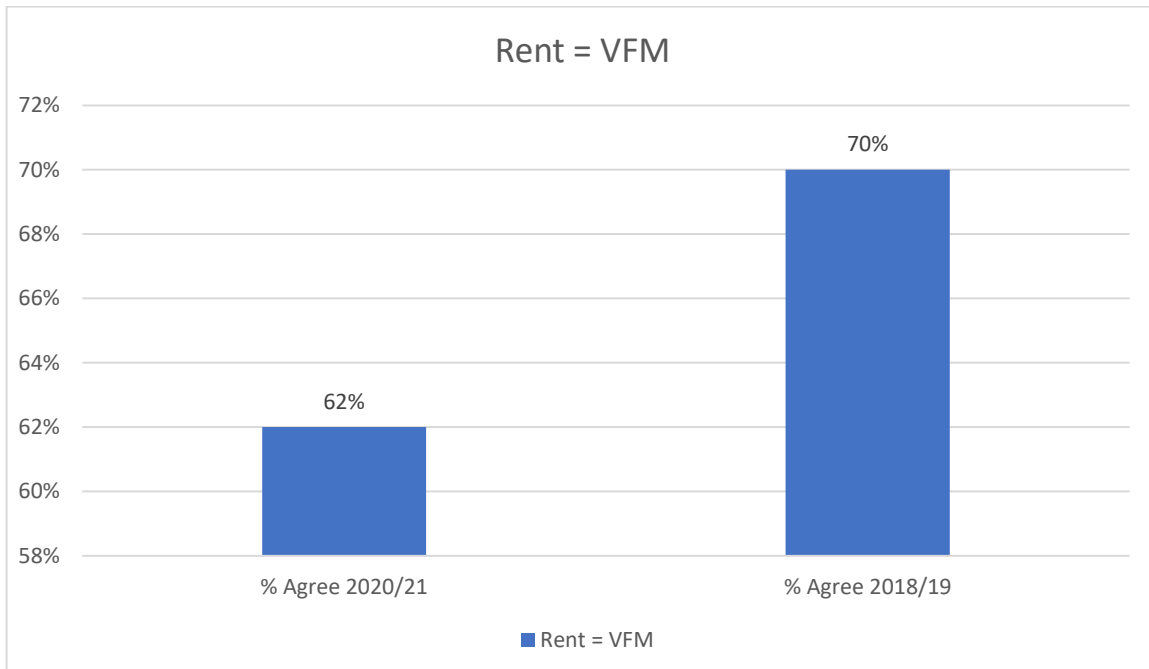
Graph 1 – Questionnaire Response Rates



Graph 2 – Questionnaire Results



Graph 3 – Number of Tenants who felt their Rent Represents Value for Money



Graph 4 - Attendance at Tenants Gathering 25th January 2020

