

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 22 July 2014

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr David Stallan

Subject: Tenant Profile Report 2014

**Officer contact for further information: Chris Sobey
(01992 564292)**

Alan Hall – Director of Communities (01992 564004)

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins (01992 564607)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Housing Scrutiny Panel considers and endorses the Tenant Profile Report 2014, attached as an appendix, and provides any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder for incorporation.

Report:

1. In August 2013, Epping Forest District Council's Housing Information Team commenced a postal survey, or 'census', of council tenants. At the time there were approximately 6,400 properties on the Housing Revenue Account. There were two principal aims in conducting the Census.

- To check that the data held on Housing's systems was correct, and to update that information where necessary.
- To build a better profile of tenants for service planning purposes.

The last time the Council undertook a similar census of its tenants was in 2007.

2. A mailing in August 2013 included a covering letter, a questionnaire and a reply envelope. In October 2013, all tenants were sent a copy of the tenants' newsletter 'Housing News'. This included an item reminding tenants to respond, and those who had not already returned their forms were sent a second copy of the questionnaire and a reply envelope.

3. In total, 6,390 households received questionnaires, and 3,649 had been returned by the closing date in January 2014. Tenants (including joint tenants at the address) were asked a number of profiling questions, and they were asked to give details of other people occupying the property.

4. Tenants were asked to give their name, address and other contact details, and they were asked to confirm the type of property they occupied. They were also asked:

- their preferred form of communication
- their main language (English or other)
- whether they had access to the internet
- to state if they had any disabilities that limited their activities
- whether they would like assistance with communications

- to provide contact details for next-of-kin and keyholders, and
- to state if they had access to a current account with a bank or building society.

5. Other background information requested from tenants was their ethnicity, and faith or religion. There were questions on sexual orientation, and respondents were asked if they identified as transgender.

6. The data gathered through the Census has been entered onto Housing's 'OHMS' computer system. Housing staff now have access to more accurate data for the tenants who responded, such as up-to-date phone numbers, email addresses and details of key holders. Any special needs identified on the Census returns are being 'flagged' on the system so Housing Management Officers will be made aware of them when accessing tenant records.

7. The Council appointed a firm of external consultants, ARP Research, to produce a tenant profile report. ARP was provided with data collected from census returns, and they used this information to compare the profile of tenants with other data available, such as the 2011 national resident census. ARP is experienced in carrying out research and tenant satisfaction surveys for social housing providers.

8. The consultant has produced a written report including an executive summary, district mapping and ward profiles.

9. The Housing Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and endorse the Tenant Profile Report 2014 attached as an appendix to the report, and provide any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder for incorporation.

10. To continue building the Council's profile of its tenants, home seekers signing up to new tenancies from January 2014 onwards are being asked to complete a similar form to the 2013 Census.

Reason for decision:

Tenancies are normally granted on secure tenancy terms, and some tenants may make only occasional contact with the Council. Information held by the housing service, such as household size and contact phone numbers, can become out of date.

Some tenants may have special needs, such as assistance in communicating. By entering the census data on Housing's OHMS computer system, housing officers have access to more information about tenants and can provide assistance as required.

To meet the terms of the Equality Act 2010, there is a legal requirement to protect people from discrimination. A more comprehensive understanding of the tenant profile will assist in this duty.

Options considered and rejected:

Not to conduct a tenant census or to produce a profile report.

Consultation undertaken:

The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation was consulted on the report at their meeting on 4th June 2014 and they have approved the report.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: £7,000 from the HRA including consultants, printing, posting and salary costs

Personnel: N/A

Land: N/A

Community Plan/BVPP reference: N/A

Relevant statutory powers: As set out in the Strategy

Background papers: N/A

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: As set out in the Strategy

Key Decision reference: (if required) N/A None

Appendix