

## **Report to: Housing Scrutiny Panel**

**Date of Meeting: 8 January 2009**

**Portfolio: Housing – Cllr D. Stallan**

**Subject: Report on the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2008**

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**Epping Forest  
District Council**

### **Recommendations:**

**That the National Housing Federation's (NHF's) report on the results of the Council's biennial Tenant Satisfaction Survey be considered and that the Panel provides any comments on the results of the Satisfaction Survey to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing Services as appropriate.**

### **Report:**

1. Having previously been required to carry out a detailed Tenant Satisfaction survey every three years, the Council is now required by government to undertake a survey every two years. The last two surveys have been carried out by Feedback Services Ltd, a company part-owned by the National Housing Federation (NHF) that specialises in conducting surveys and related activities for social landlords.

2. The survey approach is based on STATUS, the industry-standard questionnaires, as developed originally by the NHF Feedback Service for local authorities and housing associations. A standard satisfaction form is used nationally in order to compare results amongst landlords.

3. New guidance was published for the 2008 Tenant Satisfaction Survey and, therefore, a number of the standard questions were re-written. Significantly, local authorities were required to exclude tenants living in sheltered housing accommodation. As a result, the 2008 survey was a sample survey of the only Council's general needs tenants, while the previous survey in 2006 used a sample of all tenants including those in supported accommodation. Due to the new methodology, Feedback Services is not yet in the position to compare any results nationally. However, a 'peer group' of 9 landlords has been selected, all closely resembling this Council in terms of area of operation and the number and type of properties managed. Comparison with previous results, and with other landlords, have been possible where questions are similar to the former standard STATUS survey.

4. A copy of the NHF's draft executive summary on the results is attached, and an item will be placed in the Members' Bulletin after the Panel's meeting with a copy of the full report being available in the member's Room. The full report has been provided to both the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Chairman of the Panel.

5. Approximately 1,500 of all the Council's tenants, 25%, were randomly selected by the NHF to be surveyed. The response was 53%, a good response for a postal survey. The overall findings are reliable to within a statistical accuracy of a +/- 3.16% margin of error at the 95% confidence level. This means that if the Council surveyed all of its tenants, there is a 95% certainty that the results for all the questions would be somewhere between 3% less and 3% more than the results from the sample survey.

6. Based on their findings, the NHF concluded that:

*“The Council and its staff have every right to be pleased to learn that, overall tenant satisfaction with the landlord service that the Council provides remains high and significantly above that reported by most other landlords. Key driver analysis showed that satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service and satisfaction with the outcome of their contacts with staff have the greatest impact on overall tenant satisfaction. Importantly, the survey identified that the Councils’ repairs service and the customer service provided by its staff are both particularly strong aspects of the Council’s overall service. The high level of tenant satisfaction with these two key services underpins the unusually high level of overall satisfaction amongst Epping Forest District Council’s tenants.”*

7. As can be seen from the Executive Summary, overall satisfaction with the Housing Directorate remains consistently high, at 84% compared to 85% in 2006. When considering the exclusion of sheltered housing tenants, who generally receive a higher level of support from Scheme Managers etc. and are therefore more likely to express higher levels of satisfaction, a reduction of 1% in overall satisfaction levels is considered to be an excellent outcome. 86% of tenants were satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service (12% above the peer group average of 74%.) Impressively, the Council ranked a strong first in its peer group for all 6 aspects of the repairs and maintenance service measured.

8. In terms of quality of contact with the Council, as many as 12% more Epping Forest District Council tenants said that it was easy to get hold of the right person (compared to the peer group averages). Overall, 75% of the Council’s tenants were satisfied with the final outcome of their contacts - 10% higher than the rest of the peer group.

9. In relation to tenant participation and consultation, 62% were satisfied that their views are being taken into account by the landlord. This is a very positive response showing an improvement of 14% compared to responses to the 2006 survey. It should be noted that this question has replaced a question seeking opinion on satisfaction with opportunities for involvement in management.

10. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the NHF’s report and provide any comments on the results to the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Director of Housing as appropriate.