

Rent and service charge setting

2017/18 consultation newsletter

About your rent

The amount of rent you pay is subject to a review each year. Based on the information we have at present, we propose to increase your rent by 2.5% from 1 April 2017.

On average this will mean an increase (excluding service charges) of between £1.25 and £2.90 based on the lowest weekly rent of £51.08 and the highest £118.96.

We want you to be able to afford our rents and we also want to be able to invest in our properties and provide you with quality housing and services. If we increase the rent by 2.5% we will be able to continue to do this.

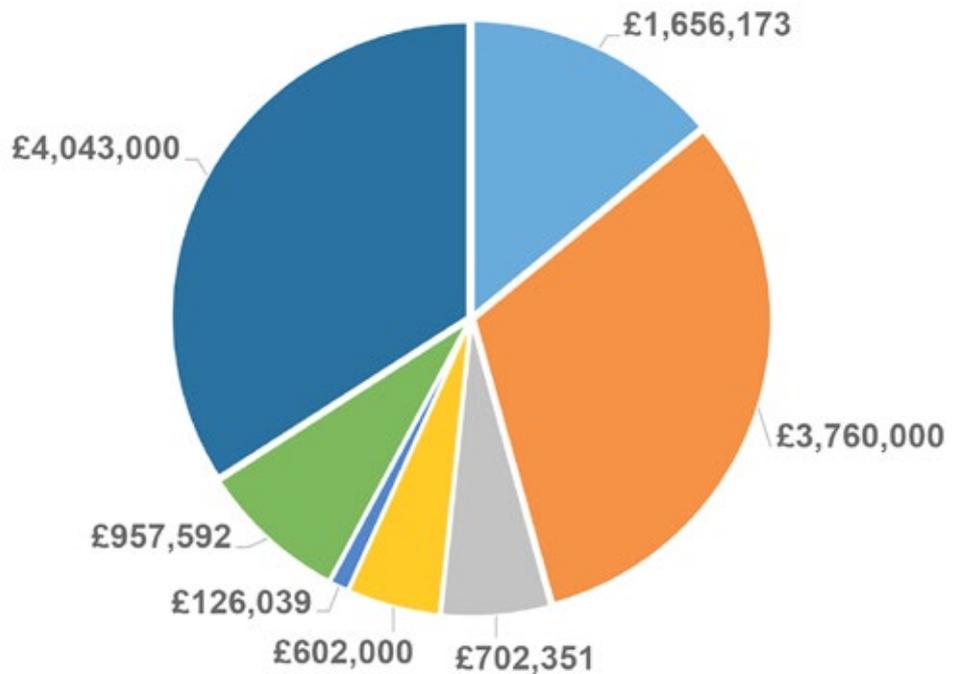
Your views are very important to us and will be taken into account by the Home Scotland Board before a final decision is taken. We are now seeking your views on the proposals for rent from 1st April next year. You can now give us your views online as well as by post. A list of methods are included at the end of this newsletter.



Involvement

What does your rent pay for?

	Employment costs £1,656,173
	Maintenance costs £3,760,000
	Service charges £702,351
	Direct housing £602,000
	Staff overheads £126,039
	Facilities & other £957,592
	Depreciation £4,043,000



Source: Home in Scotland Ltd 2017/2018 Draft Budget

- Maintenance costs include all day to day expenditure on general repairs as well as cyclical maintenance. In addition we plan to commit nearly £1.3 million for replacement works such as new bathrooms.
- Other direct housing costs include customer involvement, housing property insurance, non-recoverable servicing costs and legal fees (including debt collection).
- Facilities costs include office rent, rates and establishment costs such as stationery, postage and printing.
- Depreciation is the decrease in the cost of our housing properties and other assets over their anticipated lifetime. It is used to pay for property improvements over a period of time.
- Other costs include professional fees and external advisory costs.





What did we achieve in 2015/2016?

Between 1st April and 31st March 2016 we:

- Let **372** houses
- Collected **99.02%** of rent
- Built **107** new homes for social rent

Repairs, maintenance and improvements

- Completed **3,032** emergency and **7,250** non-emergency repairs
- Carried out **3,326** annual gas services
- We replaced **150** bathrooms, **198** kitchens and boilers, **76** windows, **42** front doors
- We kept **94.7%** of repairs appointments made compared to **80.8%** in 2014/15
- **72.1%** of our customers who had repairs and maintenance carried out were satisfied with the service they received

Involving and supporting customers

- We supported **225** customers to gain an additional **£260,000** income through our Supporting Tenancies project in Dundee
- We involved **101** customers to help deliver the Scottish Social Housing Charter

During next year, we will

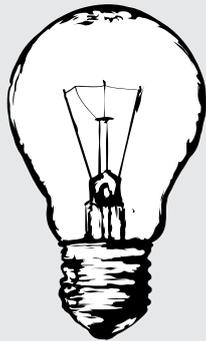
- replace 10 boilers
- replace 80 bathrooms
- replace 221 kitchens
- install 18 full central heating systems
- replace 203 doors



About service charges

Service charges costs are based on the actual cost of delivery of the service. They apply to maintenance of communal areas such as:

- grounds maintenance
- communal cleaning
- door entry repairs
- lift maintenance
- bulky uplifts and waste
- stair lighting



Charges are applied to the scheme in which your property is located. Not all homes receive all service charges. We work with our procurement team to ensure we are delivering quality services at as low a cost as possible. We are currently in the process of tendering for our Grounds Maintenance and Cleaning Contracts.

Once we have received the new costs for these services, which we realise are a high percentage of your service charges, we will be able to advise you of the actual costs you will be asked to pay from April 2017.

Home Scotland Board and staff are fully aware of the economic situation and the impact on our customers, especially with respect of the Welfare Reform changes.

As you are aware, Home Scotland does not operate for profit but that income and any surplus is directed towards the delivery of all aspects of our services and investment in your homes. Our income comes directly from our customers and it is essential that we are commercially aware and strive to achieve value for money.

Money advice

The Money Advice Service is an independent organisation providing free, clear and unbiased advice about money. If you'd like advice on budgeting, saving, credit, borrowing, insurance, mortgages, pensions or retirement planning, their trained money advisors will be able to help.

All Home Group customers can receive:

- A 45 minute face-to-face appointment with a qualified money advisor
- Guidance on any of the money topics mentioned
- An action plan to take away with recommendations for actions you can take
- The opportunity to book a follow up appointment.

For information and advice or to order Money Advice Service guides, call the money advice line on **0800 138 7777** or go online at www.moneyadvice.org.uk

Calls are free.



Help with your rent

If you're worried about paying your rent or finding it hard to keep up please contact the Customer Service Centre on **0345 141 4663** as soon as possible.

We'll help you stay on top of your rent by letting you know about any overdue payments straight away before they escalate into bigger debts. Small arrears are easier to pay than if they get out of hand.

We're committed to supporting customers who may be experiencing difficulties.

You can also get free, impartial and confidential advice from the following agencies:

National Debt Helpline

Tel: **0808 808 4000**

Web: **www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/Scotland**

Citizens Advice Scotland

To find your local citizens advice bureau

Web: **www.cas.org.uk**

Money Advice Scotland

To help you find a money adviser in your local area

Tel: **0141 572 0237**

Web: **www.moneyadvicescotland.org.uk/find-adviser**

StepChange Debt Charity

Tel: **0800 138 1111**

Web: **www.stepchange.org**



Citrus switch for homes

Citrus Switch is an easy to use service specifically designed to make switching your domestic energy supplier a simple and straightforward process.

All it takes is a 5 to 10 minute call and by calling from a landline on free phone number **0800 221 8089**, you won't even pay for the call!

Simply have a copy of your latest gas and electricity bills to hand and call to speak to the energy advice team. The Citrus advisers will ask you for some information from your bills and then they will take care of everything else. Citrus Energy corresponds with the energy suppliers on your behalf from start to finish.

Citrus offer a 100% impartial service and will show you every energy price from every energy supplier currently available. **Currently Citrus customers have the potential to save an average of £208 per annum on their combined gas and electricity bills.**

Switching energy supplier needn't be complicated. Citrus Energy makes it an easy process and with their ongoing support they will automatically review your tariffs every 6 months to ensure you continue to get the best deal.

Please note that if you call from a mobile you will be charged at your Network Provider's rate.

Contact Citrus on FREEPHONE **0800 221 8089**



Energy saving quick wins

We're all responsible for the energy we use in our homes. There are many things you can do to reduce how much energy you use and how much is spent.

Here are some quick tips from the Energy Saving Trust which can help you save as much energy as possible. You can also check out their website at:

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/home-energy-efficiency



1. Switch off standby

You can save around £30 a year just by remembering to turn your appliances off standby mode. Almost all electrical and electronic appliances can be turned off at the plug without upsetting their programming.

You may want to think about getting a standby saver which allows you to turn all your appliances off standby in one go.

Check the instructions for any appliances you aren't sure about. Some satellite and digital TV recorders may need to be left plugged in so they can keep track of any programmes you want to record.

2. Spend less time in the shower

Spending one minute less in the shower each day will save around £10 off your energy bills each year, per person.

3. Careful in your kitchen

You can save around £50 a year just by using your kitchen appliances more carefully:

- Use a bowl to wash up rather than a running tap and save £30 a year in energy bills
- Only fill the kettle with the amount of water that you need and save around £7 a year
- Cutback your washing machine use by just one cycle per week and save £5 a year on energy, and a further £8 a year on metered water bills.



4. Draught excluder

Unless your home is very new, you will lose some heat through draughts around doors and windows, gaps around the floor, or through the chimney. DIY draught-proofing of windows, doors and blocking cracks in floors and skirting boards can cost around £200, but can save up to £25 to £35 a year on energy bills.

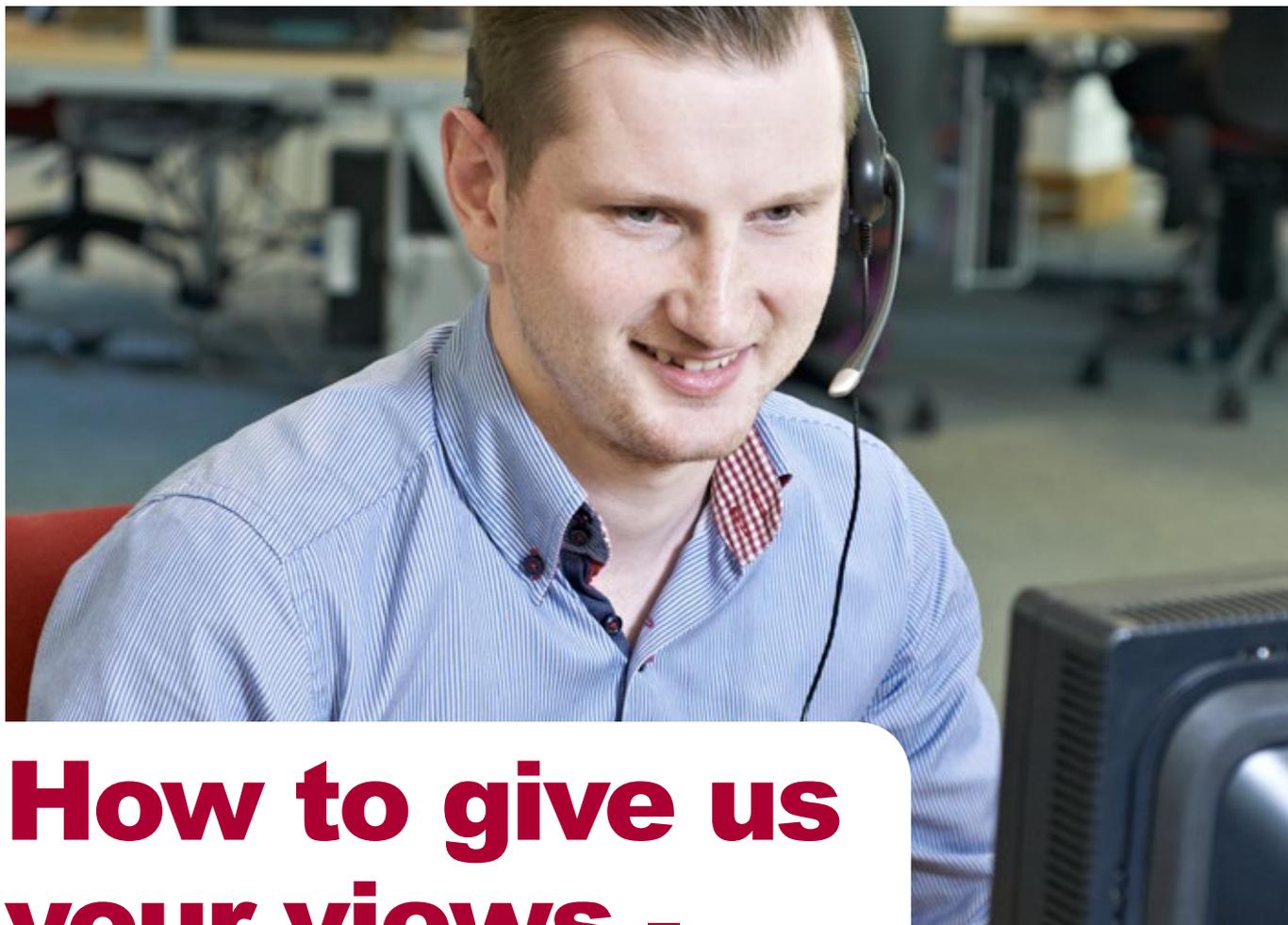


5. Take control of your heating

Turning down your room thermostat by just one degree can save between £85 and £90 a year.

6. Turn off lights

Turn your lights off when you're not using them. If you switch a light off for just a few seconds, you will save more energy than it takes for the light to start up again, regardless of the type of light. This will save you around £15 on your annual energy bills.



How to give us your views -

By the 6th January 2017 please

- Use the enclosed slip to give us your comments and return in the pre-paid envelope provided
- Via our website - www.homegroup.org.uk/homescotlandinfo
- Check out our **Facebook page**
- Twitter **@homegroup**
- Log into **anyone@home**

Throughout the year we hold various customer involvement events where we ask for your views on a number of subjects including value for money and how services are delivered.

If you would like to influence the quality and cost of the services we provide to you there are many ways you can become involved.

Please check our website at www.homegroup.org.uk/getinvolved to get information on all involvement opportunities at Home Scotland.



Communication needs

Please let us know if you would like an audio tape or large print version of this information. If you need any part of this document to be translated please contact the Customer Service Centre on **0345 141 4663**.

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