

**HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
15 JANUARY 2025**

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**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – MTFP 2025-26 TO 2028-29**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025-26 to 2028-29 before recommendation by Cabinet on 4 February 2025 and approval by Council on 20 February 2025.

**Summary**

2. Attached at **Appendix 1** is the HRA - MTFP 2025-26 to 2028-29 report, which has been approved by Cabinet as a basis for consultation.

**Recommendations**

3. Members are requested to consider the HRA - MTFP 2025-26 to 2028-29 and make any recommendations to Cabinet, specifically in relation to the following recommendations:
  - (a) To implement an average weekly rent increase of 2.7% for 2025-26, giving an average social rent of £86.15 and affordable rent of £97.55.
  - (b) To increase garage rents and service charges as shown in Appendix 1.
  - (c) To approve the revenue budget at Appendix 1.
  - (d) To agree the Housing Business Plan at Appendix 1.
  - (e) To approve the capital programme at Appendix 1.

**Anthony Sandys**  
**Assistant Director – Housing and Revenues**

## Background Papers

### Regulator of Social Housing - Rent Standard

Anthony Sandys: Ext 6926

Council Plan	This report supports the Council Plan's HOMES priority to provide affordable and secure homes that meet the current and future needs of residents
Addressing inequalities	There are no issues which this report needs to address
Tackling Climate Change	There are a range of energy efficiency measures included in the business plan, which will support our Housing Services Climate Change Strategy
Efficient and effective use of resources	As the HRA is a ring-fenced budget every effort is made to maximise income and identify savings to maintain a high-quality service
Health and Wellbeing	By ensuring our housing stock is in good condition, we are making a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of our tenants
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	All wards with Council housing
Groups Affected	All Council tenants and leaseholders, and Lifeline service users
Budget and Policy Framework	The issues contained within this report require Council approval and the report will be presented to Council in February 2025
Key Decision	This is not a key decision for Cabinet, as the approval of Council in February 2025 will be required
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision for Cabinet, as the approval of Council in February 2025 will be required
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Background

4. Cabinet, at its meeting held on 3 December 2024, considered and approved the HRA - MTFP 2025-26 to 2028-29 at Appendix 1 as a basis for consultation.
5. Members are asked to consider the recommendations agreed by Cabinet in relation to the revenue budget, capital programme, rent levels and service charges for the Council's HRA for the financial year 2025-26 in the context of the HRA MTFP to 2028-29 and the 30-year business plan.

### Consultation

6. The Tenants Panel has been consulted about the proposals and a wider consultation with all Council tenants took place during December 2024.

### Outcome of Consultation

7. A consultation exercise was carried out with the Tenants Panel in December 2024, with overall supportive views about the proposed rent increase. The Panel's comments were as follows:
8. Do you agree with the proposal for Darlington Borough Council to increase their rents by 2.7% in April 2025?
  - (a) "It makes no difference as it will go up any way, it's a good thing that it's not gone up as much as last time".
  - (b) "Yes, absolutely I agree as I know the reasons behind it - it has to do to inflation".
  - (c) "As a rent payer it's necessary I agree".
  - (d) "I would like it to be lower, but we know it's going rise every year - as long housing do the jobs they are supposed to do".
  - (e) "Not particularly but it's not too bad".
  - (f) "Yes, I do as housing have to increase money".
  - (g) "Yes - we can't not agree with it - I think it's fair as everything goes up in April".
  - (h) "I agree with the 2.7% increase as is needed for works to be ongoing. Saying that, I don't think properties are kept up to date with needed improvements".
  - (i) "I think that 2.7% increase in rent is a little high mainly for those who don't get Housing Support Benefit and with the current cost of living crisis there may be many struggling with the current rent charge".
9. Do you think your rent is value for money compared to other landlords in Darlington?

- (a) "Yes definitely - I know private are much more expensive".
  - (b) "Yes definitely - Most of my friends have private and they are struggling with the payments, some of my friends who work are struggling so think I am lucky to be council tenant".
  - (c) "According to what Claire Gardner-Queen (Head of Housing) said we are competitive - I know we pay slightly more as it's a new build".
  - (d) "Yes - friends pay more in private".
  - (e) "I don't know what other landlords charge, but I presume others will be dearer".
  - (f) "I think it is value for money it's cheap in Darlington - but things need changing - lifeline is a lot of money and pay to get grass cut but they don't take away grass".
  - (g) "Yes, it's value for money and what private people pay is extreme".
  - (h) "I do think rent charged is value for money, especially when comparing like for like in the private sector and other providers".
  - (i) "I do think it's on average compared to other social housing landlords but quite low compared to private landlords, but I would say repairs are not carried out to a high standard and from some improvement works to my own home they have made very little difference and if any have caused numerous issues and problems".
10. A verbal report on the outcome of the wider consultation with Council tenants during December 2024 will be given at the meeting.