

Dear Tenant

Rent Level Consultation 2015 – 16

I am writing to ask you to take part in this year's rent consultation. As you know, we consult with tenants, tenants and residents groups and East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel every year on our proposals to increase rents. This year, the consultation will end on Friday 9th January 2015.

We will use the results to prepare a report for a meeting of the full Council in February 2015 at which the Council will set the budget. At this meeting, Councillors will decide the level of rent and service charge increase for council tenants in the year 2015 – 16. We will then write to tell you what your rent and service charges will be for 2015 – 16. You should receive this letter at least four weeks before the 6th April 2015, which is the date that your payment will rise.

Proposals

For the past few years, we have held the annual rent increase at 4.3%. You will be aware that the rent levels in East Lothian are very low compared to other local authorities and neighbouring Councils. For this reason we would like this year to be able to increase investment in our housing stock and further improve our services. For example, we would like to provide new kitchens and bathrooms to more tenants more quickly. We would also like to improve the energy efficiency of our houses to make them cheaper for you to heat. Therefore, we are asking whether you would be willing to consider a rent increase of between 5% and 6%.

I would really like to hear your opinion on our proposals and I would encourage you to spare a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire and let us know your views.

How to feed back

You can feed back by:

- filling in the questionnaire enclosed with this letter and sending it back to us, or
- if you prefer, filling in the same questionnaire on line at www.eastlothian.gov.uk/rentsurvey

If you would like to do the survey online but don't have internet access, why not book some time on a computer at your local library. You can do this by phoning your local library. It's best to book as library computers are often busy.

Pay to Stay

Paying rent is the most important part of a tenancy agreement and it **is important that rent is paid on time and in full.**

If you are experiencing financial difficulties, please get in touch immediately. **Don't be afraid to ask for help and don't delay.** Friendly and experienced Rent Income Officers are available to deal with your concerns confidentially and sensitively and will make sure that you get the help and support you need.

Phone: 01620 827528

Email: rentincome@eastlothian.gov.uk

Web: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/paytostay

Failure to deal with rent arrears could result in legal action being taken and you could be at risk of losing your home.

Prize Draw – Free iPad!

If you take part in the rent consultation and give your name and address on the survey form, you will be entered into a prize draw to win an iPad.

If you would like more information

If you would like more information or would like to talk to someone about the rent proposals, please get in touch with Deborah Piner in the Service Development Team. Her details are:

- Freephone 0800 413 721
- email tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk
- write to Community Housing, East Lothian Council, Penston House, Macmerry Industrial Estate, Macmerry EH33 1EX.

Deborah and the team will be able to deal with your enquiries up until 9 January 2015.

I do hope you will take part in the rent consultation.

Yours sincerely

Tom Shearer MBE
Head of Communities and Partnerships

Versions
of this leaflet are available
on request on audiotape, in
Braille or in your own language.
Phone the Public Information
Officer on 01620 827199

P.S. Remember, you may be entitled to **Housing Benefit** to help you with your council rent payments. To find out more about this, please contact our Benefits Section. Their contact details are:

- phone 01620 827 971 or 01620 827 887
- email benefits@eastlothian.gov.uk



**Make paying your rent a priority.
You could lose your home if you don't.**