Birmingham City Council

RENT 1ST

Rent: your questions answered

Your annual rent will again be collected over 48 weeks and no rent will be charged to your account for the weeks of 19 / 26 December 2011 and 12 / 19 March 2012.

As long as your account is up to date there is no need for you to pay rent during the payment holidays. If your account is in arrears you should continue to make payments to reduce or clear the outstanding balance.

How is the weekly rent for my home set?

The rent for each property is calculated individually, based on a formula set by the Government. The formula takes into account the average earnings for the West Midlands, the number of bedrooms in the property and the valuation of that property at 1999 prices.

The rent charged from October 2011 will increase the average annual rent levels for 2011/12 by seven per cent (in line with Government policy announced in early 2010) when compared with the average charged for 2010/11.

How are service charge levels set?

Service charges are set in line with national guidelines that say they have to be separate from the rent for your property and fully cover the costs of providing that particular service.

The council put into place a policy of recovering the full service costs over a five-year period from October 2002 to October 2007. This is now complete and charges are made for the cost of the service only.

There will be no increase in service charges this year (with the exception of some garages).

Low-rise cleaning, concierge, caretaking and multi-storey related costs will remain at the same levels as October 2010.

How will I know when to pay my rent?

All customers will receive a new rent calendar by September 2011 with their rent notification letter. The 2011/12 rent calendar can also be downloaded from our website at **www.birmingham.gov.uk/rent**

If my account is in arrears, do I have to pay during payment holidays?

Yes, if your account is in arrears you should continue to make payments during payment holidays in order to reduce or clear your arrears. For further information see section 5.3 of your conditions of tenancy.

What other charges are subject to payment holidays?

Service charges form part of the total rent and will be collected in the same way. Garage rent accounts also have payment holidays. Customers who have garage accounts will receive a separate letter.

Where can I find out more information about payment holidays?

If you want to find out more, please call your local Rent Team on **0121 675 2006, select option 1 and quote your postcode** or visit **www.birmingham.gov.uk/rent** and click on 'What are payment holidays?'.

What if I pay my rent using Housing Benefit?

If you currently get full Housing Benefit, which covers all of your rent, your Housing Benefit will automatically be adjusted to take account of your new weekly rent. If, however, your circumstances change you must tell the Benefit Service straightaway on **0121 464 7000**.

If you currently get some Housing Benefit and have to pay part of your rent, the rent notification letter will advise you of your new weekly rent amount as well as your new Housing Benefit entitlement. If your circumstances change you must tell the Benefit Service straightaway on **0121 464 7000**.

What if I pay by monthly direct debit through my bank?

Your direct debit payments will be reduced during the months in which the payment holidays occur. If you have arrears on your account, your housing officer will contact you to increase the amount collected to help you clear the arrears. For more details, contact your local housing officer on **0121 675 2006**, **select option 1 and quote your postcode** or visit **www.birmingham.gov.uk/payrent**

For a direct debit form or for more information call 0121 675 2006, select option 1 and quote your postcode.

Having difficulty paying your rent? Get free debt advice.

If you have any difficulties paying your rent please contact your housing officer on **0121 675 2006, select option 1 and quote your postcode**. If you have concerns about any other debts or need help to maximise your income, you can get free and confidential advice from the Debt Advice Team on **0121 303 2087**.

If you would like this leaflet in Braille, large print or on audio CD, please call your local Rent Team.

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