



To: Executive Councillor for Housing: Councillor Kevin Price
 Report by: Liz Bisset, Director of Customer & Community Service
 Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing Scrutiny Committee 8/3/2016
 Wards affected: All

TENANT & LEASEHOLDER SURVEY & FOCUS GROUPS RESULTS
Not a Key Decision

1. Executive summary

1.1 As housing services continue to adapt to changes, it will become increasingly important to have effective methods for gathering feedback and making sure that services are making best use of available resources.

1.2 Recent satisfaction surveys and follow-up focus groups have proved an effective method for gathering customer satisfaction data – the results of which (appendix A) have been developed into an Action Plan (appendix B).

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

1. To agree the Action Plan (appendix B)
2. To agree the suggested methodology for gathering ongoing customer feedback from tenants and leaseholders

3. Background

3.1 The most recent Tenant & Leaseholder satisfaction surveys were carried out in June 2014 by NWA consultants. The survey was designed to measure satisfaction levels, ask for opinions on future priorities and suggestions for where were needed.

3.2 Following presentation and analysis of the results over autumn/winter 2014, a number of topics were highlighted for more follow-up work:

1. Information	• Value for money	• Welfare reform
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information currently received and how it is rated • What experiences lead to positive or negative perceptions? • What is the ideal and should this be expected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for money – what is ‘good’ and what is ‘poor’ value for money? • What is reasonable to expect? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of Welfare Reform • Preparedness for welfare reform
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3.3 These topics either had the biggest impact on overall satisfaction or needed further work to understand tenant/leaseholder responses. Focus groups looking at these topics were held over July 2015, with participants able to choose from a number of venues and times. All four groups were recorded then transcribed (with the permission of participants), in line with the UK best practice code for focus groups.

3.4 Key findings from tenant/leaseholder Focus Groups

(Taken from appendix A - STAR Focus Groups Report 2015)

INFORMATION

- Open Door is popular but could be improved by more information on specific localities/wards along with a letters and suggestions page
- Some residents would prefer to receive text alerts, online communication, emails, etc.
- The ‘long wait’ to be transferred to repairs (on the phone) was a common problem
- Concern that advertising separate numbers in Open Door leads to customers having to repeat their requests
- Tenants felt more likely to be seen quickly and listened to better at area offices than on the phone
- Perception that customers should ‘work to’ the time frames set by the council rather than customers

VALUE FOR MONEY

- Affordability of property was a key measure for VFM, both in terms of rent, cost of running the property and access to local amenities
- Housing service was noted as ‘good value’ - providing a service over and above the expectations of customers
- Quality of repair work/right first time’ are key for perception of value
- Promised work not started - in some cases started but not completed
- Understanding where their particular job is would assist in reducing frustration and increasing understanding of expectations
- Expectation that customer service system would easily identify the person calling and the most recent request for service would be available without the customer having to repeat it
- The balance between the Council and the customer is weighted towards the Council

- Complaints were simply relayed back to the people who had 'failed' them in the first instance

WELFARE REFORM

- Groups demonstrated lack of awareness to welfare reform
- A number of participants would not be affected due to not being in receipt of benefits (this was the case for all in the leaseholder group)
- View that support and funding should be available from the Council and advisors who can assist
- Participants asked for information in Open Door (despite the fact that articles have already appeared)
- Several participants felt that they would have no idea how to seek assistance should they require it
- Participants were disturbed about the effects of direct housing benefit payments to tenants – concern that many people would find themselves in financial difficulties

LEASEHOLDERS

- Less happy than tenants with Open Door/considered it not particularly relevant to them with
- Preferred electronic communications and expect 24/7 access to information and services.
- Felt that their 'slightly different' (to tenants) needs were not always taken into account by the Council
- Strongly argued for more consultation on works to be carried out and the decision process on the services received
- View relationship with the Council primarily as a business relationship

3.5 The results of the focus groups have been turned into an Action Plan (appendix B). This plan draws on a number of already existing improvement initiatives – particularly in Customer Services and Repairs & Maintenance.

3.6 With changes in how social housing is financed and delivered, it may no longer be possible to make all the improvements tenants are asking for. Instead, this approach links existing work on updating processes and refining service delivery with areas that tenants have prioritised. This will be fed back to tenants, via print and online publications/media.

3.7 In addition to Focus Groups, it was also decided to run ongoing repairs telephone surveys (beginning in May 2015), capturing feedback from tenants who had recently received a repair within the day-to-day repairs service. The survey also allows tenants to provide open comments, as well as the opportunity to talk to someone regarding the survey.

3.8 To date, results compared to the 2014 survey show as follows:

Question	Monthly surveys (May-Dec 2015)	STAR survey 2014	Difference
Service charge value for money	62%	64.6%	-2.6%
The neighbourhood as a place to live	79%	80.6%	-1.6%
Rent providing value for money	76%	73.3%	+2.7%
The service provided by the landlord	85%	81.5%	+3.5%
The overall quality of their home	86%	78.2%	+7.8%

3.9 Ongoing changes to social housing will make it increasingly important to have effective methods for gathering feedback and measuring the effectiveness of services. It is also important that tenants and leaseholders have all the necessary information to understand why housing services needs to adapt in such a potentially radical way.

3.10 A report will be presented to Committee in June 2016, outlining the programme of work to ensure tenants are well informed of the significant changes taking place within social housing. The report will outline both the national agenda and how the council is working to manage expectations for current and future tenants. The report will outline the communication strategy and key topics to be publicised throughout 2016/17 and beyond.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

The satisfaction survey budget is an annual one, despite the survey being undertaken (historically) every two years. This means an element of annual activity is already budgeted for, i.e. small survey sampling, focus groups.

(b) Staffing Implications

The ongoing surveying work will be delivered within current structures and alongside tenant and leaseholder representatives.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An [EQIA](#) was completed for the 2015/16 work programme

(d) Environmental Implications

N/A

(e) Procurement

NWA consultants were commissioned at the start of the project to carry out further work once the initial survey results had been analysed, with options for additional follow up work on an ad-hoc basis. The next significant cost would be a future large-scale satisfaction survey which would go through the standard procurement process as used for the 2014 survey.

(f) **Consultation and communication**

The nature of the work described in this report is consultation with our tenants and leaseholders. It is expected that Open Door and online platforms will be the main platform for ongoing engagement and that housing managers, heads of service and the corporate teams will be updated of any future consultations being carried out.

(g) **Community Safety**

N/A

5. Background papers

2014 Tenant & Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey Results:

[2014 Tenant Satisfaction Survey](#)

[2014 Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey](#)

[2014 Sheltered Housing Survey](#)

6. Appendices

Appendix A - Tenant & Leaseholder Focus Group Results

Appendix B - Tenant & Leaseholder Focus Group Action Plan

7. Inspection of papers

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

Author's Name: James Bull
Author's Phone Number: 01223 - 458323
Author's Email: james.bull@cambridge.gov.uk