

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE – 8 SEPTEMBER 2004

TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY

Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise members of the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey and seek approval to introduce the concept of continuous monitoring.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the Housing Committee meeting held on 28 January 2004, Members agreed to commission a Tenant Satisfaction Survey as part of the Council's commitment to Best Value and to meet with the Single Regulatory Framework guidance provided by Communities Scotland.
- 2.2 The survey, conducted during March/April 2004, was designed to measure customer satisfaction, test the Council's housing service strengths and weaknesses and to provide suitable benchmarks for future measurement of performance.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Management Information (Scotland) Ltd were commissioned to conduct the survey on behalf of the Council. The survey covered a 10% population sample of the Council's housing stock and 1506 face to face interviews were conducted. The size of the sample ensured an industry accepted sampling error.

The format of the survey was a 122 question multi-choice questionnaire with sections for open responses. The survey was broken down into 13 sections as follows:

- Communication
- Contact
- Repairs
- Improvements
- Transfers
- Rent
- Complaints
- Neighbour problems
- Community satisfaction
- Working with tenants

- Improving the housing services
- Tenant information
- General opinion

4. FINDINGS

4.1 The key findings from the survey are reported below on the basis of the thirteen separate headings of the questionnaire.

4.2 Communication

Overall satisfaction levels were high with 83% (1,244) of respondents having positive views of the Housing Service's communication with them. 74% (1,119) preferred letters/leaflets for sources of information and 78% (1,168) were happy with the way they were kept informed. In addition, of the respondents who gave a view (1,436), 57% (825) thought Housing Services did take their views into account before making decisions.

4.3 Contact

66% (987), confirmed contact with Housing Services in the last 12 months; most favoured means of contact was by telephone 73% (718) followed by personal visit with 26% (257).

Telephone

Analysis of satisfaction with telephone contact,

- * 95% (682) were happy with time taken to answer the telephone
- * 93% (666) were satisfied with time to reach relevant person
- * 87% (622) were satisfied helpfulness of staff
- * 86% (614) were happy with the quality of advice and assistance given

Personal Visit

All respondents 100% (257) who personally visited the Council offices were satisfied with the access to the building and 100% (257) with the reception area within the office.

- * 98% (253) were satisfied in making an appointment to see another member of staff.
- * 98% (252) satisfied with time waiting to speak to relevant staff member.
- * 97% (249) were satisfied with the helpfulness of the receptionist
- * 95% (243) indicated that they were satisfied with helpfulness of the person visited
- * 94% (242) was satisfied with quality of advice given.

4.4 Repairs

Almost all respondents, 93% (1,396), indicated their awareness of the Council's responsibilities to maintain their homes and that of their own, 99% (1,484).

60% (907) of respondents used the repair service within the last twelve months. 73% (665) who used the service had the repair inspected. The

majority of tenants who have used the repair service, 57% (849), were happy with the service.

Satisfaction with Elements of the Repair Service

- * 79% (712) satisfied with tradesmen attitude and 73% (664) with helpfulness of repair staff.
- * 72% (652) satisfied with disturbance faced.
- * 70% (631) were happy with tradesmen turning up on time.
- * 64% (578) were happy with system to arrange repairs.
- * 62% (566) satisfied with quality of repairs.
- * 53% (484) tenants were happy with time taken to complete repairs.

28% (256) of respondents used the emergency repair service, and 23% (60) said they were dissatisfied with it.

4.5 Improvements

77% (1,158), of respondents said the state of repair of their home had stayed the same for the last 3 years. Almost half 43% (646) had some form of home improvement and of those 97% (623), confirmed they were either very well or well informed of pending improvements. The most frequent improvements were 'new kitchens' with 222 households, 'new central heating' with 211 households and 'new external doors' with 164 households. Other improvements were rewiring, new windows, new bathrooms and retiled roofs.

4.6 Transfers

6% (86) had registered on the Council's transfer list. The most common reason for seeking a transfer was 'do not like the area/neighbourhood', 'need a bigger property' and 'medical reason'. 41% (35) of those on the transfer list have been on it between 1 and 5 years. 59% (32) enquiries about transfer requests were satisfied with their enquiry and 77% (66) were happy with the advice regarding availability and turnover.

4.7 Rent

More than half, 54% (813), of respondents had their rent paid by Housing Benefit direct. 35% (525) paid their rent at area office, and 4% (56) at John Dickie Street. Almost all respondents, 97% (672), were happy with the present rent payment method. Nearly half of respondents, 49% (736), said the rent charge was good value for money.

4.8 Complaints

10% ((152) of respondents made a complaint about a housing matter, repairs accounted for 64% (98) of complaints. 73% (111) were dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, the main reason for tenants being dissatisfied was the time taken to deal with it the complaint. 38% (571) were not aware of the complaints procedures.

4.9 Neighbour problems

13% (210), suffered neighbour problems, the main reason for disturbance was 'loud music', 50% (100), and noisy children, 34% (68). The majority either

complained to the person causing the problem 34% (68) or complained to the housing department 34% (68). 6% (7) were offered mediation service. Almost two-thirds 62% (125), of all tenants who have been disturbed by the behaviour of other people, still, have not had their problem resolved.

4.10 **Community satisfaction**

85% (1,273), of respondents were happy with their neighbourhood. 73% (1,093) were happy with the car parking facilities, however, 29% were dissatisfied with the children's play facilities, 86% (1,298) were happy with maintenance of common areas, 86% (1,299) indicated they felt safe in the neighbourhood and 88% (1,325) were satisfied with the street/close lighting, 84% (1,263) happy with community facilities and 88% (1,325) with the maintenance of open spaces.

4.11 **Working with tenants**

80% (1,198) of tenants were not aware of how to become a member of a tenant/resident association and 45% (675) said they understood the benefits of a tenant and residents association. Only 1% (11) of those interviewed were a member of tenant/resident association. On a positive note, 6% (89) put their names forward to become a member. The vast majority 96% (1,447) highlighted newsletters and 41% (617) questionnaire surveys as their preferred method for consultation with Housing Services.

4.12 **Improving housing services**

The Housing Service's public image is high and 90% (1,360) of tenants said that East Ayrshire is an efficient Landlord.

75% (1,129) of respondents mentioned that quality of services from the Housing Services over the last few years has stayed the same, 8% (124) said it has got better and 11% (161) highlighted that it has got worse.

85% (1,286) thought that East Ayrshire Council cares about its tenants, 64% (1,003) said it has enough resources to do a good job, 90% (1,360) thought them efficient, 97% (1,453) thought them easy to contact, 96% (1,443) said there are enough points of contact, 98% (1,473) friendly staff, 90% (1,350) provides a good service, 93% (1,404) keeps tenants informed, 89% (1,335) keeps estates well managed, and 80% (1,210) said it provides good value for money.

4.13 **Tenant information**

The survey found that the majority of respondents 26% (391) have stayed in their home more than 30 years, 21% (311) between 11 and 20 years, 18% (269) between one and five years. 15% (220) have occupied their present home between six and ten years, and 6% (96) have stayed in their present home less than 1 year.

The majority of respondents occupied either a one-person household with 47% (715), a two-person household with 31% (462) and a three-person household with 12% (185).

The single over 60 years household had the greatest number with 32% (475) followed by single adult household with 16% (246) and single parent household 16% (240); least percentage of households was couple with children and adults with 2% (28) and pensioner with adults with 3% (952).

From the 1,506 households questioned the survey found a total 2,842 people within the households showing a mixed age distribution with peak age groups of 30 – 39 years with 11% (319) and 60 – 69 years with 14% (400) and over 70 years with 18% (500).

The ratio of children under 15 years of age to those people 16 to 59 years (working age) is one child for every 2.15 adults.

Another feature for the Council's area is that for every person over 60 years of age there are 1.47 adults of working age.

Work Status

Households with full-time employment totalled 14% (218); part-time employment 6% (95), householder looking after family 10% (152), long-term sick or disabled 10% (150), householder retired 45% (679). Finally, 13% (193) of respondents said they were unemployed.

Incidence of Disability in Household

40% (606) of respondents indicated their household had a disability. Further analysis showed that 27% (411) of respondents had a mobility disability, other disabilities identified were 3% (46) hearing, vision 1% (19) and a further 9% (130) with other unseen disabilities.

Ethnic Origin

99% (1,502) tenants interviewed identified being of White origin.

Affordability:

Rent Measure

The survey identified 59 (28%) households of the 214 non-housing benefit households surveyed failed the Housing Benefit Dependency Measure.

4.14 General Opinion

76% (1,146) of respondents were satisfied with the Council as landlord. 88% (1,320) were satisfied with their present heating system, 94% (1,414) felt safe in their home and 94% (1,420) were satisfied with the overall design of their home.

4.15 Conclusions

The conclusions that Management Information (Scotland) Ltd reached are as follows:

- The survey results provide confirmation that many of the services offered by the Council are being carried out to a standard acceptable to their client groups.

- An action plan should be formed flowing from the elements where the Council have attained 70% or below to ensure that improved performance is achieved.
- In considering a plan of action it is essential that the results of the Survey be disseminated to the Council's residents.
- Resident involvement should be sought in improving service delivery.

5. CONTINUOUS MONITORING

- 5.1 As recommended by the consultants, resident involvement should be sought in improving service delivery. Prior to the Tenant Satisfaction Survey conducted earlier this year, the last survey had been carried out in 1998. In the context of Best Value it would be preferable to measure service performance more regularly. Continuous monitoring of customer satisfaction gives better insight than periodic surveys and it is proposed to introduce and develop a framework for continuous monitoring of service delivery.
- 5.2 Tenant and Residents Associations already provide a means for tenants to become involved in service planning. The Housing Service has established a Regulation Working Group that monitors progress in various aspects of housing service delivery through a series of staff working groups. Senior Officers and Tenants Information Service (TIS) are currently investigating how tenants can be involved in this process.
- 5.3 In recognition that not all tenants want to be a member of a group, the East Ayrshire Residents Syndicate (EARS) has been established as a means for individuals to engage in discussions on housing matters. The EARS group consists of over 200 individuals who have expressed an interest in housing and a willingness to get involved in discussions over national or local housing issues. Membership of the group remains open and it is hoped to continue to grow public interest in the group over time. It is proposed to issue regular newsletters throughout the year to EARS members seeking their views on service issues and inviting them to make recommendations for improvements.
- 5.4 It is proposed to introduce quality control checks involving regular sampling of recent service users who would be invited to take part in a brief telephone survey to obtain feedback on levels of satisfaction with service provided and where appropriate, obtain suggestions to improve service. Random sampling of customers will be structured to ensure the process is cost effective and statistically reliable.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The cost of continuous monitoring will be contained within existing budgets.
- 6.2 The cost implications of any recommended service improvements arising from the Housing Service Review will be reported on separately.

7. LEGAL AUTHORITY/ IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Continuous monitoring will assist the Council in meetings its statutory obligations in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to consult with its tenants and tenants' organisations in respect of service provision

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The proposal, if agreed, would support the Council's best value arrangements for the planning and delivery of Council Services.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Members:
- (i) note the findings of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2004 as detailed in Paragraph 4 above.
 - (ii) approve the proposals to conduct continuous monitoring of housing services as outlined in Paragraph 5 above.
 - (iii) otherwise note the contents of the report

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WS/CMCA/MA/LA

09 August 2004

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Tenant Satisfaction Survey report March 2004

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone 01563 576839 and ask for Maxine Ahrens.

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