
**Meeting of the Executive Members for
Housing and Adult Services and Advisory
Panel**

15th January 2007

Report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

RESULTS OF THE 2006 ANNUAL HOUSING SERVICE MONITOR

Summary

1. This report provides the Executive Member with the headline results of the Annual housing Services Monitor: a postal survey undertaken during September and October 2006. It will be supplemented by a presentation to the Executive Member and Advisory Panel at the meeting.
2. The departments response to these findings will be worked up as part of the service planning process, and included in the Service plan reports being brought to the Executive member in March 2007 For ease of reference percentages have been “rounded”, with a full breakdown of response rates for key questions shown in **Figures 1 to 33** set out in **Annex A**.

Background

3. The Annual Housing Services Monitor is a tenant satisfaction survey which has been carried out in York every year since 1990.
4. During September 2006 a postal survey was mailed to 1800 council tenants selected at random. A total of 878 tenants returned the questionnaire which represents a good response rate of 49% of the sample. The survey was promoted using the *Streets Ahead* publication, posters in housing offices and press releases. A prize draw with a top prize of £200 was also offered in to increase the response rate.
5. The Marketing and Communications Group developed the questionnaire in conjunction with the Housing Services department. The fieldwork was conducted by BMG research.
6. The 2006 research was a statutory BVPI (Best Value Performance Indicator) survey. Every three years the council is required to report four BVPI indicators using responses to standard questions based the ‘STATUS’ survey. The Housing Service is able to add additional questions, but all the questions specified by the DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) must be included. Previously in York, the survey has been

conducted using face-to-face interviews, however this year the Audit Commission specified a postal methodology. This change in data collection methods should be borne in mind when comparing the 2006 results with previous findings. The results for the BVPI stats are shown in **Charts 1 and 4** contained below.

Data issues

7. The Annual Housing Services Monitor results are accurate to within +/- 3.3% with 95% confidence. Where percentages do not sum to 100%, this is either due to multiple responses or decimal rounding. The figures for each question have been calculated after the respondents who did not answer the questions have been removed from the bases. Data is available broken down by a number of categories including, age, residents association area and estate. Ward level analysis will also be available shortly to us from BMG who carried out the survey. The Annual Housing Service Monitor contains questions relating to tenants' profile; satisfaction with housing and neighbourhoods; recent contact with the Council; satisfaction with the repairs services and satisfaction with methods of communication and involvement.
8. The response numbers from the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) community were too low to be statistically valid.

Consultation

9. The survey questionnaire was designed by Marketing and Communications in conjunction with Housing managers, and included all the statutory questions required by the STATUS survey (see paragraph 6 above). The results of the survey will be shared with the York Federation of Residents and Community Associations at their January 2007 meeting, and in the March 2007 edition of *Streets Ahead* Magazine for tenants. Detailed feedback for staff on both general trend and their specific service areas will also be provided.

Options

10. This report is information only.

Analysis

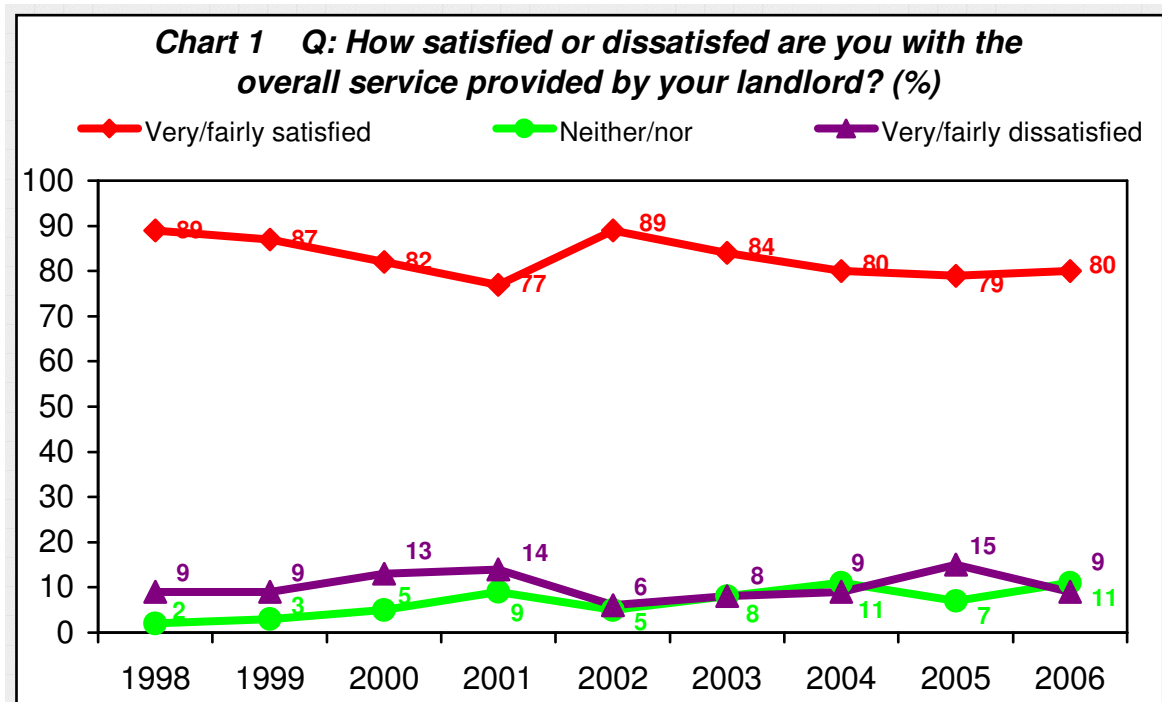
Tenant Profile

11. The majority of the sample were longstanding tenants of City of York Council 60% have been a council tenant for over 10 years and almost half have lived in the same home for more than 10 years. **(Figure 3)**
12. In terms of ethnic group, the returns were dominated by White British (98%). This compares with the 2001 census figure of 2.1% for all households in York. Only 6 responses from Black and Minority Ethnic tenants were

received, although the survey was offered in other languages and formats. (See **Figure 6**)

13. One third of households participating in the survey were made up of one adult aged 60 years or older, a further 11% were made up of 2 adults aged 60 years or older. Single parent families with at least one child under 16 accounted for 15% and two parent families 8% of respondents. (**Figure 1**)
14. The largest number of respondents (40%) had been council tenants for over 21 years, and 29% had lived in their current home for over 21 years. More detail on the breakdown of responses by length of tenancy and time in home is shown in **Figures 2 and 3**.
15. In terms of economic activity, 39% of the respondents were retired; over a quarter (29%) employed or self employed; 14% permanently sick or disabled, and 10% looking after home or family. **Figures 4 & 5** give more information on sources of income.
16. Households with an annual income of less than £10,400 account for 63% of the sample, and 59% receive all their income from benefits and/or pensions.
17. Forty six per cent of respondents to the survey responded 'Yes' to the question 'Do you have any longstanding illness, disability or infirmity?' **Figure 7**

Overall satisfaction with the Housing Service



18. Satisfaction with the overall service remains high, and 80% of tenants stating that they are 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied, is an improvement on the 2005 response. The percentage 'very dissatisfied' has halved from 6 to 3%, and those feeling dissatisfied have reduced from 9 to 6%: overall 9% of tenants are dissatisfied; and 11% 'neither satisfied or dissatisfied' (**Figure 8**). Amongst people citing a disability or long term illness, satisfaction is broadly similar to the overall figure, at 79%, and there are no significant differences in responses by this group to other survey questions. The longer term trend is shown in **Chart 1** above.
19. 76 per cent of tenants agree (strongly or slightly) that City of York Council is a good landlord (**Figure 9**). This outturn is six percentage points below the 2005 result of 82%. Further detailed analysis of the results will be undertaken to discover the reasons as to why the proportion of tenants agreeing that the Council is a good landlord is continuing to decrease.

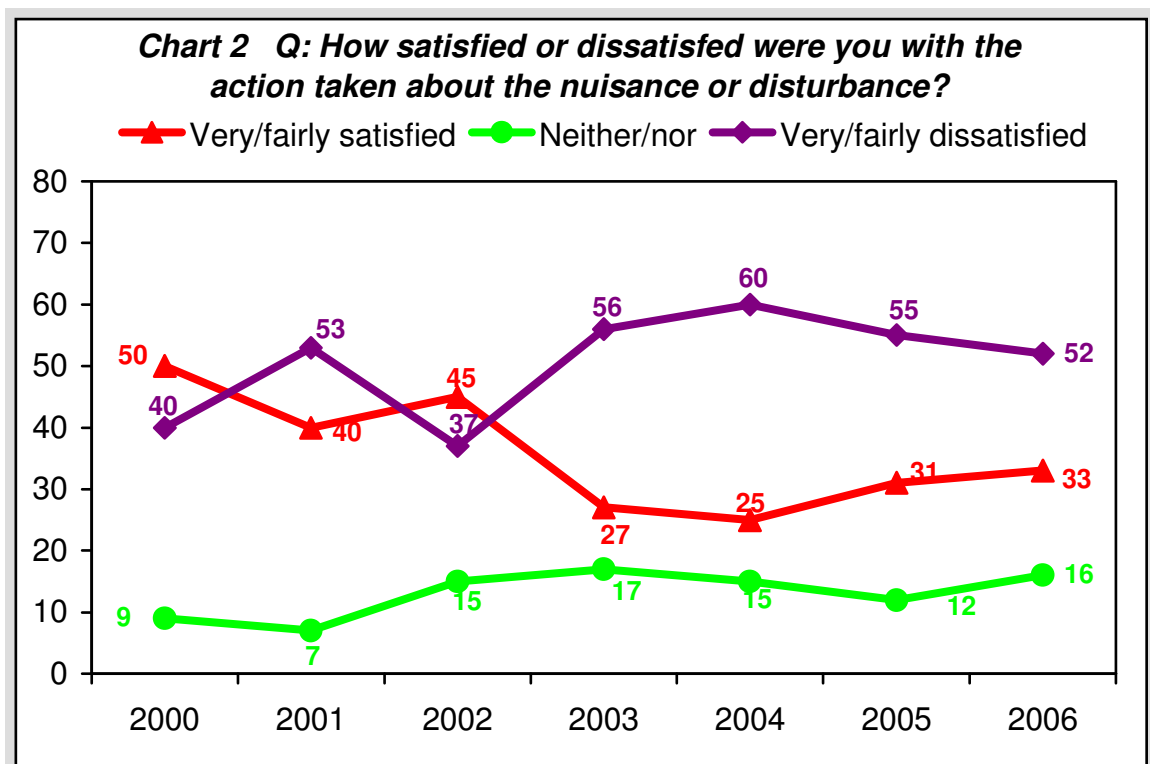
Satisfaction with home and surrounding area

20. The condition of the home (**Figure 12**) is described as 'good' or 'very good' by 80% of tenants a 1% increase on last year. The numbers stating fair or poor has reduced from 12 to 8%. Again satisfaction is much higher among the over 55 age group: 89% say their home is in good or very good condition compared to 65% of 16-34 year olds, and 70% of 35-54 year olds. Further research needs to be undertaken to discover the reasons for this
21. Eighty three per cent of tenants are satisfied (including 49% very satisfied) with their accommodation (**Figure 10**), down from 87% in 2005. There is a variation among age groups, and 92% of over 55 year olds are very or fairly satisfied. Only 77% (**Figure 11**) state that the number of rooms in their home is 'about right'. Eighteen per cent have too few rooms, and 5% (up from 2%) have too many. The council has not changed its policy on the size of properties in relation to the size of households, it is likely therefore that this trend is more a reflection on aspirational issues such a desire for additional rooms for home study or computer use.
22. Thirty seven of respondents lived in part of a communal development (generally flats or bedsits). And 71% of these residents are satisfied with the way that the council looks after these areas (**Figure 13**). This has fallen from 74% in 2005. However, when asked to rate satisfaction with particular aspects of the communal responses showed a marked improvement in relation to repairs to communal areas with 80% satisfied, and satisfaction with decoration, bin chutes and door entry phones also improved. Satisfaction with cleanliness remained the same as 2005, at 67%.
23. There was a decline in satisfaction with the maintenance of outdoor communal areas (**Figure 16**) – this fell to 67% this year from 77% in 2005. However, when asked about particular aspects of outside space:
 - satisfaction with grass cutting improved from 67 to 71%,
 - the maintenance of shrubs and trees rose from 59 to 66%,

- the removal of graffiti by 18 percentage points from 43% in 2005 to 61% this year.

24. When asked about the wider neighbourhood over three quarters (76%) are 'satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live'. (**Figure 14**) This is an improvement on 74% in 2005 and reverses a downward trend. Those least satisfied were younger people, those with children and those in employment. Respondents in the Tang Hall (centre and north) were the least satisfied (59%) followed by Bell Farm with 68% satisfaction. Residents in Cornlands and Chapelfields displayed the greatest satisfaction, with both estates rating 83%.

Nuisance

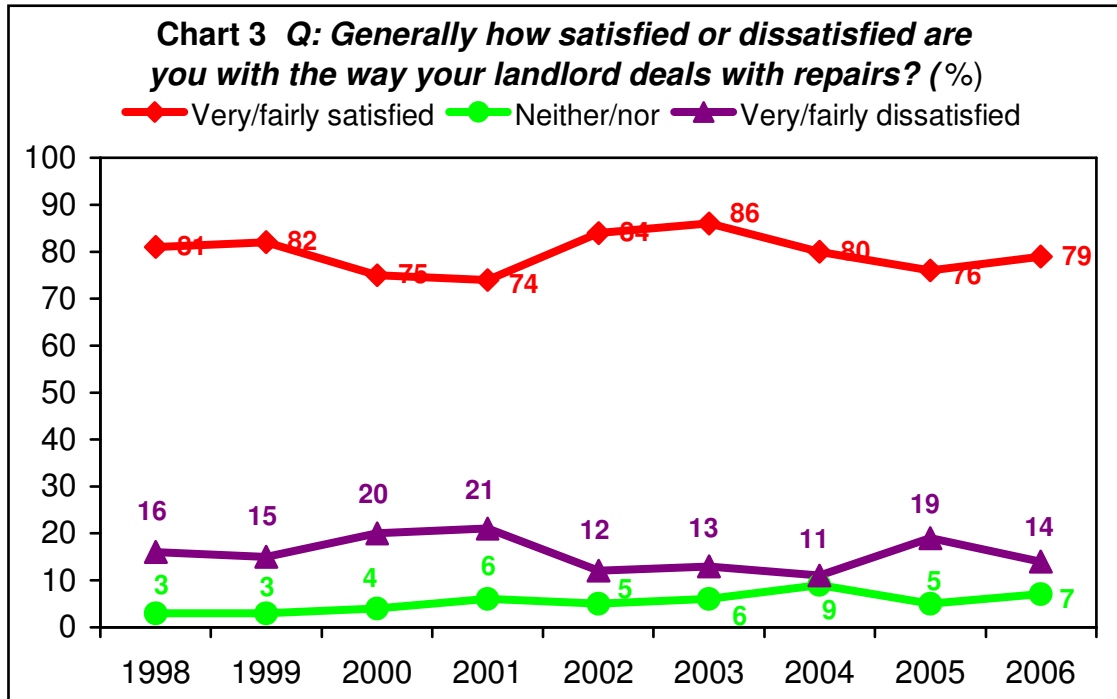


25. Respondents were asked about their personal experience of nuisance (**Figure 17**). Whilst 51% consider noise from other people to be a problem in the area, and 36% cited neighbour problems as an issue, only 16% had reported nuisance or disturbance from neighbours in the last 12 months. Reporting of nuisance issues was highest in Villages, and in Carr and Foxwood areas (with around a quarter of tenants reporting nuisance, and lowest in Chapelfields and Lowfields (6%))

26. One third of the tenants who reported a problem were satisfied with the action taken (**Chart 2 above & figure 18**) This is the highest rating since 2002, although the numbers are decreasing, over half remain dissatisfied with the action taken as the result of their complaint. Views on more the

more general incidence of Anti-social behaviour in their area is contained in paragraph 35.

The Repairs Service



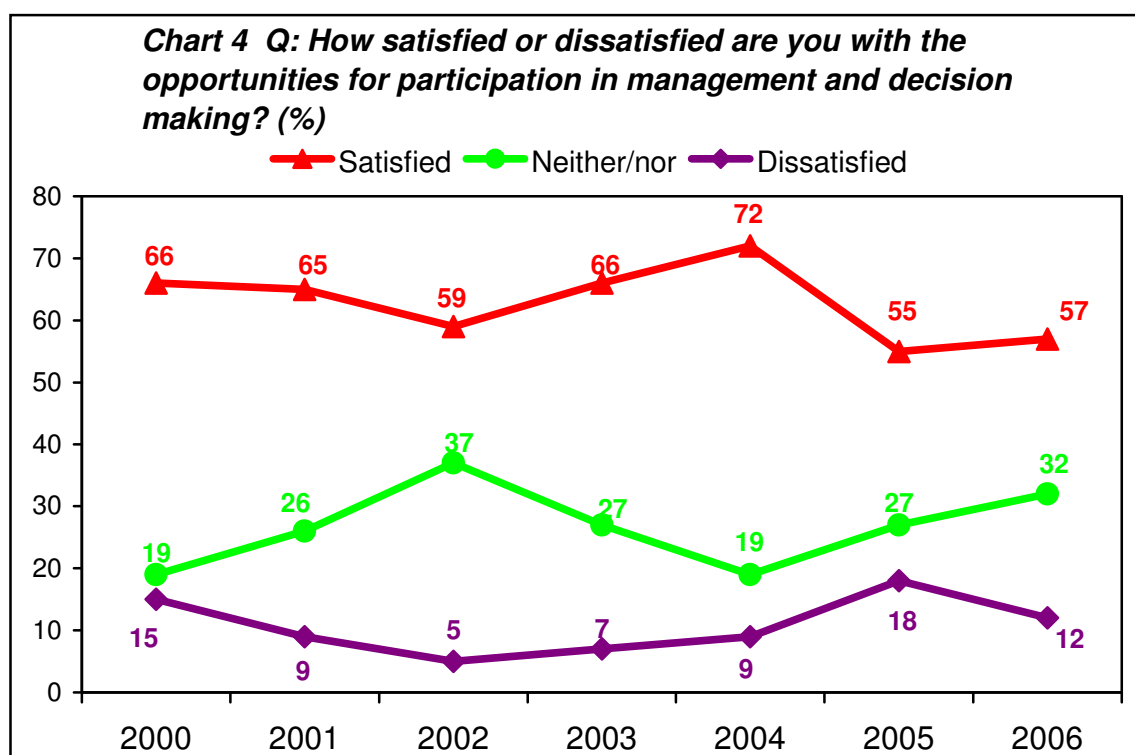
27. The proportion of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service has increased to 79% from 77% in 2005 (**Figure 25**) Again the youngest respondents had the lowest levels of satisfaction: 90% of over 55s were satisfied with the repairs service compared to only 59% of 16-34 year olds.
28. Over two-thirds (67%) of tenants have requested repair work in the last 12 months. (**Figure 26**) Those tenants who had repairs completed in the past year were asked to rate the repairs service for various attributes (**Figure 27**). In all areas the majority of tenants were satisfied, in particular 9 out of 10 reported the attitude of workers had been good. They were most critical in terms of the time taken for work to start, with only 78% satisfied down from 84% in 2005.
29. These issues have been discussed by the Repairs Partnership Board, which monitors the partnership arrangement between housing and Neighbourhood Services to deliver responsive repairs, and the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) service plan submitted in March 2007 will include actions to address repair issues highlighted by the survey).

Communications & Customer Service

30. Three quarters of respondents are very or fairly satisfied with the way the housing department keeps them informed about the things which might affect them as a tenant. The number very satisfied has increased from 29% in 2003 to 35% in 2006 (**Figure 28**) Satisfaction is higher amongst the unemployed over 55s and those without children. Longer standing tenants of 11 years plus were also more like to be satisfied (83%)
31. Respondents were asked about satisfaction with the council's magazine for tenants *Streets Ahead*. 91% of respondents recalled receiving a copy up from 88% last year. 96% of those read at least some of the magazine, with 62% reading all or nearly all of it (**Figure 31**)
32. 60% of the sample had contacted the housing department in the last 12 months, with younger respondents and those who had been in their home for less than two years the most likely to have done so. 60% used the phone to make contact, 27% visited in person, and 1% each wrote a letter or emailed, Responses suggest that getting hold of the right person in the housing department is becoming increasingly difficult (down from 74 to 61%). This may reflect the initial impact of changes to staffing arrangements following the restructure in late 2005, and changes specialisation of estate manager roles, to separate responsibility for income and tenancy management However the perceived helpfulness of staff continues to improve increasing to 81% from 74% in 2005. In 77% of cases staff were cited as being able to deal with the enquiry. (**See Figures 20-24**)

Tenant Involvement

33. Another question testing satisfaction with tenant involvement is satisfaction with opportunities for participation in management and decision making, one of the BVPI indicators. There is a small improvement in satisfaction in this area rising from 55 to 57%. (See **Chart 4** below)



34. The survey asked tenants about satisfaction with the extent to which the housing department finds out their views (**Figure 28**) This has remained fairly stable, reducing only 1 percentage point from 65 to 64% satisfaction. However this is not satisfactory and further work needs to be done to establish the reasons for this, including the differences between age groups.

Wider Crime and Disorder Issues

35. Specific questions were asked about how much of a problem tenants perceived crime and anti-social behaviour to be problems in their area. The highest proportion of residents 66% overall, perceived vandalism to be a slight or serious problem in their area. It is also the issue most likely to be described as a 'serious' problem (by 19%) (**Figure 15**) Similar increases were reported in the perception of the following as a problem:

- Litter 63%
- Dogs 54%
- Noise from people 51%
- Drug dealing 46%
- Graffiti, 45% (although only 6% view as a serious problem)
- Racial harassment is perceived as a serious problem by 2% of residents, a further 6% referring to it as a slight problem.

36. The increasing concern about aspects of anti social behaviour highlighted by the survey warrants further research.

Responding and Improving Services

37. Overall, the results from the survey have been largely positive with eight out of ten respondents being satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council's Housing department

38. There has been a slight decline in satisfaction with accommodation and value for money, however the results are still strong with 83% and 74% expressing satisfaction

39. When presented with a list of services and asked to rate the three most important in terms of their importance, tenants ranked them as follows: (**Figure 32**)

- Repairs and Maintenance – 80% cited as one of the three most important
- Overall Quality of Home- 58% (down from 73% in 2005)
- Value for money of rent – 50%

- Keeping tenants informed 45%
 - Taking tenants views into account 35%
 - Involving tenants in management of homes (up to 11% from 7%)
40. The Questionnaire then asked tenants which of the above services most needed improving. Here the results were more evenly spread, 49% cited repairs, 51% overall quality, 35% value for money, 49 % keeping tenants informed, 54% taking tenants views into account, and 43% involving tenants in the management of homes. All these were within 7% points of the previous years figures, except involving tenants in management of homes, which increased from 30 to 43%. **(Figure 33)**
41. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Service Plan for 2007/8 submitted to EMAP in December 2006 highlighted the Government's Respect Agenda for Anti Social behaviour as a key service driver and priority, and joint working between the housing service and key stakeholders towards meeting the standard, could have a significant impact on anti social behaviour.

Corporate Priorities

42. The collection of the data used in the Annual Housing Monitor reflects one of the overall corporate priorities which is to: *'Improve our focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services'* Whilst the survey does not directly affect the actual condition of properties, it contributes to the priority action *'Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces'* by measuring customer perceptions of housing and estates, to provide information to the housing service to inform service improvements
43. The findings from the survey can also be used to inform the priority statement *'Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city'* by clarifying quality issues of concern to tenants.

Implications

44. Implications arising from this report are:
- **Financial** -There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.
 - **Human Resources (HR)** - There are no HR implications
 - **Equalities** - There are no direct equalities implications arising directly from this report. The results have been analysed to show differences in responses by age group, and can be interrogated to reveal responses given by people with disability or limiting long term illness, in terms of analysis by ethnic origin, as the base of ethnic minority respondents is low, further work needs to be done to establish the views and aspirations of this group.

- **Legal** - There are no legal implications
- **Crime and Disorder** - Some of the responses indicate tenants' views on Crime and Disorder issues, and the Housing Service will work in partnership to address these concerns, and to respond to the Governments 'Respect' Agenda to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- **Information Technology (IT)** - There are no IT implications
- **Property** - There are no Property Implications
- **Other** - No other known implications

Risk Management

45. There are no risks associated directly with this report.

Recommendations

46. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member notes the summary results of the 2006 Annual Housing Service Monitor.

Reason: This report is for information only.

Contact Details

Author:
Alison Leech
Service Development Manager
Housing Services
 01904 554362

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:
Steve Waddington
Head of Housing Services

Report
Approved



Date 22nd Dec 06

Jenny Stuart
Research Officer
Marketing & Communications
 (Chief Executives)
 01904 552021

Report
Approved



Date 22nd Dec 06

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *None .*

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

**Annex A: Tables showing detailed results from Annual Housing Monitor
2006**