

Rent Consultation 2025/26






We would like to thank the 105 tenants who took the time to respond to our annual rent increase consultation.

It was harder than ever for our Board this year to make a final decision on the increase. As we set out in the consultation, many of the costs to us to provide our services are rising at a rate well above inflation. We are also very aware of the pressures the cost of living crisis is having on households.

Of the 105 responses to the consultation, 84 voted for a 3.3% increase and 21 voted for a 4.3% increase. We explained in the consultation that the lower the increase, the less improvements we can do this year and in future years. However, after carefully considering the results of the consultation, the Board approved a 3.3% increase to apply from 29 March 2025.

The booklet sent out to you explained the level of improvements we can do in the year with a 3.3% increase:

Improvements will be made in the following areas:

	External Wall Insulation
	Central Heating Systems
	Kitchens
	Roofs
	Smart Homes Pilot

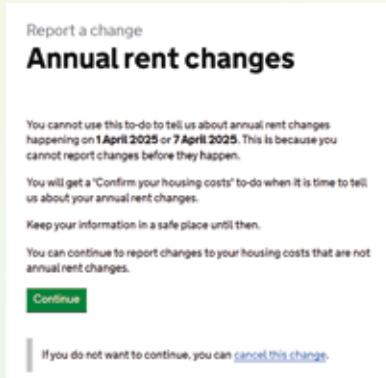
Our Financial Inclusion team is on hand to provide help and support to all of our tenants. We offer a wide range of services including, budgeting advice, help to maximise income and assistance with benefit applications. We can also access other agencies who can assist with energy advice or offer financial support with pre-payment meters. We can also talk you through how a change in your circumstances might affect your current benefits. Please give us a call on 01290 421130 and we will be happy to help.

The winner of the £50 shopping voucher for participating in the consultation was Ms Lorimer of Hurlford. Well done!

Rent Increase 2025

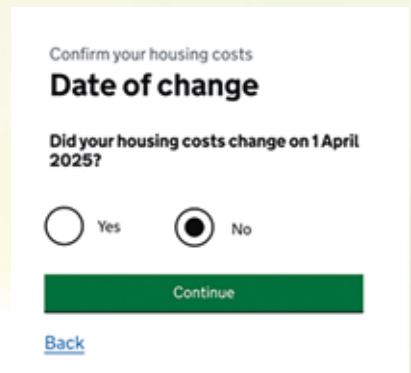
If you receive UC, you will need to update your claim with your new rent charge.

If your UC assessment period ends on **29th, 30th or 31st of March**, you should report your new rent charge on **29/3/25**. To do this you should click **Report a Change** and then **Where You Live And What It Costs**. You will then see this message



As your rent increases on **29/3/25**, you should click continue and report that the change took place on **29/3/25** and then complete the change by reporting what your new rent charge is.

For tenants with assessment periods ending on **1st of April onwards**, UC will add a “To Do” to your claim on **1st April 2025** asking you to confirm your Housing Costs. When asked if your housing costs changed on 1 April 2025 you should click “**No**”.



You will then be asked to confirm the date the change took place which will be **29/03/2025**. You can then report your new rent charge to clear your “To Do”.

If you need any help to update your UC claim, please call our Financial Inclusion Team on 01290 421130.

Move to Universal Credit

It is expected that Move To UC will be completed by the end of 2025. This means that all working age tenants who are still receiving one of the following benefits will be invited to claim UC.

- Tax Credits
- Income Support
- Jobseekers Allowance (IB)
- Employment and Support Allowance (IR)
- Housing Benefit

It's important that you wait until you receive your migration notice before claiming UC. **Making a claim too early could leave you worse off.**

For more information on how this change will affect you or if you would like assistance to make your new claim, please contact our Financial Inclusion Team who will be happy to assist.



Grant Funding

We have some funding available to assist tenants who feel they are affected by the general increase in cost of living. We can offer support in a number of ways, as well as discuss ways to reduce your monthly bills. Please call our Financial Inclusion Team on **01290 421130** for more information.

Pension Age Disability Payment

Pension Age Disability Payment will replace Attendance Allowance in Scotland during 2025.

Social Security Scotland will contact AA claimants by letter when their benefit has been selected to transfer. It will then take around two to three months for the transfer to be completed. Another letter will be issued once the transfer is complete. Attendance Allowance claimants don't need to do anything to make the transfer happen, this will happen automatically in phases throughout 2025. Everyone will continue to receive their awards on time and at the right amount with no gaps in entitlement.

From 24 March 2025, pensioners living in East Ayrshire will no longer be able to make a new claim for Attendance Allowance, they will have to claim Pension Age Disability Payment. If you have

experienced a deterioration in your health that is making it more difficult for you to carry out your own personal care tasks and would like to know more about what financial help is available, please contact our Financial Inclusion Team on **01290 421130**.



Annual Gas Heating Services – It's that time again!

A huge thank you to those of you who kept your appointments to have your gas heating system serviced at the first visit during our last service run. This helps us to deliver this important safety inspection on time and within budget every year.

The current service run started in November 2024. We really appreciate your support in allowing access to your home to ensure the continued safety of your heating system. So, if you've had our letter, please get in touch with us to arrange your appointment.



Customer Service Excellence – Retained!



The Association is proud recipient of the Government's Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard. On Tuesday 11 March, we underwent an assessment to see if we continue to meet the standard.

CSE Assessor, Hugh Keachie, joined our tenants, staff and partners at the Dumfries Arms Hotel, Cumnock. The event was a great success, with the assessor taking time to chat informally to our guests, obtaining personal views of our services and our business relationships.

Commenting on the achievement, Jim Munro, Chief Executive of Shire Housing Association, said "we are delighted that our commitment to delivering our Business Vision of 'Great Homes, Great People, Vibrant Communities' was recognised during the assessment process of the Customer Service Excellence standard. The efforts of both the Management Board and Staff team have been key in ensuring that our customers' needs are met, and service is delivered at a high standard.

Thank you to our tenants, members, employees, and Board – your cooperation is invaluable and helps shape the services provided by the Association.



HOMEMASTER Goes Live!

Shire achieved a major milestone in March, as we went live with our new housing management and finance system, HomeMaster from Designer Software.

This was the culmination of a six month project which will see efficiencies for our team and our tenants.

After a settling in period, the next part of our digital strategy will be to deliver an interactive portal to our tenants, allowing greater visibility and more convenient access to services.



How you hear from us

Would you like to receive less paper in the post?

We have recently implemented a new housing management system. This makes it much easier for us to contact you by either SMS or email. It cuts down on postage costs and reduces the use of paper. If you would like to change your preferred method of contact, please phone or email us to let us know.

The next stage will bring in an exciting new tenant portal, allowing you to access certain information at a time and place that suits you. To access the portal, we will need to have an up to date email address for you, so please let us know of any changes.

We know that these options will not suit everyone, so a paper based options will remain.



Estate Management Responsibilities

It is in the interests of tenants and landlords to ensure that properties are provided within a safe, secure, and pleasant environment. It is therefore important to understand your rights and obligations in relation to estate management and those of the landlord.

Issue	Responsibility			Additional info
	Tenant	Shire	East Ayrshire Council	
Dog Fouling	✓	✓	✓	Your Tenancy Agreement states that tenants must keep any permitted pet under proper control and ensure it does not cause a nuisance in the house or locality. Dog fouling can be dealt with as a tenancy complaint if against a tenant, however we do not issue fixed penalty notices. This is done by the East Ayrshire Council's Corporate Enforcement Unit, which covers the whole of East Ayrshire. They will investigate any complaints or reports about animal fouling and will issue fixed penalty notices where necessary.
Close Cleaning	✓	✓		Maintaining the cleanliness of the close is included in every tenancy and factor agreement so although we may provide close cleaning to some closes, the responsibility of the tenant/owner is the same. The clean is a top-up service.
Communal Grass/ Shrubs		✓		SHA will regularly cut common areas that we own, removing all grass, cutting communal hedges and removing cuttings and maintaining all shrub beds.
Fly Tipping			✓	The responsibility for issues such as fly tipping lies with the Environmental Health at East Ayrshire Council. Issues can be reported anonymously by any member of the public on 01563 576790 . You can also make reports online - https://our.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/service/Fly_tipping_form
Bins	✓		✓	East Ayrshire Council is responsible for bin collection. This includes if your bin is missed during collection. Tenants are responsible for putting bins out for collection and ensuring that all rubbish is placed in the correct bin and only in the bins provided, not anywhere else.
Bulk Items	✓		✓	Residents are expected to remove and dispose of bulk items appropriately. East Ayrshire Council also offer a bulk uplift service. This can be requested on 01563 554400 or by visiting EAC's website - Special uplifts · East Ayrshire Council
Vehicles, Parking, Pavements and Roads.			✓	If you notice an abandoned vehicle, then this should be reported to the Corporate Enforcement Unit at East Ayrshire Council on 01563 553520 . You will be asked to provide as much information about the vehicle as possible. Ayrshire Roads Alliance are solely responsible for parking, pavements and road issues. Issues can be reported to ARA by calling 01563 503 160
Council Tax			✓	Council tax is set and collected by East Ayrshire Council, who send out Council Tax Bills in March each year. Payments are made directly to EAC and do not form part of your rent.

COMMUNITY

Hi folks, Alan here. Bringing you a wee round up of our community work in recent months.



Our community film nights are still going strong! Here we have some pictures of two such nights – one in New Cumnock and one in Catrine. They are always a great success these nights, which we put on free of charge of course. The cost of travelling to Ayr, Kilmarnock or Glasgow with kids is so expensive, so us being able to bring the film nights to any village – well, it is wonderful.

Myself and Laura, of **East Ayrshire Care & Repair**, were recently at Dumfries House for a Community Connections Older Persons event, along with over 165 others!



John Reid, AKA Elvis, had contacted me to see if we could help to support the raffle on the day, as we did last year.



I thought this would be a great shout for Care & Repair to get involved also, so we purchased some nice gifts and went along on the day to present them in partnership.

Another great event for the older folks; lunch, laughter, smiles, dancing, connection and togetherness.

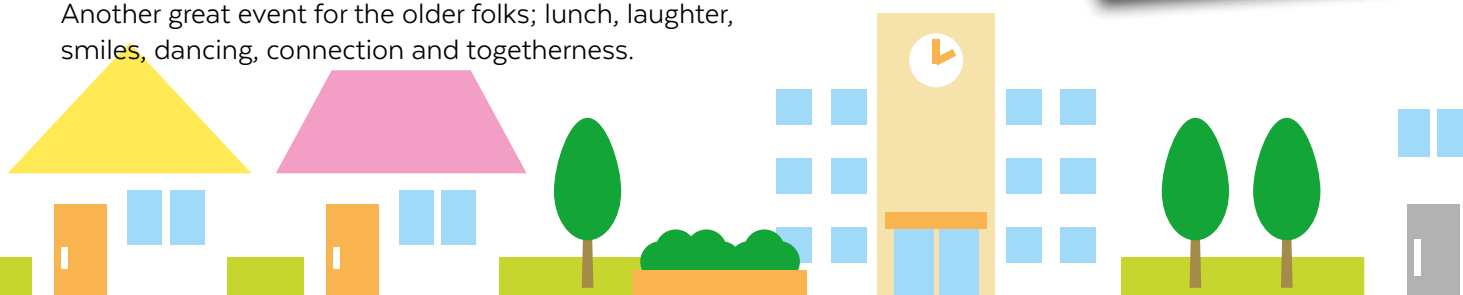
I have been coming and going from the Hurlford Age Concern meetings, held in Hurlford Community Centre. They are so popular and really well attended. They are actually the best attended Age Concern group in the whole of Scotland.



There were Burns celebration aplenty across the region, we attended three; Patna Primary & ECC, The Nest Wellbeing Group Cumnock and Netherthird Primary School.



The kids put on a superb show; music, poetry, songs and delicious food; the talent was really impressive.



Engagement



Speaking of The NEST, we were invited along to the official opening of their new premises. Myself and two of my colleagues, Ann & Jade, had a great afternoon. There was laughter, some music, a few videos were shown regarding the group - their aims/objectives - some talks and an AMAZING buffet.

We have supported, worked with, and benefitted from our partnership with the Nest across the years.

Cumnock is so privileged to have such a group in their midst, not that their reach begins and ends in Cumnock.

I have mentioned before that not only do I work with the Nest through my role with Shire, I have also attended the group often in my free time.

There is something SO special about the Nest. Absolutely anyone and everyone who walks through the door is an equal, nobody is looked down on - no matter their position.

The welcome is something truly special. You can physically feel the support, the warmth and the love; within your first visit it becomes glaringly evident that the group cares, about everyone.



What type of words can be used here?

Compassion, empathy, appreciation, support, encouragement, validation, teaching, learning, inclusion, fun, involvement and love. I could go on.

They are more than a group, more than a charity. They are a home, a family; a family for all that attend, that visit, for those who need a family they can rely on.

Now we are in Spring, with Summer not too far away, we can hopefully get some decent weather and get the opportunity to do some more outdoors work; here's hoping it is a long and hot one.

We wish to be involved in our local communities as much as possible, and every thing I have spoken of is not the entirety of what we have been doing....we can only take up so much space in the newsletter of course.

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding Shire Housings involvement in your community, please contact me at: athomas@shirehousing.com



A Fond Farewell

We have recently wished two of our colleagues a fond farewell.

We said goodbye to our Housing Assistant, Leanne Morrison, and our Modern Apprentice, Amy Coldicott. We would like to take the opportunity to thank Leanne and Amy for their hard work and commitment during their time at Shire. We wish them all the very best for the future. Our new Housing Assistant will take up their role in April and recruitment is currently underway for a new Modern Apprentice. If you know anyone who may be interested in the Modern Apprentice position, they can register their interest by scanning the QR code:



Join us in Welcoming our New Staff Members

We are very pleased to welcome two new members of staff to the Shire team. Darren Clark and Lana McCurdy have joined our team, and both bring a wide range of skills and experience to enable us to develop and improve our services and help deliver our vision of "Great Homes, Great People, Vibrant Communities".

Darren Clark

We welcomed Darren to the Association in January. Darren is the Housing Officer for homes in the Irvine Valley, Auchinleck, Craigens, Catrine, Cumnock, Logan and Mauchline. He joins Shire with a wealth of experience having worked at other Housing Associations across the Central Belt.



Lana McCurdy

Lana has joined Shire as our Asset Assistant. Lana brings a wealth of knowledge to the Association which will ensure that our planned, cyclical, compliance and asset management services are delivered to the highest quality.



Developing the Young Workforce - Ayrshire Apprenticeship Challenge

This year, Amy, our Modern Apprentice, took part in the Ayrshire Apprenticeship Challenge. The challenge invited companies with 1 or more apprentices to plan, develop and complete a project that would be of benefit to their local community.



Amy partnered with the Alloway Railway Tunnel team to help

raise funds for improvements aimed at increasing footfall. After brainstorming and planning, she organised a public-sponsored walk—gaining valuable experience in event creation and management along the way (raising over £500 in total!)

The feedback from walkers on the tunnel's improvements has been very positive thanks to Amy.

Amy then presented her portfolio of evidence and results to a panel of judges on 4th March. She did a great job presenting and was awarded with a certificate for her achievements.

Fantastic work Amy!



Become a Member of Shire Housing



Shire Housing Association is a membership organisation that is committed to the involvement of tenants and residents in the running of its affairs, and to being accountable to tenants and the wider community. We seek to ensure our membership is reflective of the communities we serve.

The following groups are eligible to become members of the Association:

- Tenants of the Association
- Service users of the Association
- Other persons who support the objects of the Association

- Organisations sympathetic to the objects of the Association

If you are over 16 you are eligible to become a member. A lifelong membership costs £1. Your membership entitles you to:

- Attend the Annual General Meeting
- Be eligible to stand for election to the Management Board
- Have a stake in the future of your community

Why should you join?

Becoming a member of Shire Housing Association entitles you to be involved in Shire's activities and have a say in how we run our business.

Throughout the year, you will receive copies of our Annual Report, Financial Statements and tenant newsletters. You will also be invited to the Annual General Meeting where you have a right to vote to elect the Management Board or, if you so wish, you can stand for election to the Management Board.

You can apply to become a member by completing a membership application form and returning it to the office with your £1.00. If you would like a membership application form, either telephone the office on **01290 421130** or email us at info@shirehousing.com. Alternatively, the form can be found in the Downloads section of our website.

Tenant Board Members – We Want You!

We want to encourage tenants to join our Management Board. We need tenants to express their point of view on what we do, how we spend rent money and have a say on how we could do things better.

Are you interested in helping to make a difference to the people and communities we serve in East Ayrshire? Would you like to use your skills and get the opportunity to develop new ones to broaden your experience as a Voluntary Board Member of Shire Housing



Association? Please get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

Our Management Board provides strong leadership to our staff team that enables our organisation to deal with a wide range of challenges to deliver our vision of "Great Homes, Great People, Vibrant Communities". All new Board

Members will receive personal support and training to help them thrive in this rewarding role.

For further details please contact Jim Munro, Chief Executive, on **01290 421130**, or email info@shirehousing.com.

Planned Maintenance Update

We are delighted to provide you with an update of our planned works.

Kitchens

Everwarm have completed a programme of 33 kitchen replacements with positive feedback from tenants.

Royal Strathclyde Blindcraft Industries (RSBI) manufactured the kitchens who are a disability supported employment facility that manufactures a wide range of products including our kitchens. The Association are delighted to continue assisting disability employment within the community.

Re-roofing and External Wall Insulation

AC Whyte have delivered a programme of 9 roof covering replacements and 10 properties which received roof covering replacements and external wall insulation. We have had excellent feedback on the product and the performance of the contractor.

Wall Insulation

BCA Insulation Ltd have delivered a programme recently of 9 Cavity Wall Insulation (CWI) extract and refills, 8 CWI and roughcasting, 1 Internal Wall Insulation and 14 External Wall Insulation upgrades.

This project targets energy efficiency and fuel poverty.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys are underway via telephone discussions to gauge how successfully the project was delivered in terms of timescales, customer satisfaction, workmanship and product.

Smart Homes Monitoring

As part of our monitoring regime on energy efficiency and property performance, we are continuing our pilot to build analysis across all house types and geographical areas to understand how our properties are used as well as what improvements may be required.

Millar Electrics Ltd have targeted and completed 20 installations. The Association has contacted the respective tenants to setup the "Resident App" to allow them to access and educate them on the potential environmental and structural related risks in their properties and how to overcome these potential risks.

A further 3 properties have received Smart Homes installations as part of our partnership working with East Ayrshire Council, SP

Energy Networks, University of West of Scotland and a number of other organisations to pilot an "Equiflex Project," designed to monitor energy usage, give us a broad understanding of the environmental and structural related risks within the property and tailor a tariff specific to the households energy usage.

We thank our tenants who have participated and are still involved in the "Equiflex Project"

Boiler Replacement Programme

Our initial programme of 152 boiler replacement has been completed by City Technical Services. We have had excellent feedback on the product and the performance of the contractor

We are installing Vokera Vibe Max 30C and Vokera Easi Heat boilers which carry a 5-year warranty, meaning Vokera staff will undertake any required repairs during this time.

We have recently provided an instruction to City Technical Services to deliver a further 31 boiler installations prior to the end of the financial year.

Façade Cleaning Programme

Castleview Avenue, Galston development has received a specialist façade clean by Flamingo Exterior Cleaning Services following a build-up of mould growth to the external finish. The photos below show the impact the work has had in our previous façade cleaning project.

Before:



After:



Fire and Gas Safety

We take tenant safety seriously and have a range of early warning alarms fitted in your homes to safeguard our tenants. Alarms are usually ceiling mounted and can be battery operated or hardwired.

As your landlord, we have a legal responsibility to regularly check the alarms in your home to ensure they are operating efficiently and to ensure they comply with current legislation but, it is important that you know what these alarms are and what to do if they ever go off.

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide is a deadly, odourless gas produced when burning carbon-based fuel. Stoves, water heaters, fireplaces, and a variety of other appliances can create CO. It's known as the "silent killer" because it's virtually impossible for humans to detect it without the aid of a device.

You should have a carbon monoxide detector fitted in any room where there is a carbon-fuelled appliance such as a boiler and flue, open fires, heaters and stoves. We check these detectors as part of your annual gas service.

Your CO alarm goes off by sounding continual beep and with a flashing light on the device. If this happens, you should:

1. Turn off the gas and any gas appliances
2. Open windows and get everyone to exit the house
3. Call the Gas Emergency (SGN) number on 0800 111 999
4. If you are feeling unwell seek urgent medical attention

Fire (Smoke/Heat)

If your smoke/heat alarm goes off accompanied by smoke or a fire in the home, this is an emergency, and you should:

1. Make sure everyone leaves immediately. Smoke and fumes can quickly overcome anyone.
2. Trying to tackle a fire or stopping to save goods could prove fatal. Remember, your main priority is to get out safely. A property can be replaced, but people cannot.
3. The only safe thing to do is get out of the building, call 999 and ask for the Fire Service

Random and unexpected smoke alarm activations, without smoke in the home, can be disruptive and

concerning. In most cases, there are 3 common reasons why fire alarms go off for no reason, low battery, dust accumulation and/or high humidity.

Looking after your alarms

Never

- Take the batteries out, even for a short time
- Paint over or put stickers on the smoke alarm

Every month

- Test your alarms by pressing the 'test' button. If it doesn't sound, fit a new battery. If it still doesn't sound, contact us.
- Keep it clean and dust free. Gently vacuum the inside and outside casing. If you're decorating or doing something that creates a lot of dust, use an elastic band to secure a plastic bag over the smoke alarm casing. Don't forget to take it off when you're done.

Environmental Sensors

A small number of our homes have environmental sensors fitted. The data collected from these alarms allow us as a landlord to get a broad understanding of potential structural or environmental risks and proactively investigate and rectify any potential risks e.g. damp and mould.

While these sensors look like an alarm, they do not sound or have flashing lights as they are data collecting devices.

Specialised alarms

There are a range of specialised alarms for people with sight, hearing, mobility issues or other special needs. These include mains-powered smoke alarms with back-up batteries, and vibrating pads and flashing lights that warn people who cannot hear well.

For advice about where you can get additional help please contact us.

Ref: Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Gas Safe Charity

Gardens and Open Space

Now that the growing season is underway, we will be working closely with Tivoli, our open space contractor, to ensure all the estates are maintained to a high standard and will be on the lookout for fly tipping.

Our Housing team will be out and about in your area and we would like to remind you that, as part of your tenancy agreement, you are responsible for ensuring

that your garden is kept in a neat and tidy condition and free from rubbish. Tidy gardens add to the appearance of your neighbourhood and enhance the local area. If you fail to do this, we may decide to carry out the work and issue a bill direct to you for payment.

Large, bulky items of rubbish can be uplifted by East Ayrshire Council by contacting the **Department of Cleansing Services on 01563 554033 or 01563 554032**, or contact our office where our customer service team may be able to assist you.

Annual Garden Competition

Do you take pride in gardening or simply enjoy and appreciate the efforts a neighbour makes with their garden? Why not enter or nominate a neighbour for our annual garden competition. To be in with a chance of winning, you can fill out the entry form on the back page of the newsletter, give our office a call, or email us at info@shirehousing.com

I'm sure it's not only us here at Shire that appreciate the efforts of our tenants who take pride in gardening to help make the areas where you live look great.

Whether it's keeping a smart & tidy garden, growing great Ayrshire veg or everything else in between – we'd love to get your entries.

We have some great prizes up for grabs, so please enter to be in with a chance to win:

1st Place - £100 Voucher for the shop of your choice

2nd Place - £50.00 Voucher for the shop of your choice

Alan Thomas, our Community Engagement Coordinator, along with a guest judge, will be out and about selecting the winning entries at the end of July. You've got to be in it to win it!

