

## **Information about rent increases**

### **Q. Why are rents going up by an average of 5.13%?**

A. The Government has instructed us to bring our rents in line with other social housing providers, like housing associations. This process is called 'rent restructuring'. To do this we must increase rents gradually until the rent you pay for your council house is similar to the rent paid by other people living in social housing in our district. Applying the Government's formula for 2014/15 has resulted in an average rent increase of 5.13% for council tenants.

### **Q. Why has my rent increased more than other people's rent?**

A. In some cases, tenants are already paying a similar amount of rent to people in other social housing. For these tenants their rent will stay the same or increase by a smaller amount.

### **Q. What happens to all the money we pay in rent?**

A. The rent you pay the Council is used to pay for the housing service you receive. Specifically this is in respect of investing in the housing stock, building more Council houses, repairs and maintenance of the houses and covering the costs of running the service. In addition the Council is repaying a £121M loan it took out from Government for buying back its housing stock.

### **What should I do if I am having difficulty paying my rent?**

A. You should contact an Income Recovery Officer on 01476 406080 and select the Rents option to discuss your circumstances. Also, you may consider contacting the Citizen's Advice Bureau as they will be able to help you with money and debt advice.

You may wish to consider applying for Housing Benefit to help you pay your rent. Please contact the Benefits Service on 01476 406080 to talk to a benefit assessor. The assessor will discuss your circumstances with you and tell you if you are entitled to any help with your rent.

### **Q. What if I decide I don't want to pay more rent?**

A. If you are unhappy with your rent increase, you have the right to terminate your tenancy and move to alternative accommodation at any time. If you want to give up your tenancy you must write to us and give us four weeks notice.

Your written notice must arrive with us by Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2014 for your tenancy to be terminated on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

### **Q. What if I refuse to pay the increase?**

A. You must pay your rent or you will be in breach of your tenancy agreement and you may ultimately lose your home.