

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. **How much is my rent increasing by and when?**

Your rents will be increasing by 7% from 3 April 2023. We have written to you to tell you the new amount you will be paying from this date.

### 2. **Why are rents increasing?**

The decision to increase rents has been a really difficult one, especially with the rising cost of living. We need to balance this increase with the rising costs of maintaining and repairing homes and providing quality services. The income from the rent is reinvested by Cheshire West & Chester Council into neighborhoods and communities. Without the rent increase, it's likely that the Council would have to significantly scale back or slow down their plans to maintain and improve homes, services and neighbourhoods.

### 3. **How is the rent increase calculated?**

Like all Councils and social housing providers, the Council follow the Government's guidelines on rent-setting. It is worked out by taking the previous September's Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate, which was 10.1% in September 2022 and adding 1% to it. Because the CPI was very high last September, instead of increasing rent by 11.1%, the Government has agreed to cap the rent increase at 7% instead.

### 4. **What is CPI?**

CPI – the Consumer Price Index – is a figure used to measure inflation. It reflects how much the price of common goods and services changes over time across the UK. CPI is higher than last year because the cost of goods and services has increased more sharply than it has done in previous years, largely because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. As a result, the amount rents can increase under the Government formula has also gone up.

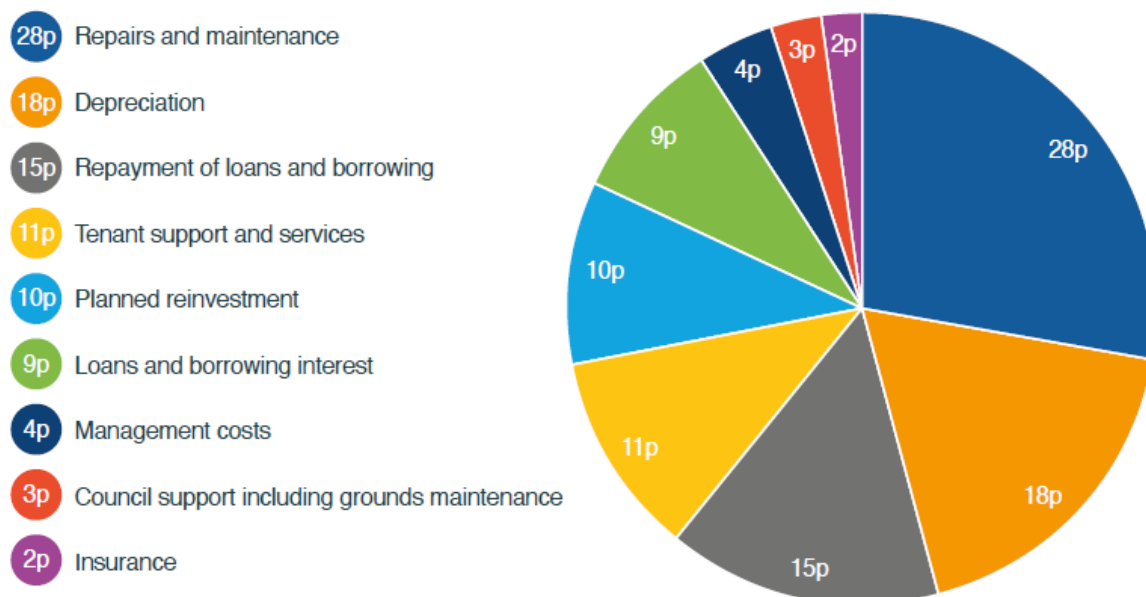
### 5. **What do I need to do if my rent and/or service charge is increasing?**

This depends on how you pays your rent:

- **Direct debit**  
You don't need to do anything; your payment will change automatically and you will receive a separate notification from Allpay in due course.
- **Standing order**  
You need to contact your bank and change your standing order to the new rent amount from 3 April.
- **Phone, Allpay or any other method**  
You will need to change the amount of rent you pay from 3 April.
- **I receive housing benefit**  
We have notified Housing Benefits of the increase and you will need to check your new rent notification letter when you receive it to check that the rent used in your new award is correct.
- **I receive Universal Credit**  
You must notify the Department for Work and Pensions of your rent increase on 3 April through your online journal. It's important to note that you won't be able to let them know the rent change earlier than this date.

- 6. What happens if I have a question about changes in the rent on my garage or Lifelines?**  
Please complete an online [enquiry form](#) or call us on 0300 123 5522 and we'll be happy to help.
- 7. What happens if I have an enquiry about changes to shared ownership rent or leasehold charges?**  
Please complete an online [enquiry form](#) or call us on 0300 123 5522 and we'll be happy to help.
- 8. How is rent spent by Cheshire West & Chester Council?**  
Your rent pays for all services, repairs, maintenance and improvements to Council homes. This includes:
- Support and advice
  - Tenant wellbeing service
  - Managing estates and dealing with complaints
  - Collecting rents
  - Day-to-day repairs
  - Improvement to homes e.g. roof replacement, bathrooms, kitchens, central heating, rewiring, gas, electric and fire safety
  - Work on empty properties
  - Letting empty properties

The chart below shows how every £1 of rent is spent by Cheshire West & Chester Council:



- 9. What happens if I can't pay the new rent and/or service charge amount?**  
We want to work with you to understand any difficulties you may have in paying your rent or if you're struggling with the rising cost of living. If you have concerns then please complete an online [enquiry form](#) or call us on 0300 123 5522. We'll do all we can to support you.

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## 10. What support can I access if I'm struggling with money?

You are our priority and we will do everything we can to support you, particularly through the cost of living crisis.

For instance, we can help with making sure you're receiving all the financial support that you're entitled to, including Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. We can also support with everything from contacting utility suppliers, giving advice on budgeting, affordable credit options or managing debt. We also have dedicated Money Advisors who can help with debt advice and solutions and a wellbeing service which can provide tailored support.

Support is available from the [Cheshire West & Chester Council website](#) such as mental health and cost of living support. There's also lots of additional support that tenants can access via the [ForHousing website](#) – from accessing local food banks to how to contact Citizens Advice.

## 11. What should I do if I think my rent and/or service charge has been calculated incorrectly?

If you have concerns at all then please complete an online [enquiry form](#) or call us on 0300 123 5522.