

28 June 2011

Decision Session: Cabinet Member for Health, Housing & Adult Social Services

Report of the Assistant Director - Housing & Public Protection

Developing Local Offers / Service Standards

Summary

1. The report provides background information regarding the regulatory requirements of the Tenant Service Authority; customer and staff consultation process, results and outcomes and informs the Cabinet Member of the development, with customers, of 11 local offers / service standards for Housing Services for the following service areas, attached at **Annex 1**:
 - Resident involvement
 - Customer service
 - Day to day repairs
 - Gas servicing
 - Planned maintenance
 - Tenant's Choice modernisation
 - Estate management
 - Anti-social behaviour
 - Rent collection
 - New homes
 - Value for money
2. The report seeks final approval for the local offers / service standards from the Cabinet Member for Health, Housing & Adult Social Services.

Background

3. As a regulatory requirement of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) all social housing providers were required to set out their service standards by 1st April 2011. The service standards must reflect how the landlord will meet the 5 national TSA standards:
 - Tenant involvement & empowerment
 - Home
 - Tenancy
 - Neighbourhood & community
 - Value for money

4. Guidance from the TSA¹ requires landlords to consult extensively with their tenants prior to developing their service to ensure they reflect tenants' real service priorities and needs.
5. Critically, the TSA also requires landlords to develop local service standards with their tenants for 3 of the national standards :
 - Tenant involvement & empowerment
 - Neighbourhood & community
 - Home

These local service standards are known by the TSA as the *local offer*.

6. Housing Services has defined standards for 11 service areas which correspond to the TSA national standards as shown below :

CYC service standard	TSA standard
Resident involvement	Tenant involvement & empowerment
Customer service	Tenant involvement & empowerment
Day to day repairs	Home (repairs & maintenance)
Gas servicing	Home (repairs & maintenance)
Planned maintenance	Home (repairs & maintenance)
Tenants' Choice modernisation	Home (quality of accommodation)
Estate management	Neighbourhood & community
Anti-social behaviour	Neighbourhood & community
Rent collection	Tenancy
New homes	Tenancy
Value for money	Value for money

7. The Housing allocations service standards (which form part of the TSA tenancy standard) will be developed after implementation of the new choice based lettings system in July 2011.
8. Each service standard requires defined measures of performance which must be reported, as a minimum, in the Annual Report to Tenants due 1st October each year. Performance against service standards should also be available in other ways including websites, newsletters, in local offices as well as assessed by tenants at panels / boards.
9. The development of service standards / local offers is a central plank in the TSA's express intention to significantly increase tenant's ability to monitor and influence the services they receive. This is known as the *co-regulatory approach* which involves honest performance feedback from the landlord, enabling robust assessment by tenants.
10. The Customer Service Standard has been checked to ensure it is aligned with the ethos of the draft Customer Service Strategy 2011-13. Whilst this does not, as yet, define service standards or outcomes for customers these are in development, due Autumn 2011.

¹ The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2010

11. Housing will revise its Customer Service Standard to ensure compliance with new corporate customer care standards, when agreed. The suite of standards will be updated in the event of any other future changes affecting them.

Consultation

12. Extensive tenant and staff consultation commenced in November 2010 to ensure housing's service standards accurately reflect what our tenants want their services to deliver. Details of the consultation process are set out below.
13. **November 2010. Tenant and Leaseholder Open Day.** An article and reply paid invitations were sent to all 8,000 tenants with Streets Ahead quarterly magazine. Customers had input into when the event would be held and its format. This comprised general information stalls, a housing stall and survey for each of our 11 service standards, a quiz and three super-store sponsored prizes. 46 customers attended the open day, completing 92 surveys. As a result, revised service standards were drafted. A follow up newsletter was sent to every attendee giving feedback on the event.
14. **February 2011. Local Offers Customer Project Team established.** An insert in *Working Together*¹ failed to recruit to a customer project team to oversee the development process. Members of the Residents' Federation stepped in to ensure that customers were directing the next stages of consultation. They agreed a consultation plan and decided how to progress wider customer consultation.
15. **February 2011 surveys and drop-in sessions**
 - 25 Federation members and 35 open day attendees were sent a postal survey on all 11 revised service standard areas.
 - 205 customers selected from housing's involved customer database were sent a postal survey on 2 revised service standard areas.
 - 43 respondents to the New Home Survey received a postal survey on the New Home standard.
 - Two drop in sessions were held for customers to talk to staff and complete surveys in person 18th & 21st
 - Face to face customer surveys on the Customer Service standard were undertaken at St Leonards 18th & 21st
14. **February 2011 Staff consultation** Staff were sent the relevant service standards for their work areas. In addition, managers were sent the Value for Money standard. Managers were asked to ensure relevant standards, which they and their staff would be responsible for delivering, were thoroughly discussed in team / section meetings and feedback returned.
15. **March 2011 Streets Ahead final consultation** The Spring edition of *Streets Ahead*² included an article in the *Your Service, Your Say* involvement section and asked customers to take part in the final consultation by returning a survey insert. The insert gave a selection of 8 service standards and asked customers to agree, disagree or comment on them. Space and cost restrictions limited the size of the insert, however the full set of standards was available on request as hard copy or on the website.

¹ Residents' Association members newsletter

² Quarterly housing magazine for tenants & leaseholders

This gave a second and final opportunity for all tenants to be involved in setting the standards for their services.

16. **Housing Services Management Team** noted at their meeting on the 29th March 2011 the extensive consultation and agreed the service standards should be referred for Cabinet Member approval
17. **The Residents' Federation** fully endorsed the service standards at their meeting on the 19th May 2011.
18. **York-wide anti-social behaviour (ASB) service standards.** Given the York-wide ASB strategy, consultation took place with Registered Social Landlords (RSL's)¹ partners to agree a York-wide local ASB offer. Each landlord's existing ASB standards were compared in February to identify those common standards that all landlords could support. On 22nd March, CYC and RSL partners agreed the final document entitled *Our ASB promise to you*. This local offer will, for the first time, deliver the same ASB service standards to the great majority of social housing tenants in York. It forms an exemplar of how the TSA aspires local offers to work.
19. The chart below indicates the total number of consultation responses received for each service standard :

Service standard	Total responses
Repairs including planned maintenance & gas servicing	218
Customer Service	215
Tenants' Choice	203
ASB	198
Estate management	198
Rent collection	196
Resident involvement	188
New homes	176
Planned maintenance	45
Gas servicing	44
Value for money ²	28
Total responses	1,704

20. These responses reflect customer priorities as demonstrated in the Annual Housing Satisfaction Survey 2010, with the exception of customer service which customers give a higher priority in this consultation.
21. All consultations included equalities questions. A breakdown of responses is shown below :

Male	Female	Has a disability	Has no disability	16 - 24	25 - 39	40 - 59	60+
93	152	74	186	8	19	84	149

¹ Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust; York Housing Association ; Home Group; Fabrik Housing; Railway Housing; Yorkshire Housing Association, Accent Group.

² Planned maintenance, Gas servicing & Value for Money surveys were not included in the Streets Ahead consultation due to space constraints and the project team's decision to prioritise Day to Day Repairs and ASB. Hence far lower returns.

22. Responses are skewed to reflect the views of customers over 60 (57%). Housing's customer profile shows 26% customers are over 55.¹ The majority of respondents are female (62%) which exactly matches Housing's customer profile. A higher number of respondents have a disability (28%) than compared to Housing's customer profile (19%).²

British	White British	Irish	Italian	Polish	Scottish	Romany gypsy	Asian born British	Prefer not to say
38	185	2	1	1	1	1	1	4

23. Responses reflect the views of British & White British customers (95%). Housing's customer profile shows 98.5% of customers are White British.³

Options

24. Option 1 – Agree the attached service standards which have been developed with our customers.
25. Option 2 – Decide not to agree the attached service standards and ask officers to consult further with customers.

Analysis

26. Annex 1 shows the suite of 11 final service standards. The format is concise, showing clear standards, customer responsibilities and corresponding performance measures.
27. In the consultations, customers were asked to agree with each service standard or disagree, giving their reasons or suggesting amendments.
28. Overall, customers have strong agreement with the service standards. Pleasingly, customer consensus with the majority of service standards exceeds 90% and in some cases reaches 100%. The following points consider consultation responses in more detail.
29. Customer consensus with service standards for Gas servicing, Tenants' Choice, Planned maintenance, New homes and Value for money all exceed 90%.
30. Agreement with Customer Service standards falls below 90% in 9 areas :
- always have an estate manager available when you visit the office (84%)
 - answer the phone courteously within 20 seconds with a standard greeting (84%)
 - return your phone call or message within 24 hours (87%)

¹ Autumn 2010

² Customer profile figure for disability believed to under-represent due to inputting error

³ Autumn 2010

- offer to call you back if you prefer (85%)
- using profiling to give equality of access to services (86%)
- ensuring customers are seen within 10 minutes (81%)
- try to resolve a complaint promptly complaints (89%)
- help you make a complaint (82%)
- explain the complaints procedure (89%)

31. Customer comments indicate 10 days is too long to wait for a complaint response. The lower satisfaction with telephone standards may suggest customers are expressing dissatisfaction with performance rather than responding to the proposed standard.

32. Agreement with Repairs standards falls below 90% in 2 areas :

- 20 days for general repairs (84%)
- Tenant responsibility section - carrying our repairs that are your responsibility (89%)

33. Customer comments indicate 20 days is too long to wait for a routine repair, although it should be noted that whilst the priority is 20 days, the average time to complete a non-urgent repair is just over 5 days. Customer comments suggest a lack of understanding about which repairs are being referred to as their responsibility.

34. Agreement with ASB standards falls below 90% in 1 area :

- Tenant responsibility section – completing the satisfaction survey (84%)

This may be due to a lack of clarity or promotion of how the customer satisfaction survey is used.

35. Agreement with Rent collection standards falls below 90% in 5 areas :

- providing direct debits (84%)
- providing standing orders (83%)
- providing on line debit card payments (80%)
- providing post office giro payments (75%)
- Tenant responsibility section – changing standing order payments following rent increase (82%)

It may be that customers have responded by indicating their preferred payment method given the Allpay response was high at 96%

36. Agreement with Estate Management standards falls below 90% in 5 areas :

- remove dangerous dumped rubbish in 24 hours (89%)
- advertise cleaning of flats (85%)
- publicise dates of estate inspections (83%)
- conduct estate inspections every 3 months (84%)
- visit new tenants 3 times in 12 months (89%)

Customers' comments do not throw light these responses. Again, it is not clear whether customers are commenting on performance rather than standards.

37. Agreement with Resident Involvement standards falls below 90% in 2 areas :
- Tenant responsibility section – you can help by becoming a Tenant Inspector (81%)
 - Tenant responsibility section – you can help by joining customer panels (81%)

Customers' comments do not throw light these responses.

38. Following discussion, HSMT agreed not to make any further changes to the service standards. It was felt that customer consensus was high, even when below 90% and that no clear change requirements arose from the consultation.
39. All service standards will be subject to monitoring and review and, where appropriate, further detailed consultation with customers as, for example, focus group work in service reviews.
40. A set of performance measures which will be used to report back to tenants on our achievement against service standards. All performance measures are drawn from the 2011 service plan and can be benchmarked on Housemark¹, except those marked with an asterisk. Each service standard includes a Measuring Success section so that customers have all the relevant information on one page.

Corporate Priorities

41. This supports the *Inclusive City* element of the 2009/2012 corporate strategy by engaging customers in shaping and measuring their housing services.

Implications

- **Financial** – There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- **Human Resources (HR)** – There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.
- **Equalities** – This consultation has included basic equalities information enabling us to assess whether views are broadly representative of the wider tenant base.
- **Legal** – There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- **Crime and Disorder** – There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.
- **Information Technology (IT)** – There are no IT implications arising from this report.
- **Property** – There are no property implications arising from this report.

¹ A national benchmarking club allowing comparison between landlords on distinct service areas

Risk Management

42. It is a TSA regulatory requirement that all social housing providers develop local offers with their customers, publish them by 1st April 2011 and report performance against them in their Annual Report to Tenants.
43. The TSA contacted Housing Services early April to ask why service standards were not on CYC's website. They were satisfied with the response that, as a local authority, we were unable to publish them during pre-election purdah and would need member approval post-election. They were assured that the service standards were timetabled for consideration by members in June 2011.
44. The significant risk is found in not complying with the regulator's requirements by failing to publish service standards at the earliest opportunity post-election.

Recommendations

45. The Cabinet Member is asked to:

- Approve option 1 as set out in para 24, to agree the attached service standards.

Reason – To ensure that the council complies with its statutory responsibility to develop service standards with its customers.

Contact Details

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Report Approved Date 3rd June 2011

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

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

- HSMT report 14.07.10 Meeting the TSA standards & developing local offers

Annexes

- Annex 1 11 Housing Service Standards