



To: Executive Councillor for Housing
Report by: Director of Customer and Community Services
Relevant scrutiny committee: 04.06.2013 Housing Management Board
Wards affected: Wards with Council estates

Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey, 2014

Not a key decision

1. Executive summary

The 2014 Tenant Satisfaction Survey offers real opportunities to use customers' feedback and priorities to further improve services and drive value for money.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

To approve this report's proposals for the 2014 satisfaction surveys with tenants and leaseholders.

3. Background

Customer feedback guiding performance and priorities

3.1 Landlords have traditionally done large-scale tenant satisfaction surveys every two or three years, with a hiatus in 2010 while government reconsidered the function of these surveys. When the surveys restarted in 2012, the Council was pleased to find that local tenant satisfaction rates had broadly remained level, despite the national climate of recession, cuts and restructures since Cambridge's last survey in 2008.

3.2 In addition, residents' stated priorities for services in the 2012 survey were for the most part the same as those that the Council had been prioritising for investment. (Tenants' priorities were, in priority order: newly-built homes, the repairs service, tackling anti-social behaviour, housing for older people, responding well to tenants' calls and queries, and providing tenants with extra support.) Meanwhile, in both 2012 and 2013, City Homes was assessed for and awarded the national Customer Service Excellence Standard. Overall, these independent sources of feedback suggest that on the whole, the Council is in touch with and meeting its tenants' needs and expectations, despite the challenges of recession.

3.3 But there is no room for complacency. Since the dissolution of the Audit Commission and its inspection regime, landlords and local residents must now develop their own local 'Co-Regulation' systems for keeping service standards and customer satisfaction high in the years ahead.

3.4 Two reports to HMB earlier this year (on residents' independent inspection of services and on the importance of a robust complaints system) showed how co-regulation is reaching positive practice standards in Cambridge. The other requirement of co-regulation is that there be a robust loop of feedback from the wider tenant body about the performance of services. This report proposes how the next tenant and leaseholder satisfaction surveys could contribute added value through this feedback.

Using the 2014 tenant and leaseholder surveys to increase customer satisfaction

3.5 It is important that landlords gather feedback on performance from residents' viewpoint, to complement the in-house performance-data that is monitored by managers. This is because the issues that can cause residents to feel dissatisfied with the Council are often very specific experiences that may not feature in internal performance-data. (They can range from dog-fouling, loud music, bin problems, parking or fencing to the tone of Council letters, technicalities with the Council's phone-answering system or even services that are not delivered by the City Council at all). Quality feedback from tenants on the estates, when accurately understood, can often close this communication gap, enabling the Council to make small service changes, improvements or clarifications that can significantly raise satisfaction levels at little cost.

3.6 The 2012 survey included seven core questions that landlords use to compare their performance nationally via the *Housemark* benchmarking service. It is proposed that Cambridge's 2014 survey will additionally, within existing resources:

- provide a more local communication loop or 'conversation' between the Council and its tenants and leaseholders
- ask additional local questions that are important to Cambridge residents and the services they receive
- involve residents in phrasing and testing the survey questions, to avoid the ambiguous meanings that cloud one or two of the core national questions
- include resident-led questions from other service-areas that are important to tenants and leaseholders, such as the Customer Service Centre, the repairs service and the Streets and Open Spaces service
- be enhanced and informed by drill-down surveys such as the face to face tenant questionnaires used at neighbourhood Community Days, and telephone surveys provided by the resident involvement service
- include a lead-in phase for publicising the survey through local media, an incentive prize for completing the survey, posters at Council receptions promoting it and frontline staff reminding customers to participate

3.7 Thus the tenant and leaseholder satisfaction surveys in 2014 will be an opportunity to develop an even more robust communication loop with residents on the estates, delivering:

- deeper ownership and engagement on both sides of this 'conversation' between residents and the Council
- a careful analysis of areas of lower satisfaction, with dead-lined action plans that make modest but visible improvements in the service-areas where residents have asked for them
- thorough, ongoing communications in Open Door magazine and related media, showing residents the progress of these improvements in terms of 'You said it, We did it'
- the outcome that residents feel the Council does "listen to and act upon their views", which is one of the national benchmarking questions

3.8 The elected residents on the Housing Management Board and other lead resident representatives were consulted for this report and their suggestions are reflected in the proposals above.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

The proposals within this report would be delivered within existing budgets.

(b) Staffing Implications

None. The proposed work would be delivered within existing staffing resources.

(c) Equal Opportunities Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the survey design process.

(d) Environmental Implications

None.

(e) Procurement

An independent market surveying company will be hired as usual to implement the survey itself.

(f) Consultation and communication

As explained in the report, tenants, leaseholders, staff and other stakeholders will be closely involved in the design of the survey and the interpretation of its results.

(g) Community Safety

The survey will include questions about anti-social behaviour and the resulting action plan will seek to address, within available resources, any issues highlighted by residents.

5. Background papers

None.

6. Appendices

Proposed time-schedule for the 2014 Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Surveys.

7. Inspection of papers

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To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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