

FAQs: about your new service charges

We've received questions about your new service charges for open spaces and garden maintenance. Here's some answers that may help you.

Why have things changed?

Service charges for our council properties have been effectively subsidised by rents for more than 20 years. We need to collect service charges properly to pay for repairs, maintenance and improvements, and more social housing. By making service charges clear for our tenants and leaseholders, we'll be able to make more of these improvements.

Are service charges the same for everyone?

No, we calculate the charges based on the work that's done to each property, block, or area – so your specific payment will be going towards things that you'll benefit from.

Why is this the first time I've heard of this?

We started consultation about changes to service charges with tenants and leaseholders in February 2022. We asked everyone for their thoughts and invited them to join a resident working group to work with us to develop fair and transparent service charges. Every resident was written to on three occasions. We published details of all meetings, minutes, and presentations online and you can find a record of what happened by visiting [Housing Consultations](#).

My estate doesn't look great – why am I paying?

Exactly because of this. Throughout the consultation residents repeatedly told us that the upkeep and maintenance of housing estates and open spaces needed to be addressed. We've mapped out all the land that needs improvement and we'll be investing £300,000 this year in bringing it up to a better standard so it can be maintained more efficiently.

Aren't I paying twice with service charges and council tax?

No, legally maintenance and improvements to open spaces on the land where council homes are built (which is called HRA or Housing Revenue Account land – it is not actually owned by the council's general fund) has to come from service charges and not from council tax. They cover different things.

Can I opt out of the service charge because it's too high?

No, nor can we pause or delay the charges. In setting our rents and service charges throughout the consultation, affordability has always been in mind. Each year we produce an ['Affordability Report'](#) which reviews the current rental market, the local economy and many other comparable measures.

Our rents compare extremely favourably when compared to other social landlords and the private sector in and around Milton Keynes. On average our rents are £13 per week lower.

If you are having problems paying your rent or facing other financial difficulties, you can find guidance at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk. Search for 'cost of living support'.

Can I formally complain about the charge?

We have worked very hard to involve and inform as many tenants and leaseholders as possible throughout the consultation, which started in early 2022. Because of this we do not intend to escalate complaints about the charge through our usual complaints process. You will receive a standard response referring you to the consultation material online. If you have a different complaint, [you can log it with us here](#).