

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C/004/2006-07.

Date of meeting: 5 June 2006.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Housing.

Subject: Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

Officer contact for further information: Sandy Lindsay (01992 – 56 4035).

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 – 56 4470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That, as specialist work, the National Housing Federation (NHF) be appointed to undertake the Council's tri-annual Tenant Satisfaction STATUS survey of Council tenants in the sum of £9,993; and

(2) That Contract Standing Order C4 be waived in respect of seeking at least two separate quotations.

Report:

1. A postal survey of the Council's tenants needs to be carried out in 2006/07. The results provide the information required for two Best Value Performance Indicators BV74 and BV75 (overall tenant satisfaction and satisfaction with opportunities for participation).
2. Government guidelines for BVPIs requires that a survey of tenants should be carried out at least every three years and that the survey itself should follow the NHF STATUS standard tenant satisfaction methodology.
3. STATUS is a postal survey sent to a sample of council tenants. The sample surveyed depends on the total number of tenants. The Council owns around 6,650 council properties, so a sample response of 10% or more is considered adequate. The standard survey includes 44 questions and these cover the following issues:
 - Tenant profile including equalities
 - Overall satisfaction with landlord
 - Value for money
 - Quality, size and condition of home
 - Area
 - Overall satisfaction with landlord and aspects of home
 - Area problems
 - Contact with landlord
 - Quality of contact
 - Repairs and Maintenance
 - Communication and participation
 - Additional comments
4. The last survey was carried out in 2003 by the NHF at a cost of around £9,500. The NHF provided a very efficient service in the way it conducted the previous survey, analysed the results and provided the reports in 2003.
5. The response rate to the NHF survey carried out in 2003 was extremely good compared to the normal response rate for postal surveys, with approximately 70% of tenants responding (of the sample surveyed).

6. As the National Housing Federation formulated the STATUS survey in the first place, the organisation knows exactly what the Government and the Audit Commission require. This could be a particular advantage in 2006/07 due to the revised guidelines that have been issued.
7. The NHF have provided a quotation in the sum of £9,993 to undertake this survey in 2006/7, which represents an increase of around 5% based on their tendered rate in 2003.
8. It is important that these surveys are carried out correctly and our experience with previous consultants carrying out this work has been far less successful. It is therefore recommended that the NHF undertakes this specialist survey in 2006/7 and that the new Contract Standing Order C4 that now requires the seeking of at least two separate quotations for works between £5,001 and £10,000.

Statement in support of recommended action:

9. In view of the expertise and knowledge of the NHF and the fact that all surveys of this nature have to meet the standard criteria set by the STATUS system used by the NHF it would seem appropriate to negotiate agreeable terms and request that they conduct this survey of behalf of Housing Services.

Other options considered and rejected:

10. Obtain at least two more different quotations from organisations to carry out this work but this will be time consuming, requiring specifications to be written with regard to the revised guidelines that have been issued.
11. Do not carry out the survey at all. However, this is not recommended, as it is a Government requirement to carry out this survey.

Consultation undertaken:

12. No external consultation undertaken.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: £10,000 funding has already been set aside for this survey to be carried out.

Personnel: N/A.

Land: N/A.

Community Plan/BVPP reference: BVPI 74 and BVPI 75.

Relevant statutory powers: N/A.

Background papers: N/A.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: N/A.

Key Decision reference (if required): N/A.