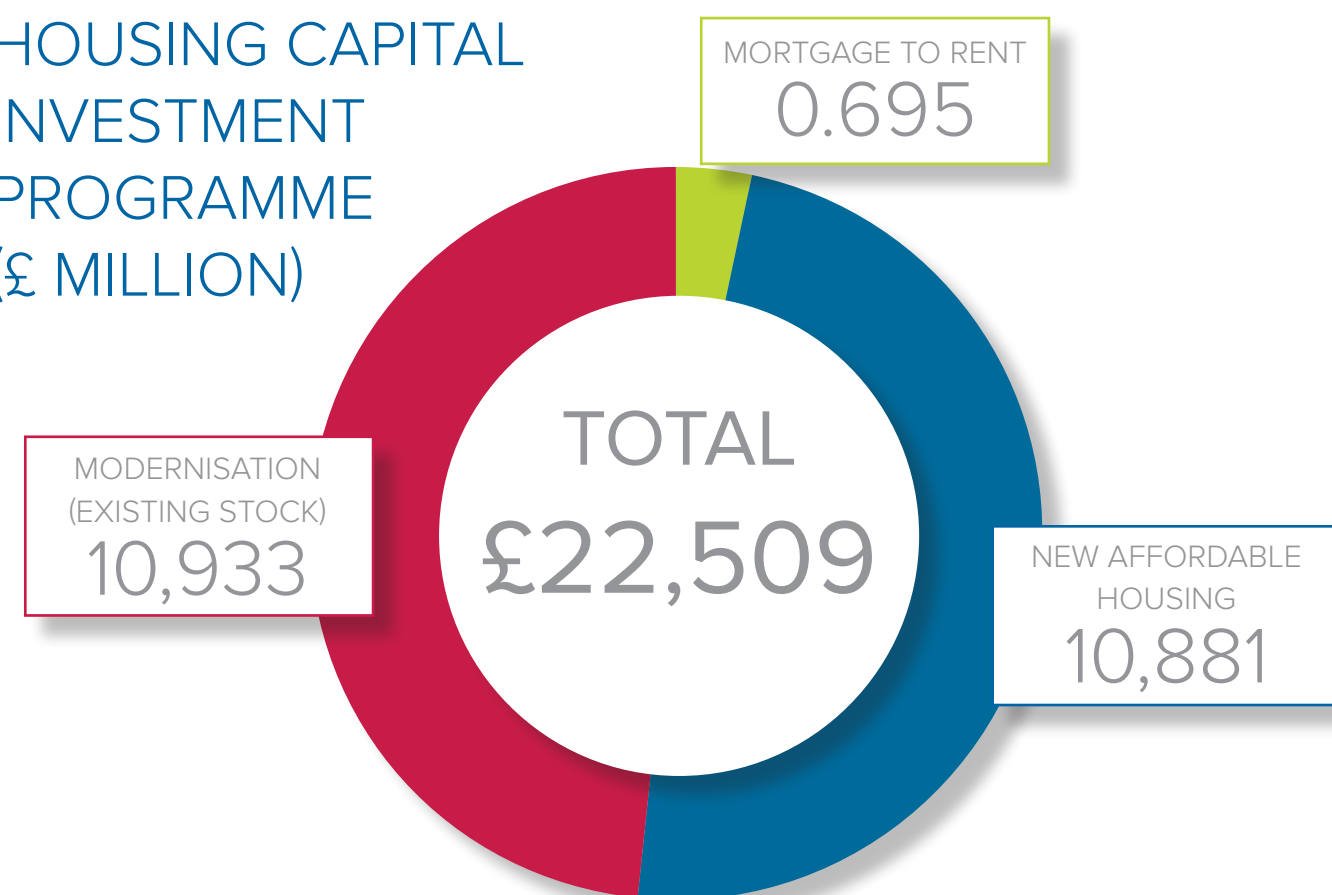


## Budget Headlines

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.

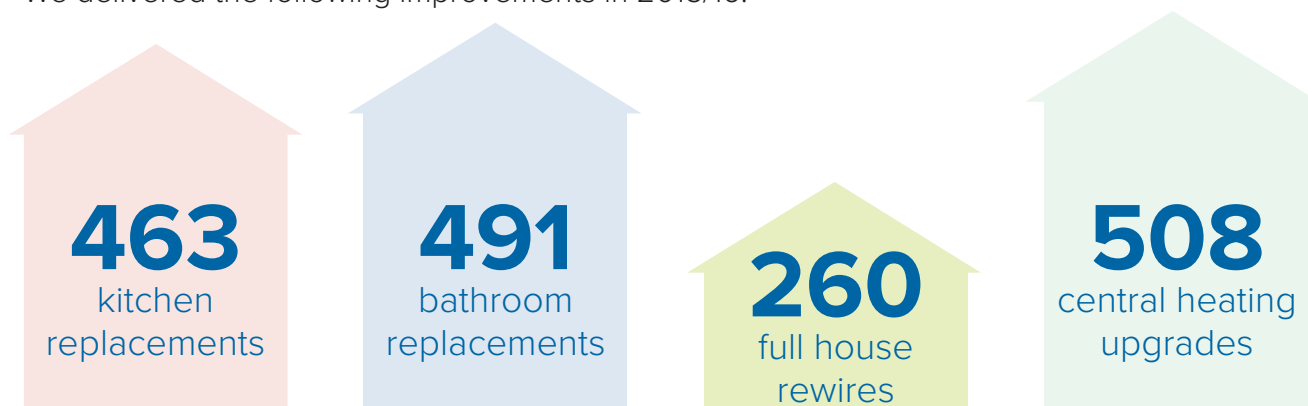
The *Housing Capital Improvement Programme* sets out how much money the council plans to spend on improving existing council houses and providing new ones. Our spending commitment for 2016/17 is shown below:

## HOUSING CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME (£ MILLION)



Last year as part of our rent consultation we asked tenants if they agreed with our commitment to build new houses and continue to modernise our existing stock. Of those who responded, 93% agreed to our new build commitment and 97% agreed that we should continue with our modernisation programme.

We delivered the following improvements in 2015/16:



We delivered **56** major adaptations and **576** minor adaptations for tenants with physical disabilities and lift upgrades in sheltered housing.

In 2016/17, we plan to continue with our investment and will use the increased income from the rent increase to help provide:

- **500** bathroom replacements
- **550** kitchen replacements
- **750** Heating upgrades
- Lift upgrades in sheltered housing.

We will continue to deliver disabled adaptations, such as wet-floor showers, for tenants with mobility issues to make their homes more accessible and help them to live safely and independently for as long as possible.

We also continue to invest in new houses, delivering **48** in 2015/16 with a further **82** council houses planned during 2016/17.

We are pleased to report an improvement in repairs performance again this year with day-to-day repairs being completed on average one day quicker than they were last financial year. We will continue to focus on this area and are looking at improving internal processes and investing in new technology to ensure that we continually improve the repairs service provided to tenants.

The council continues to work hard to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) by 2020, which aims to improve the energy efficiency of all social housing in Scotland through a range of measures including boiler replacements, insulation, new technology etc. It will help to reduce energy consumption, and should make it easier to heat your home, reducing fuel poverty and the emission of greenhouse gases. This requirement will result in the council surveying some council houses to inform our plans to meet this target.



In accordance with previously approved plans, the council intends to make a final transfer to the General Fund in 2017/18 to help meet general service requirements that tenants and residents benefit from. This includes, but is not restricted to, maintenance of public parks and open spaces, footpaths, road and path gritting and graffiti removal etc. An alternative mechanism to properly reflect the cost of such services will have to be developed.

On conclusion of this consultation and once the budgets have been set for the coming years, we will communicate our *Capital Investment Programme* through *Homefront*, our tenants newsletter.

# RENT LEVEL CONSULTATION 2017-18

Dear Tenant

## Rent Level Consultation 2017-18

I am writing to ask you to take part in this year's **Rent Consultation**. As you know, East Lothian Council consults 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 6th January 2017.

We will use the results to prepare a report for a special budget meeting of the full council in February 2017. At this meeting, councillors will decide the level of rent and service charge change for council tenants in the year 2017-18. We will then write to tell you what your rent and service charges will be for 2017-18. You should receive this letter at least four weeks before the 3rd April 2017, which is the date that your payment will be adjusted, subject to the decision at the council's budget meeting.

Last year, the majority of tenants who responded to our consultation on a 5% increase agreed with the council's commitment to build new houses and continue with the modernisation of its existing stock. They also said that they thought the rent they pay is good value for money and that the council was proposing a fair increase. This letter explains how your rent money is spent and we will provide further updates through the *Homefront* newsletter.

## Proposals

As provisionally indicated, within the budget approved earlier this year for 2017/18, the council is considering a **rent increase of 5%**. This is our best estimate of what it will take to maintain existing services, continue with our investment in the development of new council houses and maintain and improve our council houses. I would really like to hear your opinion on our proposals and hope that you can spare a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire and let us know your views.

## How to provide feedback

To provide feedback please:

- Complete and return the enclosed questionnaire, or
- Complete the same questionnaire online\* <https://eastlothianconsultations.co.uk/>

\*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.

Call us on: 01620 827 528 or visit us at [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/paytostay](http://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.*



**Remember, you may be entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to help you with your council rent payments. To find out more about Housing Benefit, please contact our Benefits Section, phone 01620 827 730 or email [benefits@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@eastlothian.gov.uk). To find out more about Universal Credit please visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/universalcredit](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/universalcredit)**

## Additional Information

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

- Freephone 0800 413 721
- Email [tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk)
- Or 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 6th January 2017.

This is an important opportunity for you to have a say on our rent proposals and plans for continued improvements in 2017/18 and I would urge you to take part in the rent consultation.

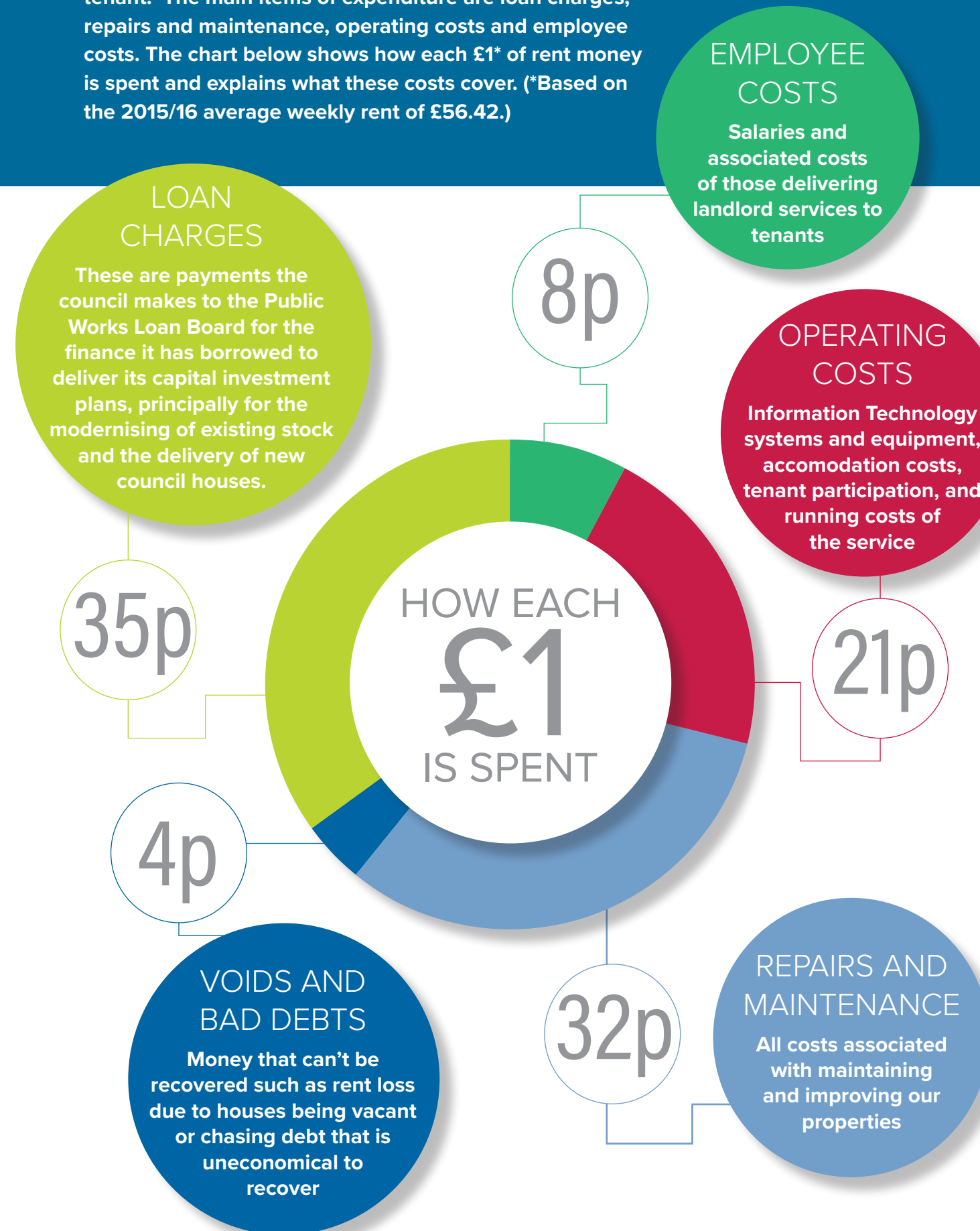
Yours sincerely

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**

## HOW RENT IS SPENT

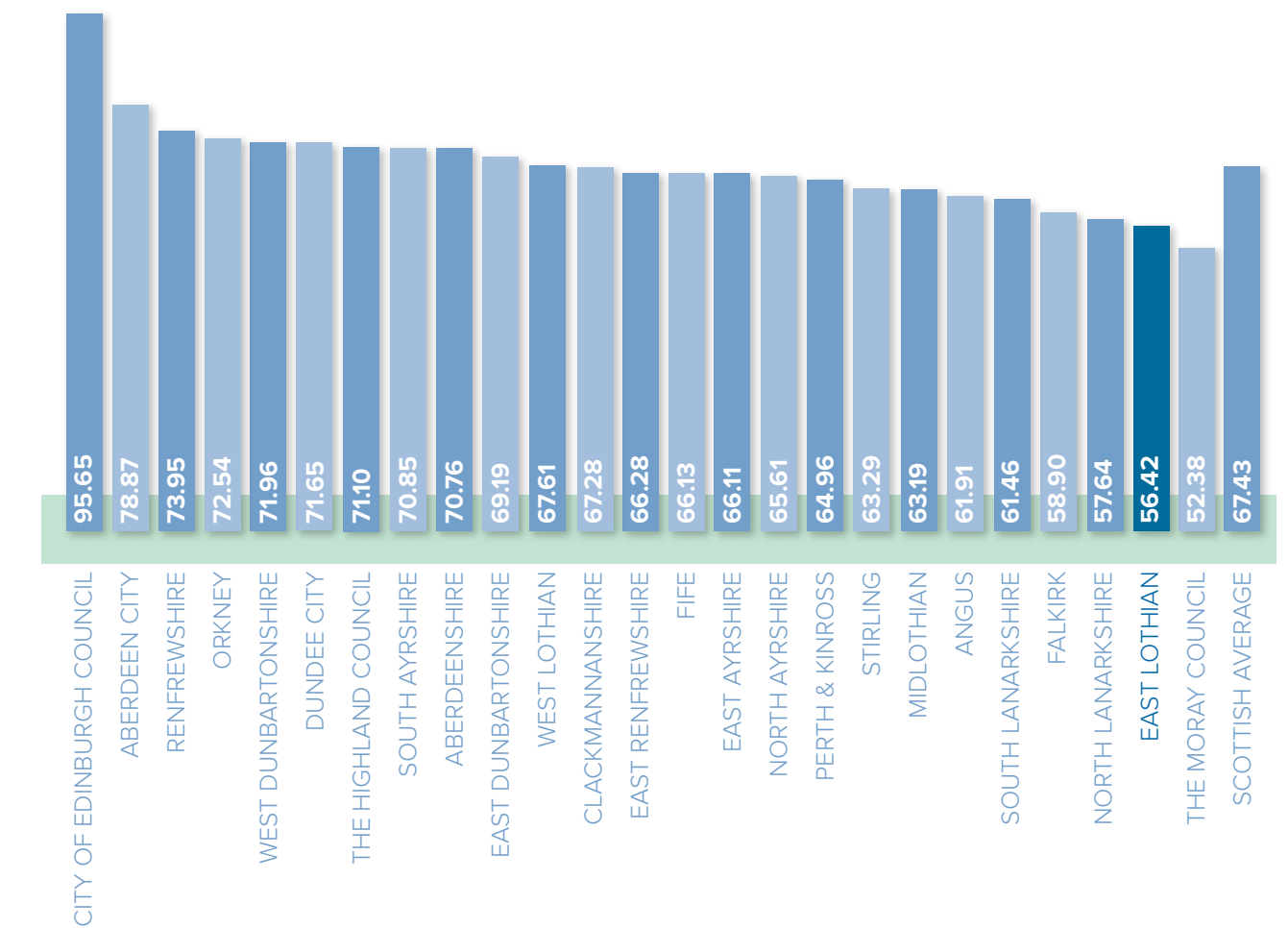
The money you pay in rent goes towards the cost of providing you with the services you receive as a council tenant. The main items of expenditure are loan charges, repairs and maintenance, operating costs and employee costs. The chart below shows how each £1\* of rent money is spent and explains what these costs cover. (\*Based on the 2015/16 average weekly rent of £56.42.)



## WEEKLY RENT (£s)

You will be aware that the rent levels in East Lothian are very low compared to other local authorities and neighbouring councils. The table below shows how our average weekly rent compares with other local authorities in Scotland.

## ESTIMATED AVERAGE WEEKLY RENT 2015-16



Visit [www.eastlothian.gov.uk](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk) and look at our ready reckoner to calculate what your proposed rent would be. If you don't have access to the internet then please contact us and we can send you a copy.