

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

16th July 2007

Report of the Head of Housing Services

ANNUAL HOUSING SATISFACTION SURVEY 2007

Summary

1. This report asks the Executive Member to consider proposals for changes to the collection of satisfaction data from City of York Council Tenants in 2007-8.

Background

2. Every three years all Councils who retain their housing stock are required by the Communities and Local Government (CLG) to carry out a sample survey of tenants using a questionnaire known as the STATUS survey, and a prescribed methodology. The STATUS questionnaire consists of core questions which it is compulsory to ask, which housing providers can supplement with additional questions which are relevant to their local area, or to particular service issues. A national methodology for the survey serves two main purposes:
 - to enable data to be collected to inform Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) on satisfaction with the housing service overall (BVPI 74), and satisfaction with opportunities for participation in the housing service (BVPI 75).
 - to enable housing providers and the CLG to benchmark and compare performance.
3. The most recent year in which the STATUS survey was required was in 2006-7 and the Council commissioned a market research company to carry out a survey of tenants using the prescribed methodology in Autumn 2006, the results of which were reported to the Executive Member on 15th January 2007. However, City of York Council housing services have historically carried out a survey known as the *Annual Housing Service Monitor (AHSM)* every year since 1990. From 1990 to 2005 the survey was carried out face to face with a sample of customers in their homes. However in 2006 for the first time the CLG insisted that all housing providers used a postal methodology. The change in methodology prescribed by the CLG was reported to the Executive Member on 14th August 2006.

4. Given that this represented a break in the continuity of the survey the Head of Housing is recommending a revised approach to the collection of tenant satisfaction information, the options are set out below
5. A full satisfaction survey will again be carried out in 2009/10.

Consultation

6. The proposal to change the way in which Tenant Satisfaction data has been considered by Housing Services Management Team
7. The York Federation of Residents and Community Association's will be discussing the proposal at their July meeting, and the panel set up to oversee the Customer Involvement Compact for York, (Members received the revised document at the June 2007 Housing EMAP meeting) will be a key force in developing new ways of involving tenants, and also in any changes to the way in which we collate customer feedback.
8. Tenants attending the follow up focus groups were asked how they would like to be involved in the housing service in future. Interest was particularly high in being part of Mystery shopping & estate inspections (18 people interested) and 'expert panels' (16 people) out of the 50 tenants who contributed to the focus groups.

Options

9. **Option 1 – Carry out a reduced size annual housing survey in 2007/8 and 2008/9, complemented by focussed research**
10. **Option 2 – Carry out a full Annual Housing Monitor based on the STATUS survey again in 2007**

Analysis

11. Results of the 2006 survey were finalised in January 2007 and it was then decided to carry out additional work in Spring 2007 with focus groups of tenants to elicit additional information about areas where satisfaction levels were falling and/or of concern. Work on designing and commissioning a 2007 survey would the need to begin in August 2007. The sheer volume of information and the cycle of analysis and reporting involved limits the opportunities for Housing Services to make best use of the data. For this reason a reduced questionnaire focussing on questions supplying key BVPI data on satisfaction, and issues which were of particular concern in last years survey results is recommended (Option 1). [Note Councils do not have to supply updated satisfaction figures in the years between 'Status' surveys but can supply a revised figure to the CLG if they have carried out a further survey meeting the methodological requirements of the CLG]
12. Commissioning a less detailed sample survey, supplemented by additional customer consultation on both a rolling basis and to address particular issues, would enable the housing service to better focus on developing services to

respond to tenants needs. Housing Services propose to circulate a reduced survey to a sample of tenants sufficient to achieve 700 responses (of the PI data to be updated by the CLG, a minimum of 625 responses are required). This will be supplemented by existing customer satisfaction surveys such as the *New Homes Questionnaire* sent to all new City of York Council Tenants. Work is underway in refining our approach to the collection of satisfaction information with the responsive repairs service.

13. In addition more detailed focus group work will be carried out. A number of the tenants who volunteered for the follow up focus groups in the 2006 survey have indicated an interest in being involved in further work of this type. We will also be seeking to establish 'Customer Expert Panels' in the coming year, where customers are invited to review, test and inform particular service areas. This represents an additional or alternative way for tenants to be involved in the service. Tenants can become 'experts' in a particular service area and be involved in mystery shopping, reality checks (on estates and reception areas), monitoring performance and developing policy and procedures. There will also be more 'armchair' opportunities for tenants who do not want to be involved in meetings. This approach will enable tenants to better influence the direction of the service. Detailed plans for how the panels and associated feedback mechanisms will work are currently being developed.
14. The housing service also needs to focus efforts on particular areas of declining or low satisfaction such as opportunities for involvement, and getting hold of the right person and anti-social behaviour. The housing service will also be consulting with and involving customers in several major initiatives during 2007-8. These include our response to the Governments 'Respect' Agenda around anti-social behaviour, and an end to end review of the responsive repairs service.
15. Option 2 – continuing with a full postal survey, would enable continuity of data but would be less useful in informing focussed improvement work (see paragraph 12 above) The Audit Commission Housing Inspection 'Key Lines of Enquiry' (KLOE) suggest that an excellent authority should focus on their customers key concerns, and provide them with 'a range of opportunities to put forward their views' which the more detailed approach taken in Option 1 could better facilitate. The intention remains to carry out a wide ranging housing survey in 2009/10 in accordance with STATUS and whatever government guidance is in place at that time.

Corporate Priorities

16. The collection of tenant satisfaction data and its use in informing improvements to the housing service contributes to the Corporate Priority '*Improve our focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services*'.

Implications

17.

- **Financial Implications**

The cost of the reduced AHSM survey and mail out sufficient to elicit the 10% response rate which exceeds the statistical base required by the DCLG will be covered from by the existing housing market research budget of £12,800, held by the Service Development Manager. The cost of the reduced survey is estimated at £2,000. Any savings from this budget will be used to carry out additional customer satisfaction work. The exact costs of this are not currently known but will be kept within the budget total. The costs associated with the development and delivery of Customer Expert Panels is currently being worked up and will be reported to members through the service planning / financial monitoring process. The cost of carrying out a full Survey and follow up groups in 2006/7 was £13,101.

- **Human Resources (HR)** There are no HR implications
- **Equalities** The reduced AHSM survey, and other customer satisfaction data collected in housing will be analysed according to ethnic group, disability age and gender.
- **Legal** There are no legal implications
- **Crime and Disorder** There are no Crime & Disorder Implications
- **Information Technology (IT)** There are no IT implications
- **Property** There are no property implications
- **Other** None

Risk Management

18. There are risks associated with feedback opportunities such as surveys and the Customer expert panels outlined in paragraph 14 above aim to make participation in the housing service more accessible, and in turn to increase levels of satisfaction with participation. Tenant Satisfaction with Opportunities for Participation is a Best Value Performance Indicator and one which has an impact on the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) rating. Satisfaction among tenants in York with opportunities for involvement is currently 57%. This is an increase on 55% in 2006, but below the bottom quartile threshold of 68.2%.

19. The CLG currently requires submission of data based on a full STATUS survey every three years so collecting data in the way proposed above does not pose any risks in terms of audit compliance. Any major changes to the reporting and

measurement of tenant satisfaction made by the CLG, will be reported back to the Executive member

Recommendations

20. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to approve Option 1, adopting a revised approach to the collection of annual housing satisfaction data from CYC housing tenants:

- Option 1 outlined above is adopted

Reason: To enable an approach which better facilitates tenant involvement in service development, and to allow sufficient time to act on findings from survey work.

Contact Details

Author:
Alison Leech
Service Development
Manager
Housing Services
Tel No. 01904 554362
Email: alison.leech@york.gov.uk

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

Report Approved Date 2/7/07

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Financial: Jayne Close (Housing Accountant) 01904 554175

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Housing Services Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2006/7 – Report to Housing EMAP
14th August 2006

Results of the 2006 Annual Housing Services Monitor – Report to Housing
EMAP 15th January 2007

Audit Commission – **Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) 30: Access and Customer Care**

Annexes
None