

Explanation of rent and water charges from 02 April 2018 for houses

Changes to your rent charges from 02 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 water charges you pay unless you have a water meter. The water charge increase is calculated by the water company and sent to us each year in February.

The council letter notifying you of the changes to your rent amount including water charges will show you the total amount due for your household.

Your total rent payments

The total amount you are required to pay each week is calculated by adding together the basic rent charge and water charges 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 rents-free weeks each year. If you are behind and owe rent, these rent free weeks give you the opportunity to catch-up with your payments. The rent free weeks are the last week in December 2017 (week beginning the 24 December 2018) and the last week in March 2018 (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 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.

Estate Service Charge

This charge applies to houses in some of our recent developments and covers the costs of repairs electricity, ground maintenance and cleansing of the areas and roads around your house

How do these changes affect my housing benefit claim?

If you claim housing benefit, the water charge will not be 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 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 | Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, SG1 1HN |

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|---|--|---|-----------|--|
| | | | to 5:30pm | |
| 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 | | | |