

**Housing, Neighbourhood
and Building Services**

Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth
PO1 2AL

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Dear Resident

Have your say on next year's rent and service charges by 29 December

Each year the council, your landlord, consults with you when setting rents and other charges that come into force from 1 April 2024. We have set out our proposed changes to rents below.

Rents

The level of rent increase that we can make is based on the inflation rate in September of each year plus 1%. The consumer prices index rate in September was 6.7 % so the maximum we can increase your rent by is 7.7%. This is below what we need to spend to maintain the services we provide for you (to do that, we would need to increase rents by 9.5%).

- The proposed 7.7% increase will generate £5.9m to help keep those local services running. If your rent is £100.00 per week, it would rise to £107.70 (an increase of £7.70).

The council will not increase any rent charges above the local housing allowance rate. This means that all rent charges will be less than the maximum allowed for housing benefit or universal credit, so your full rent will be eligible for benefits (your entitlement will depend on your household income and savings).

Heating charges

We have 15 blocks where we provide heating, and in some cases hot water. Our policy is to set the heating charge so that the full cost of heating and hot water is paid by the tenants in those blocks. We have reduced energy consumption and negotiated better tariffs with energy providers and are proposing a reduction in rates for blocks using gas or combined heat and power (CHP) energy. We do however need to propose an increase in rates for the blocks using electricity energy.

- If you currently pay £15.00 per week, your weekly charge will increase to £16.58 in Edgbaston & Tipton (electric), reduce to £10.75 in the sheltered blocks (gas) and reduce to £11.91 in the Dickens blocks (CHP).

Other charges

We set **general service charges** to pay for things like cleaning communal areas, the out-of-hours telephone service, money advice team and grounds maintenance. The proposed charges are:

- £7.42 per week for houses and bungalows (increase of £0.28 per week)
- £20.02 per week for flats, bedsits and maisonettes (increase of £1.82 per week)

Sheltered housing charges are only paid by tenants in these schemes and cover specific costs of shared facilities. The proposed charges are:

- £19.61 per week for tenants in category 1 schemes (increase of £1.27 per week)
- £64.25 per week for tenants in category 2 schemes (increase of £3.49 per week)
- £114.52 per week for tenants in category 2.5 schemes (increase of £6.72 per week)

Laundry costs - the proposed cost of laundry tokens in our blocks will be frozen next year, having risen for the first time in five years to reflect increased energy costs this year. The proposed charges are:

- Wash machine token £3.00 (no increase)
- Tumble dryer token £2.00 (no increase)

Garages and parking spaces - the current year's charges for garage and parking spaces were increased by inflation.

- A similar inflationary increase of 6.7% is proposed for 2024/25.

Tell us what you think.

We want to hear your views. We've used some of our recent resident engagement events to talk about the plans but if you haven't spoken to us yet, you can:

- feedback at the Residents Meeting on 4 January 2024 from 10am-12 noon at The Hub, Somerstown Central (contact the resident engagement team if you need help with transport)
- call us on 023 9383 4835
- send a text message to 07826 046712
- email housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- Write to us or make an appointment to see us at

The Resident Engagement Centre, 37 Sharps Road, Havant, Hants, PO9 5QJ

We want to hear from as many people as possible, but we need your feedback by **29 December 2023**. This gives us time to consider all your views before the decision meeting at 9.30am on Friday 26 January 2024 in the Council Chamber of the Guildhall.

If you are experiencing problems paying your rent, please contact your housing officer. If you would like information about cost-of-living support, please visit **portsmouth.gov.uk/costofliving** or call **023 9284 1047**

Yours sincerely

James Hill
Director of Housing Neighbourhood and Building Services