

**Rent and Service Charges
2021-2022
Consultation**

Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022 Overview

Overview

The City of Wolverhampton Council's (CWC) Housing Services are required to undertake an annual review of its rent and service charges.

In February 2019 the government confirmed that it will resume the policy to increase rents by consumer price index (CPI) plus 1% from 1 April 2020 for five years.

For the financial year 2020-2021 a 2.7% increase was approved, this increase allowed us to build more Council homes and make improvements to housing quality by helping to fund the projects set out below:

- A pitched re-roofing programme.
- A re-roofing programme converting flat roofs to pitch roofs.
- Year 2 of the Heath Town refurbishment project.
- Year 2 of the programme to improve high-rise flats including improving fire safety and renewing services in tower blocks (electric and water supplies). It also includes installing sprinkler systems.
- Improving the decency of homes as they become empty as well as homes used for temporary accommodation.
- Delivering over 50 new build council homes.

For the financial year 2021-2022 an increase of 1.5% will be proposed to Cabinet in January 2021.

The impact of the rent increase is detailed in the table below:

CWC Social Rent	Average Rent 2020-2021	1.5% (CPI plus 1%)	Average weekly increase
1 Bedroom	£68.54	£69.57	£1.03
2 Bedroom	£76.62	£77.77	£1.15
3 Bedroom	£87.18	£88.49	£1.31
All Properties	£79.08	£80.27	£1.19

This increase would allow the Council to maximise investment in new build Council housing and improve housing quality and the safety of homes.

Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022 Overview

For 2021-2022 our priorities will include:

- Repairs - continue to improve our repairs and maintenance service.
- Customer experience - enabling customers to deal with us easily and ensure that they are listened to through a variety of channels.
- Community focused - being more visible out in the neighbourhoods. As we move towards more digital channels with more customers using services online, we want to ensure that that we're more visible in the community too. The Estate Custodian approach allows us to go to the customer rather than they having to come to us.
- Smart working - developing digital platforms and a new website that will provide ease of access and speed in responding to calls.
- Helping communities to stay safe and secure.
- Keep neighbourhoods clean and tidy.
- Planned maintenance, investment and improvements to homes - responsive repairs, planned repairs, improvements and adaptations; asbestos and fire reviews - materials used, and specifications.
- Supporting the City Housing Strategy to provide more homes.
- Wrap around services - supporting the challenges Universal Credit poses; welfare benefits and money advice.
- Making improvements to aids and adaptations - quicker and easier for people with a disability to have access to what is needed.
- Working to make the city a more environmentally friendly city.

Why did we consult?

As part of Council's commitment to involving tenants and other service users in the management of housing services, City of Wolverhampton Council invited views from tenants and leaseholders in respect of rent and service charges and the Council's priorities for 2021-2022.

The Consultation

The consultation was in the form of a short survey inviting views on two areas, the Council's priorities for 2021-2022 and value for money for rent paid.

Priorities

- Do you agree with the Council's priorities for 2021-2022? - Yes/No
- Do you agree with the Council's priorities for 2021-2022? - If no, please add any comments.

Value for money

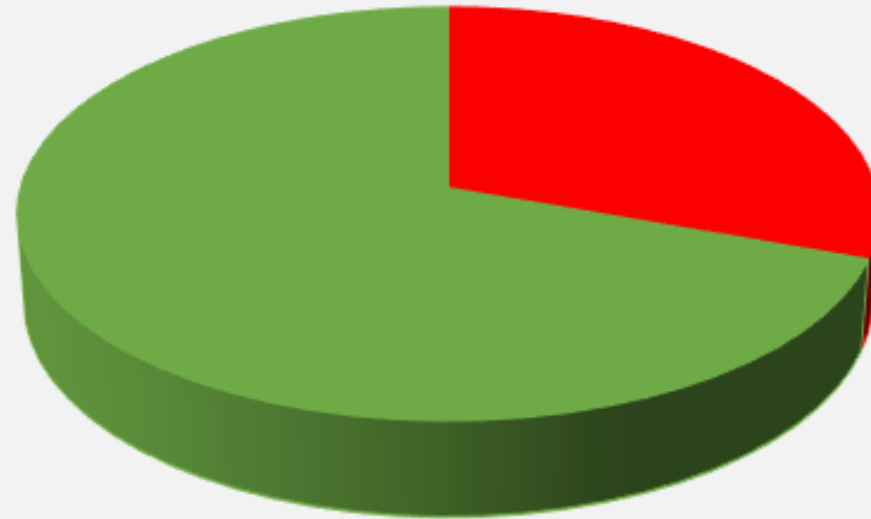
- Do you feel the amount of rent you pay offers value for money? - Yes/No
- Do you feel the amount of rent you pay offers value for money? - If no, please add any comments.

Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022 Priorities, Question 1

Do you agree with the priorities for 2021-2022? Yes/No

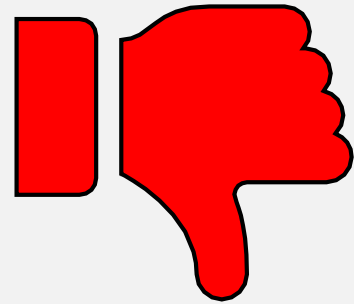


Yes
70%



■ No
■ Yes

No
30%



	Count	%
Yes	249	70
No	109	30
Totals	358	100

Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022

Priorities, Question 2

If no, please add any comments:

- **104 out of 109** respondents who answered no left comments.
- Some respondents noted multiple priorities within their comments.
- All comments were reviewed and grouped into themes.

Repairs
Fencing
Roofs and Guttering
Parking
Windows and Doors
Investing in Existing Stock

Some priorities were clear and specific and have been grouped as follows on the left.

However, many comments were generalised and have been grouped under one of the following themes to the right.

Financial
Condition
Health and Safety
Communication / Customer Service
Allocations Policy

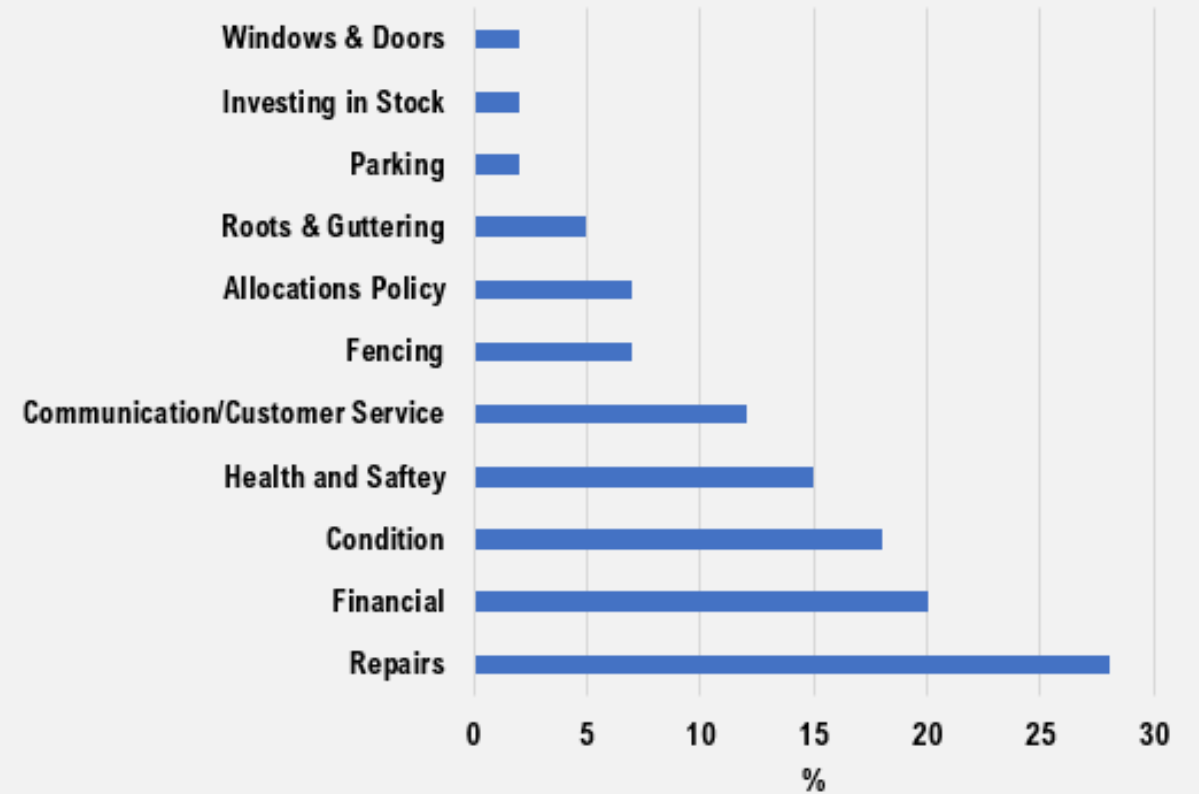
Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022 Priorities, Question 2

Respondent priorities:

Top Themes

1	Repairs	28%
2	Financial	20%
3	Condition	18%
4	Health and Safety	15%
5	Communications / Customer Services	12%
= 6 th	Fencing	7%
= 6 th	Allocations Policy	7%
7	Roofs and Guttering	5%
= 8 th	Parking	2%
= 8 th	Invest in existing stock	2%
= 8 th	Windows and Doors	2%

Note: Percentages are based on number of respondents who answered no and commented. The total of all percentages will exceed 100 due to respondents giving multiple answers.



Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022 Priorities, Question 2 – Top 5 Themes

1

Repairs

Respondents comments have shown that improvement regarding repairs is a priority for them, with the most frequent comments below:

- Not being done or part done
 - Poor quality
 - Long waiting times
 - Not being prioritised

17% of respondents who felt repairs should be prioritised also noted poor communication and/or customer service experience.

14% of respondents who felt repairs should be prioritised noted that they are aware 2020 as been a difficult period for everyone which may have resulted in issues and longer waiting times.

2

Financial

This theme groups together where respondents have commented on finances, including but not limited to: financial struggles, support, charges (rent/service/utilities) and affordability.

85% of comments were generally about financial struggles

15% were much specific relating to rent, service charges and lack of financial support

29% who commented on finances also noted the current pandemic as part of the reason

61% felt there should NOT be a rent increase and/or rents should be reduced.

3

Condition

This theme groups together where respondents have commented on the condition of their property (internal/external) and/or communal areas and/or the estate they live on.

47% of respondent comments on condition were referring the estate they live on, some were general comments and some more specific should as cleanliness.

16% commented on the internal condition of their property

16% commented on the external (Inc. garden)

16% commented on the condition of shared/communal areas

4

Communication/ Customer Service

This theme groups together comments regard communication and customer service, most frequently were noted were:

- General comments to improve communication and customer service
- Improve digital platforms, but also still give an option if the customer doesn't wish to use these.

5

Security

This theme groups together comments specifically noting health and safety along with not limited to: ASB, security, Mental Health, Adaptations, Disabilities.

40% of respondents who commented on health and safety referred to ASB within their estate

27% of respondents noted security concerns

Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022

Priorities, Question 2

Other Themes:

Allocations Policy

This is where comments have been made in respect of the Allocations Policy, these comments have involved improving or reviewing:

Waiting times

Bedroom criteria

Bidding process

Parking

Improvement to parking in areas with restricted parking and older properties that don't have driveways.

Roofs and Guttering

Roof replacement programme and regular cleaning of guttering.

Investing in existing stock

Improvement to current properties rather than building new properties.

Fencing

General need for improved fencing or a fencing programme on their estate.

Windows and Doors

Improvements to doors and windows due to draughts, damp which also as knock-on affect on heating bills.

Other notable comments:

- **COVID-19**
The impact of the pandemic was mentioned on 14% of all respondent comments in addition to their specific priorities noted.
- Climate change
- Homelessness
- Increase stock
- Bin / waste collections

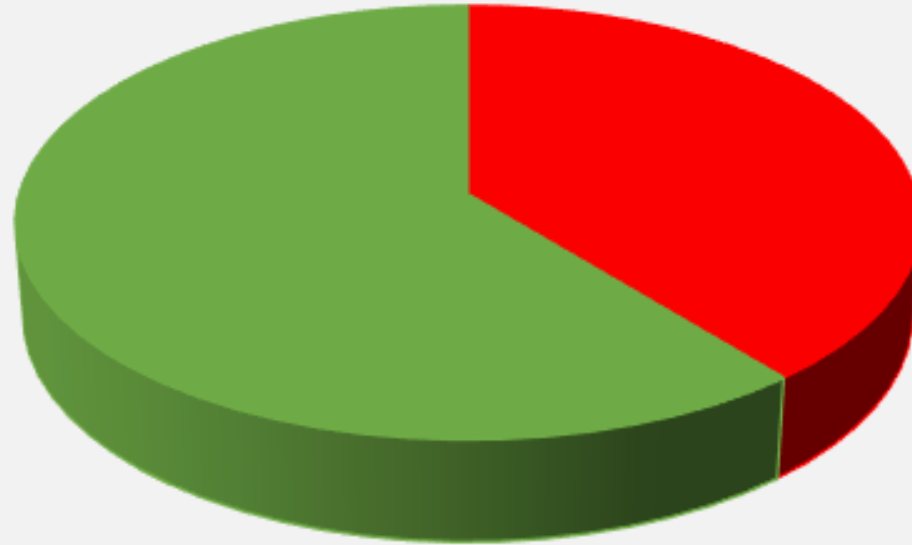
Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022

Value for Money, Question 1

Do you feel the amount of rent you pay offers value for money? Yes/No

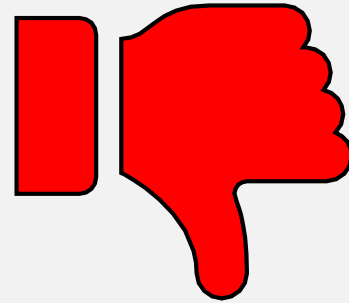


Yes
61%



■ No
■ Yes

No
39%



	Count	%
Yes	218	61
No	140	39
Totals	358	100

Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022

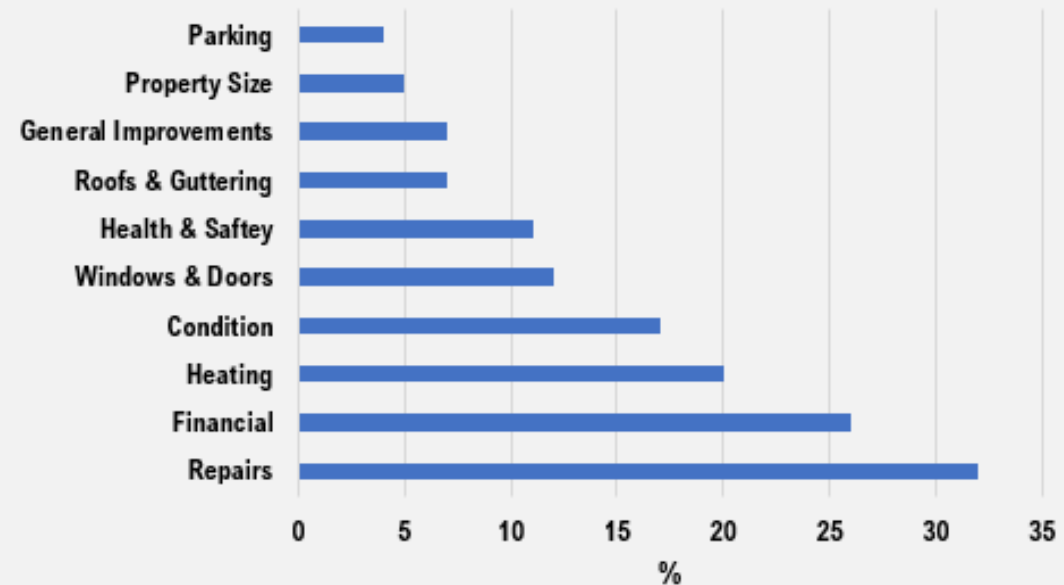
Value for Money, Question 2

If no, please add any comments:

- **119 out of 140** respondents who answered no left comments.
- Some respondents noted more than one reason why they felt rent paid was not value for money.
- All comments have been reviewed and grouped based on the same themes used for question 1.

Top Themes

1	Repairs	32%
2	Financial	26%
3	Heating	20%
4	Condition	17%
5	Windows & Doors	12%
6	Health and Safety	11%
= 7 th	Roof & Guttering	7%
= 7 th	General Improvements	7%
8	Property Size	5%
9	Parking	4%



Note: Percentages are based on number of respondents who answered no and commented. The total of all percentages will exceed 100 due to respondents giving multiple answers.

Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022

Value for Money, Question 2 – Top 5 Themes

1

Repairs

Respondents comments have shown that improvement regarding repairs is required before they feel like rent paid will offer value for money, respondents biggest concerns were:

- Not being done or part done – this was by far the biggest concern with 50% of those respondents who commented on repairs pinpointing this as the reason.
- Poor quality (18%)
- Long waiting times (16%)
- Having to get work done themselves to bring their home to decent standard
- Only done if an emergency

2

Financial

This theme groups together where respondents have commented on finances, including but not limited to: financial struggles, support, charges (rent/service/utilities) and affordability.

- 74% of comments were generally about the rent being too high and respondents also noting comparisons with similar or bigger properties with smaller rents.
- Services charges (10%)
- Financial Support (10%)
- Bedroom Tax (6%)

3

Heating

This theme groups together comments regarding heating at their property:

- 54% of comments regarding heating were general comments and did not cover a specific area.

Below are where respondents gave specific issues regarding heating at their property.

- Damp and Mould (17%)
- Insulation - poor or none (8%)
- Radiators – poor quality or need replacing (8%)
- Boiler – not working or poor quality (8%)

4

Condition

This theme groups together where respondents have commented on the condition of their property (internal/external) and/or communal areas and/or the estate they live on.

40% of respondent comments on condition were referring the communal or shared areas, with most comments being in respect of the cleanliness.

30% commented on the internal condition of their property

15% commented on the external (Inc. garden)

15% commented on the estate they live on

5

Windows & Doors

This theme groups together comments specifically windows and doors as a reason the felt rent paid was not value for money.

Generally there were more comments on windows, with 86% of respondents mentioning windows within their comments with general quality an draughts being the biggest issues. The key points are listed below:

Doors:

- General quality
- Broken – including jammed, stuck, leaking, draughts
 - Not secure

Windows:

- Broken – including vents, seals, jammed and draughts
- Quality (including age)

Rent and Service Charges 2021-2022

Value for Money, Question 2

Other Themes:

Health and Safety

This is where comments have been made in respect of the Health and Safety, the two main themes noted within this group were:

ASB

Security

General comments were also made in respect of the general condition of respondents properties or quality of work done which caused concern.

General Improvements

Comments have been made regarding the need for general improvements and maintenance to be carried out more regularly.

Roofs and Guttering

Roof maintenance and regular cleaning of guttering.

Property Size

Too small, lack of space and storage.

Parking

Improvement to communal parking areas including lighting and security.

Other notable comments

Plumbing
Allocations Policy
Covid-19
Bin/waste collection