

2020/21 Rent and Service Charge Consultation – Summary of Responses

This is a summary of the report that was provided to the Board for their meeting on 11 February 2020.

If you would like to see a full copy of this report please contact us.

Rent and Service Charge Proposal

The proposal which was put to tenants was:

Rents Proposal:

- To increase rents by 2%

Service Charges Proposal:

- Most service charges would increase by 2%
- Common area charges would increase by £1.44 per month
- Communal heating charges would decrease
- New service charge for communal heating and hot water to be introduced where tenants receive both services
- Charges for gardening and food would increase but this would be variable according to area

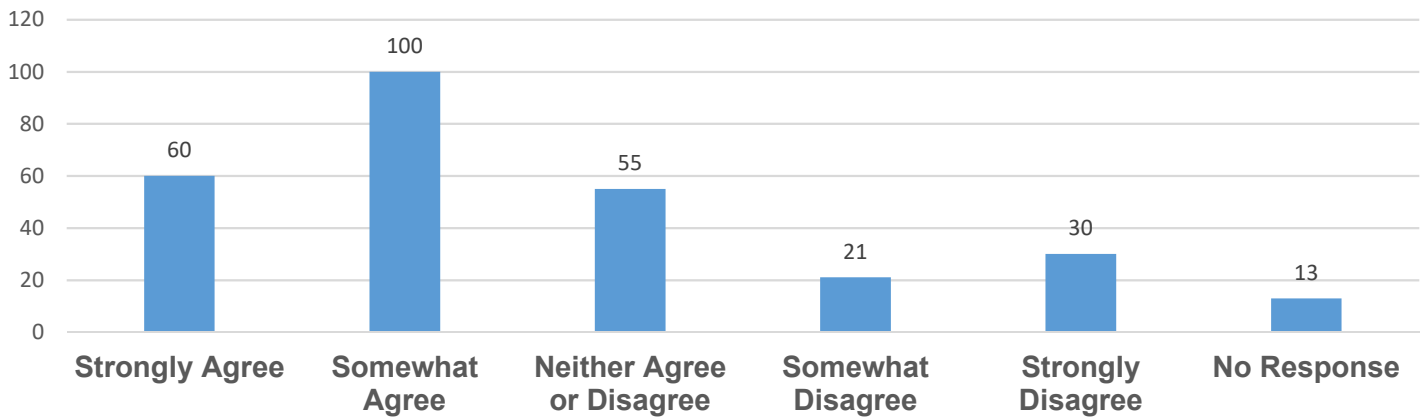
Responses

We received **279 responses**, a response rate of 21.1% of our tenants.

The survey responses are summarised below. At the end of the survey tenants were asked to add their name and telephone number if they wished a call from a member of staff to discuss their feedback.

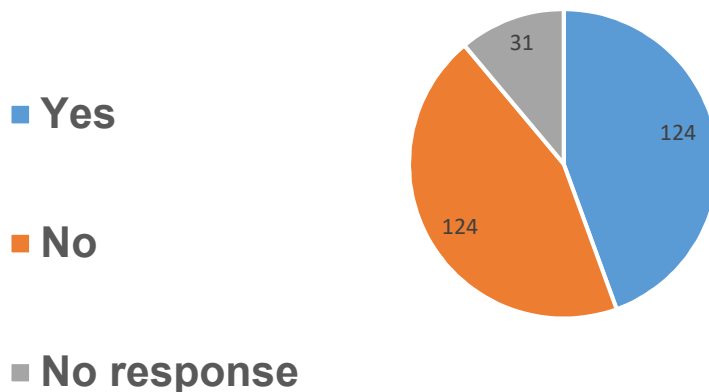
87 of the 279 responses requested a call back. All of these tenants were contacted during January and any additional comments were included in the report that was sent to the Board. Most of these queries were not relating to the rent proposal but related to other housing issues.

Do you agree that a rent increase is necessary to maintain service and investment in our stock?



| | Number | % |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree | 60 | 21.5% |
| Somewhat Agree | 100 | 35.8% |
| Neutral/No comment | 55 | 19.7% |
| Somewhat Disagree | 21 | 7.5% |
| Strongly Disagree | 30 | 10.8% |
| No Response | 13 | 4.7% |
| Total | 279 | 100% |

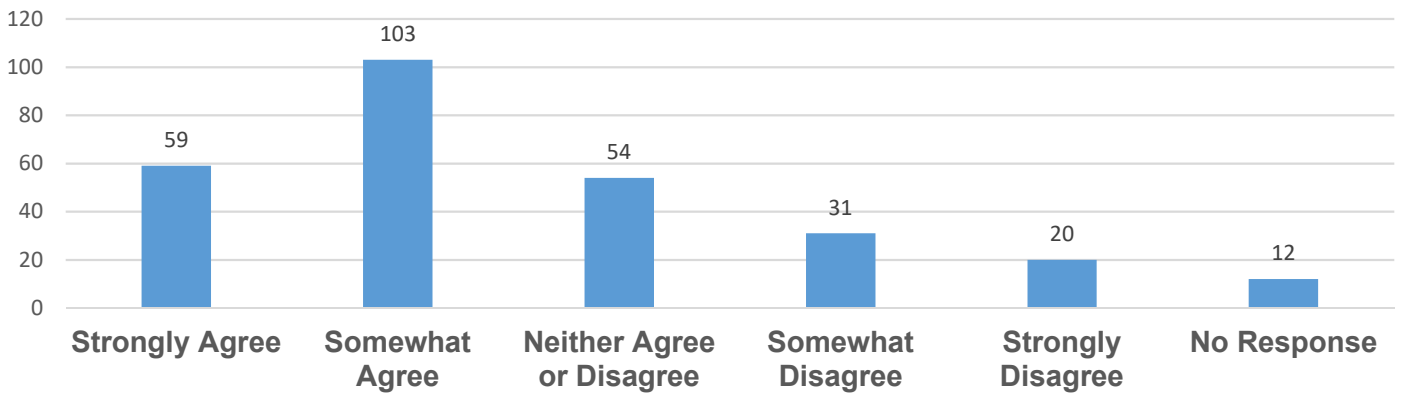
Do you agree that we should introduce a new service charge for heating and hot water?



| | Number | % |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Yes | 124 | 44.5% |
| No | 124 | 44.5% |
| No Response | 31 | 11% |
| Total | 279 | 100% |

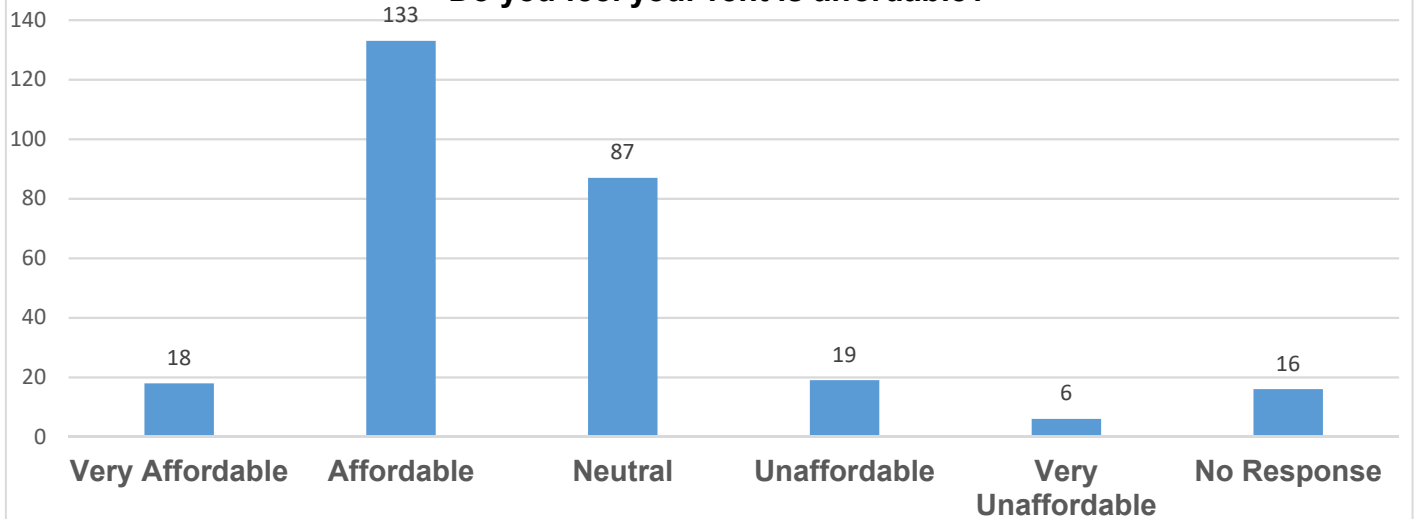
The response to this question was surprising as many of the people who will benefit from the reduced charge (central heating only) said they did not agree with the new charge for those receiving central heating and hot water. After reviewing the comments it would appear that the proposal had not been clearly understood and perhaps the leaflet should have had more information on this.

Do you feel you get value for money from Viewpoint?

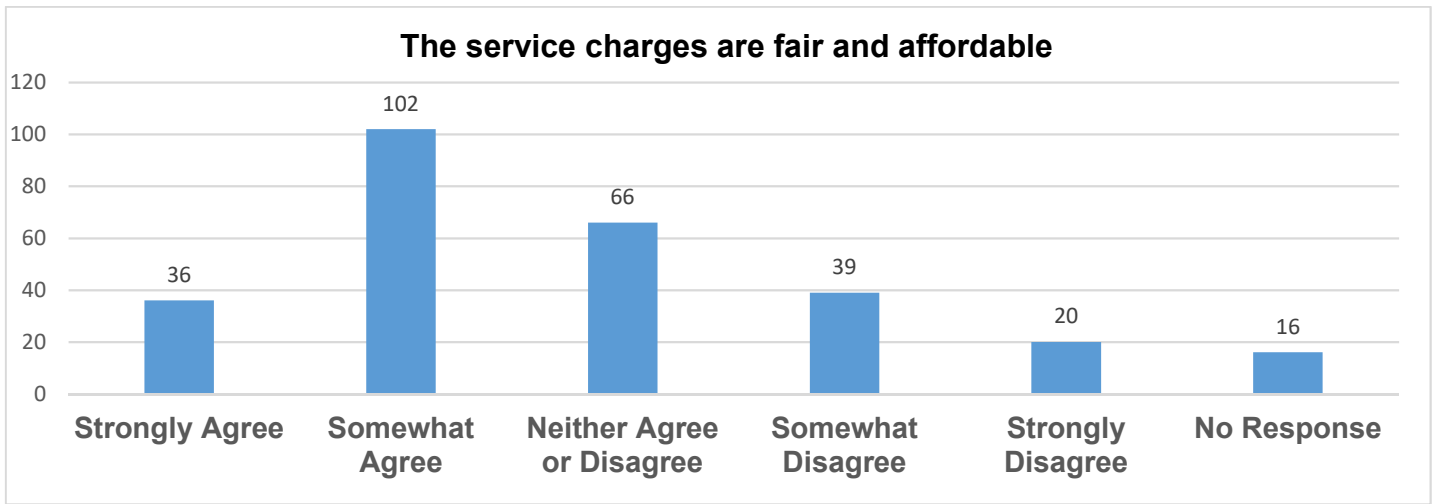


| | Number | % |
|---------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree | 59 | 21.2% |
| Somewhat Agree | 103 | 36.9% |
| Neither Agree or Disagree | 54 | 19.4% |
| Somewhat Disagree | 31 | 11% |
| Strongly Disagree | 20 | 7.2% |
| No Response | 12 | 4.3% |
| Totals | 279 | 100% |

Do you feel your rent is affordable?



| | Number | % |
|-------------------|------------|-------------|
| Very Affordable | 18 | 6.5% |
| Affordable | 133 | 47.7% |
| Neutral | 87 | 31.2% |
| Unaffordable | 19 | 6.8% |
| Very Unaffordable | 6 | 2.1% |
| No Response | 16 | 5.7% |
| Total | 279 | 100% |



| | Number | % |
|---------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Strongly Agree | 36 | 12.9% |
| Somewhat Agree | 102 | 36.6% |
| Neither Agree or Disagree | 66 | 23.7% |
| Somewhat Disagree | 39 | 13.9% |
| Strongly Disagree | 20 | 7.2% |
| No Response | 16 | 5.7% |
| Total | 279 | 100% |

Summary of comments on the proposal

A summary of the comments is below, negative and positive comments and also some comments that do not directly relate to the proposal but are indirectly related to the services we provide. Comments from consultation with the Viewpoint Tenants and Residents Group (VTRG) and Fife Viewpoint Tenants Group are included at the end of this section.

Negative Comments

- Concern about affordability now and in the future
 - If circumstances change
 - If the rents increase further
 - If cost of living continues to increase
 - If benefits are not increased accordingly
 - If living on minimum wage and this does not increase
 - If rent increase is greater than superannuation increase
 - If it means have to use some of savings to supplement income to pay this and other bills
- Rent charges too high for 1 bedroom properties with a single bedroom as it is the same rent as those with a double bedroom
- Concern that increases with Viewpoint are greater than with other housing providers
- Need for investment in some of our properties and common areas
- Need for investment in providing showers in flats as baths inaccessible for many
- Disparity of services in some areas in relation to heating and hot water charges
- Disparity in services between Fife and Edinburgh
- An occasional rent freeze would be appreciated
- Feel that gardeners and window cleaners could provide a better service
- Being charged for using the common laundry although not used

Positive Comments

- Decrease in heating and hot water charges welcomed
- Increases to rent and service charges fair, especially service charges which have increased very little in recent years
- Increase fair providing money re-invested in properties
- Welcome reintroduction of handyman service
- Overall services are satisfactory
- Acceptance that cost of living charges, including rent and service charges, are increasing
- Satisfied and happy with the service
- Finds term affordability difficult but happy with services provided
- Repairs service good and homes comfortable and well maintained
- Safe and supported environment with good staff

Other Comments

- Housing benefit will cover the increases
- What is our investment programme
- Repairs service could be more efficient and effective
- Would like internet available in common room
- Would like security entry doors reviewed
- Suggestion that rents should be structure around council tax charges
- Would like a stair cleaning service and would be happy to pay for this
- Do the Board receive all the comments made by tenants and do they take these into account?

Consultation with Viewpoint Tenants and Residents Group

The Director met with the VTRG on two occasions.

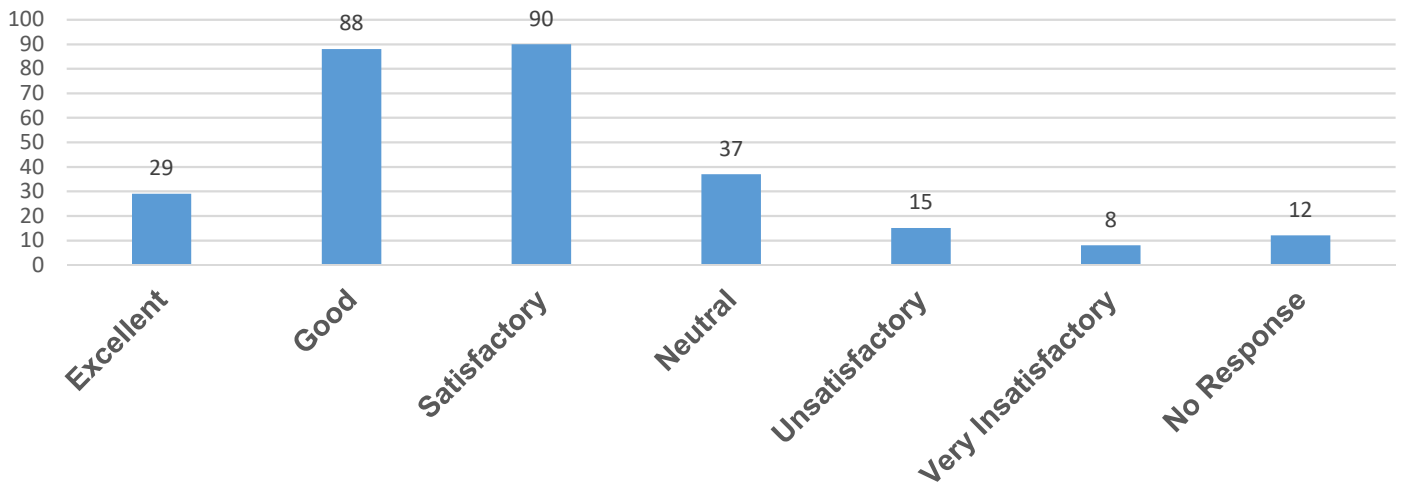
VTRG felt that the proposal was a fait accompli and there was no benefit in discussing this. VTRG final comments that they wished recorded were as follows:

- They had no great objection to the rent and service charge proposals.
- They would like the Board to consider a rent freeze for 2021/22

Consultation with Fife Viewpoint Tenants Group

The Director attended the Open Forum of the Fife Viewpoint Tenants Group. Various issues were clarified regarding the proposal and how money was spent. The tenants made no recommendation and appeared to have no great objection to the proposals.

How would you rate the information in the rent and service charge proposal leaflet?



| | Number | % |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|
| Excellent | 29 | 10.4% |
| Good | 88 | 31.5% |
| Satisfactory | 90 | 32.3% |
| Neutral | 37 | 13.2% |
| Unsatisfactory | 15 | 5.4% |
| Very Unsatisfactory | 8 | 2.9% |
| No Response | 12 | 4.3% |
| Total | 279 | 100% |