

Explanation of rent and service charges from April 2018 for flats

Changes to your rent charges from April 2018

This year, your basic rent will be reduced by 1% and will be lower than last year.

This reduction will not apply to any service charges and water charges. The council calculates service charges on the actual costs of providing and delivering essential and obligatory services in flat blocks. The water charge increase is calculated by the water company and sent to us each year in February.

Despite the basic rent being decreased by 1%, some tenants will find their weekly charges have increased, because their service charges have increased. Each year the council sends you a letter about planned changes to your rent, service charges and fees for the coming year. This year the letter notifies you of the changes to your rent amount, giving a detailed breakdown of any service or water charges and shows you the total amount due for your home.

Your total rent payments

The total amount you are required to pay each week is calculated by adding together the basic rent charge, any service and/or water charges and fee (where applicable) for the whole year. The total is then divided into 50 equal payments. This amount is the weekly rent we charge you to live in your home. Your rent is payable weekly in advance, each Monday.

There are two rent debit-free weeks each year. If you are behind and owe rent, these rent debit free weeks give you the opportunity to catch-up with your payments. The rent debit free weeks are the last week in December 2018 (week beginning the 24 December 2018) and the last week in March 2019 (week beginning the 25 March 2019). If you do not owe rent, you do not need to pay rent on either of these weeks.

If you pay your rent by direct debit, your payments are calculated on a monthly basis; therefore we will collect the monthly payment as usual in December 2018 and March 2019. You do not need to do anything.

Basic rent

This is the weekly amount you pay for landlord services, including basic repairs and improvements to your home. This varies from property to property and the weekly amount is set in your Formal Notice of Rent Charges letter.

Management fees

A few of our properties are charged a management fee. The management fee (where applicable) is calculated using the actual costs of providing and delivering essential and obligatory services in flat blocks by an appointed management agent.

Changes to service and other charges from 02 April 2018

If you live in a flat block, or your home is attached to a sheltered or supported housing scheme, your charges include a contribution towards the upkeep of the communal areas of that building. These charges apply whether you use the communal areas or not.

These charges will be shown separately on the rent notice. The charges will reflect the actual cost of providing the service.

The charge	What it covers
Caretaking & cleaning service charge	Cleaning of communal areas, removal of fly tipping, etc.
Communal block repairs	This charge covers repairs to communal areas in flat blocks. This includes items such as communal glazing or repairs to handrails.
Communal block electrics	The cost of the electrical supply for communal lighting.
Water charges	Included in your rent notification letter.
Grounds maintenance	Grass cutting, weeding shrub beds and clearing litter in landscaped and communal areas around blocks of flats and sheltered/supported housing schemes.
Window cleaning service charge	Covers the cost of providing communal window cleaning.
Estate Service Charge	This charge covers the costs of repairs electricity, ground maintenance and cleansing of the areas and roads around your flat block.
Heating charge	Communal heating fuel supply costs (often in sheltered schemes/tower blocks).
Support charge	To provide a Supported Housing Officer to offer help, support and advice alongside emergency assistance as and when required.
Careline charge	Contributes towards the cost of the Careline alarm service.
Community Support Charge	Covers the cost of the visiting and support service by supported housing officers
Pest control	Covers the costs of dealing with pest infestation in communal areas
Management fee	Covers the inclusive costs of providing and delivering essential and obligatory services in flat blocks by an appointed management agent.

How do these changes affect my housing benefit claim?

If you claim benefit claim, the heating charge and water charge are not covered by housing benefit. You are required to make these payments yourself.

Garage rents

If you rent a garage, you will be notified separately about any change in the standard garage rent charge. For more information about garages please visit www.stevenage.gov.uk/garages

Council Tax

Your council tax is paid separately to your rent. Any changes to your council tax will be notified to you separately. We will send you notification of the revised council tax charges during March 2018.

Paying your rent

You will need your nine-digit reference number to make a rent payment.

If you do not have a rent account card with your reference number on it you can apply for a new one at www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay or contact us on 01438 242666.

Method	How to pay
Online account	Simply log on to: www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay and follow the prompts.
Direct debit	Set this up on the councils website at www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay or contact the customer service centre for further information
Online on the Council's website	www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay . Debit or credit card (we do not accept American Express or Diners club).
Customer Service Centre – Payment Kiosk	Cash, cheque or debit card payments can be made at the payment machine in our Customer Service Centre
By telephone Automated Number	If you have a debit or credit card you can pay using our automated payments system on 01438 242345.
At the Post Office	Payment can be made at any Post Office using your account card.

Useful contact details

	Email address/Website	Telephone	Opening hours	Address
Customer Service Centre	csc@stevenage.gov.uk www.stevenage.gov.uk	01438 242666 Monday – Friday 8am to 6pm	Centre is open Monday- Friday 08.30am to 5:30pm	Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, SG1 1HN
Benefits Service	www.stevenage.gov.uk/benefits benefits@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk	01438 242440		The Benefits Service, East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council, Wallfields, Hertford, SG13 8EQ
Department of Works Pensions - Job Centre Plus		0845 6043719		
Citizens Advice Bureau		0344 411 1444 Monday- Friday 9am to 5pm		
National Debt Helpline		0808 808 4000		
Housing Advice		01438 242242		
Consumer Credit Counselling Service	www.cccs.co.uk/free-debt-advice			