

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 28th January 2013

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr David Stallan

Subject: Tenant Satisfaction Survey Benchmarking Report – 2012

Officer contact for further information:

Alan Hall – Director of Housing (01992 564004)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins



Recommendations:

- 1) That the headline findings of Housemark’s Tenant Satisfaction Survey Benchmarking Report 2012, attached as an Appendix - and the fact that the Council is within the two top quartiles for 5 out of the 6 headline categories - be noted;**
- 2) That the Scrutiny Panel provides any comments on the findings to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing; and**
- 3) That officers discuss with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation possible reasons for the Council’s tenants apparently having lower satisfaction with “listening to their views”.**

Background

1. The Council’s Housing Directorate has been a member of Housemark, a national housing benchmarking club, for many years. Following the demise of the Government’s previous tenant satisfaction reporting regime, which is now voluntary, Housemark devised a new standard Tenant Satisfaction Survey Form, called STAR, for its members to use - in order to continue to measure tenant satisfaction and benchmark with other registered providers if they wish. In addition to required standard questions, registered providers can also add a small number of bespoke questions of their choosing.

2. Accordingly, the Housing Directorate once again commissioned Feedback Services - a well-experienced, independent satisfaction survey service for social landlords, part-owned by the not-for-profit National Housing Federation - to undertake a Tenant Satisfaction Survey on behalf of the Council. The survey was completed in Summer 2012, with a very high response rate of 49%, representing around 17% of all tenants.

3. Feedback Services produced a report on the survey’s findings, which was considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 7th August 2012. In its report, Feedback Services summarised the overall level of tenant satisfaction with the Council’s Housing Service – which is the main comparator that is reported and used to compare with other landlords – as follows:

“ The vast majority of Epping Forest District Council’s tenants are satisfied with the services provided by the Council, and encouragingly the overall rating is amongst the

highest in the survey (88%) – suggesting a high degree of customer loyalty towards the Council.

A higher percentage of sheltered tenants are highly satisfied with the Council's services (93%), compared with general needs tenants (86%).

Encouragingly, the overall rating for services (88%) from all tenants is 3% higher than the rating awarded in 2006 (85%). The increase is a result of the higher rating from general needs tenants (up 2% since 2008) – while the rating for sheltered tenants remains identical to the one recorded in 2006 (93%) – when sheltered tenants were last surveyed. “

4. However, the Scrutiny Panel was advised that, since the Council had undertaken its survey much earlier than most other landlords, there was very little data available at that time to compare the Council's performance with other landlords. Therefore, it was agreed that a report be presented to the Scrutiny Panel later in the municipal year, once more members of the Housemark Benchmarking Club had undertaken their tenant satisfaction surveys, in order to compare the satisfaction of the Council's tenants with other registered providers of housing (councils and housing associations).

Headline Tenant Satisfaction Benchmarking Report

5. Now that more landlords have undertaken their satisfaction surveys, Housemark has produced a Headline Benchmarking Report that compares the satisfaction of the Council's tenants for the 6 “core areas” with that of the 46 other registered providers that have submitted data in 2012, which is attached as an Appendix. A copy of the detailed comparisons of all 21 benchmarking areas can be provided on request.

6. It is pleasing to report that, as can be seen, the Council's satisfaction levels are within the top two quartiles for 5 out of the 6 core areas, with 2 of these within the top quartile. However, satisfaction levels are within the bottom quartile for one of the core areas – “*percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied that their social housing provider listens to their views and acts upon them*”. It has to be said that this latter result is surprising, since the Council has a good track record of informing and consulting tenants on relevant issues and responding to their comments. This is evidenced by the whole of the Housing Directorate being awarded the Cabinet Office's independently-assessed Customer Service Excellence Award, of which listening and responding to tenants' views is a key component.

7. Furthermore, the Council has developed and supported the District-wide Tenants and Leaseholders Federation for many years, and ensures that the Federation is consulted on **all** proposed new policies and amendments to policies affecting tenants – as well as providing a raft of information to enable the Federation to monitor the performance of the Housing Directorate.

8. There is therefore a need to better understand possible reasons for this lower level of satisfaction with the Council listening to tenants' views. It is therefore suggested that officers discuss with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation what these possible reasons may be. One explanation may lie with the way that the question in the survey is worded, which is felt may be confusing, with some tenants answering in relation to the Council's overall service to residents for all Council services. Officers therefore intend to raise this issue with Housemark at the next liaison meeting with them. It should also be noted that the Council only has one dedicated Tenant Participation Officer, when most other councils and housing officers have a whole team.

9. The Scrutiny Panel is therefore asked to note the Headline Tenant Satisfaction Benchmarking Report and invited to provide any comments on the findings to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Housing.

Housemark STAR benchmarking report (Tenant satisfaction surveys carried out in 2012)

Comparison with 46 councils and housing associations against 6 Core Indicators.
General Needs Housing and Housing for Older People (sheltered housing).

Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the service provided by their social housing provider		
Upper quartile	89.95	
Club median	86.90	
Lower quartile	80.65	
Number in sample	47	
Epping Forest District Council	87.70	Ranked 20 – 2nd Quartile

Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the overall quality of their home		
Upper quartile	88.45	
Club median	88.40	
Lower quartile	80.90	
Number in sample	47	
Epping Forest District Council	88.90	Ranked 12 – Top Quartile

Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live		
Upper quartile	88.00	
Club median	86.00	
Lower quartile	80.98	
Number in sample	46	
Epping Forest District Council	88.20	Ranked 10 - Top Quartile

Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied that their rent provides value for money		
Upper quartile	87.38	
Club median	82.90	
Lower quartile	77.93	
Number in sample	44	
Epping Forest District Council	84.40	Ranked 18 – 2nd Quartile

Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the way their social housing provider deals with repairs and maintenance		
Upper quartile	85.00	
Club median	82.00	
Lower quartile	76.00	
Number in sample	45	
Epping Forest District Council	82.40	Ranked 21 – 2nd Quartile

Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied that their social housing provider listens to their views and acts upon them		
Upper quartile	77.20	
Club median	73.10	
Lower quartile	64.20	
Number in sample	45	
Epping Forest District Council	60.80	Ranked 40 – Bottom Quartile

BENCHMARK GROUP

A1 Housing Bassetlaw

Alliance Homes

Barrow-in-Furness BC

Berneslai Homes

Bromsgrove District Housing Trust

Charter Housing Association

Coastline Housing

Cross Keys Homes

Dale and Valley Homes

Epping Forest DC

Estuary Housing Association

Exeter City Council

Family Housing Association (Birmingham)

Hafod Housing Association

Havebury Housing Partnership

High Peak Community Housing

Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Assoc ...

Hull City Council

Hyndburn Homes

Isos Housing Group

Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust

Knowsley Housing Trust

LB of Croydon

LB of Hammersmith and Fulham

LB of Southwark

Leeds Federated Housing Association

Lewisham Homes

London and Quadrant Group

Longhurst and Havelok Homes

Newydd Housing Association

North Lincolnshire Homes

North Tyneside Council

Origin Housing Group

Parkway Green Housing Trust

RCT Homes

Regenda Group (The)

Riverside North East

Severn Vale Housing Society

Shropshire Council

SLH Group

South Cambridgeshire DC

South Derbyshire DC

Southway Housing Trust

Tai Calon Community Housing

Weaver Vale Housing Trust

West Lancashire BC

Yorkshire Coast Homes

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