

Report of the Head of Housing Services

## **RESULTS OF THE 2008 ANNUAL HOUSING SATISFACTION SURVEY**

### **Summary**

1. This report provides the Executive Member with the results of the Annual Housing Services Monitor (AHSM): a postal survey of City of York Council tenants undertaken during November 2008. It will be supplemented by a presentation to the Executive Member and Advisory Panel at the meeting. For ease of reference percentages have been “rounded”.
2. Headline results from the 2008 survey are:
  - Overall satisfaction with the housing services is 85%
  - 74% of tenants describe the council as a ‘very good’ or ‘good’ landlord
  - 84% are very or fairly satisfied with the condition of their home
  - 83% are very or fairly satisfied with the repair and maintenance service

### **Background**

3. The AHSM is a tenant satisfaction survey, which has been carried out in York every year since 1990. It is not a government requirement to carry out the survey every year, however in York this has been the case, although in 2007 the survey was reduced in size. The survey asks responses to standard questions based on the centrally determined ‘STATUS’ survey. The Housing Service is able to add additional questions, but all the questions specified by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) must be included. Formerly the survey was a statutory requirement once every three years, with the most recent statutory survey occurring in 2006. From 2008 the government increased the frequency of statutory surveys to every two years beginning in 2008. The data collected is sent to the Audit Commission for analysis and comparison and also used to inform National Indicator (NI) 160 – The proportion of tenants satisfied with their landlord (which replaces Best

Value indicator (BVPI) 74. Also, for the first time the CLG restricted the number of additional questions landlords could insert to five.

4. City of York Council Marketing and Communications Group developed the questionnaire in conjunction with Housing Services. The fieldwork was outsourced to NWA Research.

## **Methodology**

5. During October/November 2008 a postal survey was mailed to 2350 City of York council tenants selected at random. A total of 1220 tenants returned the questionnaire, which represents a good response rate of 52% of the sample. This is above the response rate in 2007 and is above the number required by the CLG for statistical validity.
6. For 2008 results are accurate to within +/- 2.7% with 95% confidence. Prior to 2006 the survey was conducted using face-to-face interviews but for the last three years a postal methodology has been used. The change in data collection methods must be kept in mind when comparing results pre and post 2006.
7. 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.

## **Consultation & Communication**

### **Pre Survey promotion**

8. The survey was promoted using posters in housing offices, staff email briefings and press releases. It was also publicised in the September 2008 edition of the Council's *Streets Ahead* magazine for tenants. A prize draw with a top prize of £100 was also offered to help maximise the response rate.

### **Post Survey communication**

9. A press release summarising the headline results will be issued to coincide with publication of this report, and there is to be a presentation to the York Federation at their February meeting. Details of the results and other performance information will be published with Streets Ahead Magazine.
10. Sessions are planned with groups of housing staff to feed back the results with particular relevance for their job role, and to involve them in discussions about potential improvements in response to the survey findings.

### **Involving Tenants in Further Research**

11. The survey asked respondents if they would be willing to take part in further research, and 379 people indicated an interest in this. Paragraph 30 below sets out the areas which may benefit from using focus groups to gain a more

thorough understanding of the reasons for some of the changes in satisfaction trends.

## **Options**

12. This report is for information only – there are no options for consideration

## **Analysis**

### **Profile of respondents to the 2008 Survey**

13.
  - i. The majority of those who responded to the questionnaire were longstanding tenants of City of York Council: almost two-thirds (61%) have been a council tenant for over 10 years, whilst new tenants (for under 3 years) made up 11% of the returned questionnaires.
  - ii. In terms of ethnic group, the sample was dominated by White British (99%) tenants.
  - iii. The largest group of respondents were in the 55-74 age group (37%) 32% were aged 35-54, 15% 16-34 years old, and 15% over 75
  - iv. Just under half (47%) of the households participating in the survey are made up of one adult. More females (60%) than males responded, and a quarter of those responding had dependent children residing in the household.
  - v. Exactly half of those responding indicated that a member of the household had a disability or long-term illness, and 6.4% of all households responding to the survey included a wheelchair user.
  - vi. One third of respondents were in employment; the remaining two thirds were non-working including unemployed and pensioner households and 60% of households responding indicated that they were in receipt of Housing Benefit.

### **Overall Satisfaction with the Housing Service**

14. Overall 85.2% of tenants state that they are very or fairly satisfied with the Housing Service: this is a slight but not statistically significant fall from the 2008 figure of 87.7%. It is a statistically significant improvement on the previous statutory year of 80% in 2006. Whilst the number of dissatisfied tenants has been fairly static, those stating they are 'very satisfied' has fallen from 43% to 36%.
15. Satisfaction with the council as a landlord has fallen to 74% from 88% in 2007. There is considerable variation by age range for both this question and overall satisfaction (see paragraph 31 below for more detail). Further work with tenants from these groups is needed to establish some of the underlying reasons for their lower satisfaction levels generally and (which have been

present in previous surveys), and the drop in satisfaction with the council as a landlord in particular.

### Tenants Priorities

16. Tenants were asked to prioritise what was most important to them in relation to their home. Over three quarters (76%) cited repairs and maintenance as important, followed by 55% stating that the overall quality of their home was important. Results have been compared to show the relationship between the importance to tenants of a particular aspect of the service, and the satisfaction levels of that service. This report details satisfaction with particular aspects, in the order which they are rated as important by tenants.

### Repairs and Maintenance

17. Satisfaction with the repairs service (among all respondents not just those recently reporting a repair) is 83% the same figure as in the 2007 survey. However dissatisfaction is 13% (12% in 2007) and efforts will be concentrated on understanding the reasons for this, including work with focus groups and customer panels.
18. Those tenants who had reported repairs in the twelve months prior to the survey were asked about aspects of the repair work carried out. The table below (*Table 1*) shows that in all of the categories listed below the 2006 figure was matched or improved upon. The data is similar to that obtained from regular satisfaction surveys sent out to tenants following completion of a repair. Satisfaction from the ongoing surveys is generally higher than that reported in the annual survey, this may be as it relates to single repairs, whereas responses to the annual survey would encompass tenants views on all the repairs received during the period.

**Table 1- Satisfaction with repair work**

<b>Aspect of repairs service</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2006*</b>	<b>Rolling repairs survey **</b>
Overall satisfaction with repairs	83%	83%	87%
Attitude of workers	93%	91%	95%
Keeping dirt and mess to a minimum	89%	86%	94%
Speed that work completed	88%	88%	95%
Quality of repair work	88%	84%	93%
Being told when workers would call	87%	81%	Not collected
* Questions not asked in reduced 2007 Survey      ** October 2007-July 2008			

19. Satisfaction with the time taken before repair work started was lower than for other aspects of repair satisfaction, and remained static at 78%. However, this is one of the elements that it is hoped will improve as a result of changes to practices and processes following an end-to-end review in 2008 of the repairs service. Details about this are contained in a report elsewhere on the agenda.
20. Tenants were asked about how satisfied they were with the overall quality of their home: a new question in 2008. The response was that 84% were very or fairly satisfied, with 11% dissatisfied. This broadly reflects the percentage of 7% of City of York Council homes, which at the time of the survey had not yet been modernised to meet the Decent Homes Standard. Plans are in place for all homes to meet the standard by the Government's target date of 2010. Reflecting overall satisfaction, younger tenants were less satisfied (67%) than those over 55 years old (91%) and this has been the case in previous years. New Tenants (0-2 years), and longer standing tenants of eleven or more years were more satisfied (81 and 87% respectively) than those in occupation for between three and 10 years, who were 78% satisfied. Again, this variation in satisfaction merits further exploration with customer groups.

### **Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) and the wider Neighbourhood**

21. After repairs and the condition of the home, the aspect rated most important by tenants is dealing with anti-social behaviour. Satisfaction with the service in this area is lower than for other aspects, but showed a marked improvement between 2006 and 2008 with an increase in the proportion that were satisfied with the final outcome of their report from 33% to 44%. In 2008 tenants were also asked how easy it was to get hold of someone to report the problem and how helpful staff were – satisfaction was lower here than with enquiries in general (*see Table 2 below*), and dissatisfaction was often linked to whether respondents were happy with the final outcome of their report.

<b>Table 2 – Contacting Housing Services</b>		
<b>Statement</b>	<b>ASB issues</b>	<b>GENERAL</b>
Getting hold of the right person was easy	56%	76%
Staff were helpful	62%	89%
Staff were able to deal with the problem	46%	83%

22. It has already been recognised that this is an area where more understanding is needed about tenants' satisfaction with services in this area. Early in 2009 a focus group is being held comprising tenants who have recently been affected

by anti-social behaviour and where the housing Tenancy Enforcement Team have been involved. There are also plans to regularly survey tenants about their experience of reporting anti-social behaviour and nuisance, and case monitoring is now simpler as an additional computer module was introduced in October 2008 allowing staff to better record and monitor complaints of nuisance electronically.

23. In terms of how they feel about their local neighbourhood the same proportion (76%) of tenants as in 2006 were very or fairly satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live (the question was not included in the reduced 2007 survey).
24. In 2008 there has been a sharp fall from 2006 levels (no data was collected in 2007) in the proportion of tenants citing various types of nuisance and anti social behaviour as a problem in their area, bringing satisfaction, back to similar levels to 2005. For example those citing vandalism and graffiti as an issue in their area fell from 66% to 18%, noisy neighbours from 51% to 22% and drug dealing down from 46% to 23%.
25. Comparing between the different aspects of nuisance in 2008: car-parking problems were the most commonly cited: with 22% stating it was a very big problem, and 17% a fairly big problem. Also mentioned as a problem (by 26% of respondents) were rubbish or litter, and disruptive children or teenagers. Racial harassment was cited by 5%, but given the low proportion of Black and minority ethnic (BME) respondents, the Council's equalities team are looking further into this data and additional data analysis or follow up work may be required.

### **Information and communication**

26. Tenants were asked how satisfied they were with the extent to which the Council keeps them informed about things that might affect them as a tenant. Almost three-quarters (73%) were very or fairly satisfied, a fall from 80% in 2007, and 75% in 2006.
27. The preferred method of communication from the council was overwhelmingly letters, with 86% citing this as one of their preferred methods of communication, followed by telephone calls (37%) and magazine/newsletters (33%). The housing service has launched some customer care guidelines for all staff during 2008 aimed at ensuring a consistent standard of response, particularly in terms of telephone call handling and written communications. In addition during the Spring 2009 a data gathering exercise will be undertaken to obtain full information about the profile of all City of York Council tenants, and this will include asking people about their preferred method of communication. Tenants when contacting the council themselves, reported that in 74% of cases their last contact was by phone, followed by office visit at 22%. Around two-thirds (68%) of contacts were about repairs and maintenance.
28. Reassuringly, 89% of tenants found staff helpful, but getting hold of the right person fell from 82% to 76%, and the proportion of tenants stating staff were able to deal with their problem fell slightly from 85% to 83%. Satisfaction with

the outcome of an enquiry fell from 73% to 66%, with 25% of tenants stating they are very or fairly dissatisfied. Of those who said their last contact was about repairs, 20% were dissatisfied, those calling about rent/housing benefit 18% were dissatisfied, and about neighbours or neighbourhood issues 47% were dissatisfied. We propose to do more research via focus groups to establish the reason why one quarter of tenants are not happy with the outcome of their contact with housing services.

### **Involvement in Decision-making**

29. Satisfaction with opportunities for participation in management and decision-making has fallen to 61% following 3 years of gradual improvement from 55% in 2005. However a high proportion of tenants (27%) appear neutral in this respect stating they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. In particular younger tenants are not satisfied and it was recognised in the development of the Customer Involvement Compact 2007-10 that additional methods of participation should be developed. A system of customer panels is in development, and groups looking at repairs, anti-social behaviour and communications are to be established early in the New Year. It is also recognised that the housing service needs an overarching strategy and to this end a Customer Engagement Strategy will be produced in the first half of 2009, to complement the emerging corporate engagement strategy covering all council services. Over two thirds (68%) of tenants said they were satisfied, 14% that the housing service took their views into account, 14% were dissatisfied and the remainder neutral (there is no past data for this as it was a new question in 2008).

### **Variations in Satisfaction and Further Research**

30. As in previous years, younger tenants were less satisfied in most respects, as were those with dependent children in the household, and those in work. Additional work is to be carried out with focus groups to establish the reasons for changes in satisfaction in particular areas, and those groups that are particularly expressing dissatisfaction will be targeted as participants. The areas it is proposed to concentrate on are:
- Condition of home.
  - Satisfaction with the Council as a landlord.
  - Experience of younger tenants, newer tenants and those with dependent children.
  - Anti-Social behaviour case handling (in particular the ability to get hold of the right person in Housing Services) and incidence of types of nuisance and ASB at neighbourhood level.
31. Overall 75% of 16-34 year olds are satisfied overall with the housing service, increasing to 91% among those over 55 years old. There is a similar contrast between those with children (76% satisfied) and those without (88%). Similarly, whilst 82% over 55s agree with the statement that City of York

Council is a good landlord, only 66% of those under 34 years old do so. Those with dependent children at home are also less satisfied (65% compared to 76% of other households). A similar variation is present between unemployed households in their rating of the council as a landlord (78% satisfied) and households where the respondent was in employment (65%). When analysed on an area basis, by estate management patch, significant variations are present, satisfaction being highest in Bell Farm and Muncaster at 79%, compared to Chapelfields and Lowfields at 63%.

32. Full analysis has been carried out to assess the satisfaction of different groups (see paragraph 35 below which sets out the equalities implications of this report).

### **Corporate Priorities**

33. The findings from the survey can be used to identify actions to contribute to the delivery of the priority statement *'Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city'* by clarifying quality issues of concern to tenants.
34. Carrying out regular surveys of council tenant satisfaction reflects the councils Vision and Values in that it helps us in *'Delivering what our customers want'* and the findings are a way of *'Encouraging improvement in everything we do'*

### **Implications**

35. The implications arising from this report are set out below.
  - **Financial** the costs of the survey were met from a dedicated grant of £8000 awarded to all stock-holding local authorities from Communities and Local Government Department (CLG). Some improvement actions taken in response to the survey may have financial implications, and the cost of any follow-up work with focus groups to determine in more depth the reasons for some of the survey findings will be met from within existing budgets held by the Service Development Manager.
  - **Human Resources (HR)** No HR implications
  - **Equalities** Respondents are asked to complete optional information in respect of the six 'equality strands' which are: ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion and disability. It is possible to analyse and sort responses to assess the satisfaction levels of different groups, however in some cases the number of responses may be insufficient for statistical validity. The Council's Equalities team are working with Housing Services and Marketing and Communications to analyse the data in more depth against the six strands, and will be highlighting any particular trends and issues in satisfaction among the different groups.
  - **Legal** No direct legal implications. The survey was carried out in accordance with Data Protection legislation, and was verified in accordance with the Research Governance Framework, as required for all research undertaken in Housing and Adult Social Services.



- **Crime and Disorder** No direct Crime and Disorder Implications
- **Information Technology (IT)** No IT implications
- **Property** No property implications

### **Risk Management**

36. This report is for information only, and there are no direct risks associated with it.

### **Recommendations**

37. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to:

- note the results of the 2008 Annual Housing Service Monitor and the proposed follow up focus group work and actions.

### **Contact Details**

**Author:**  
**Alison Leech**  
**Service Development**  
**Manager**  
**Housing Services**  
 Tel No. 01904 554362

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

**Report Approved**  **Date** 14/1/09

**Co-Author**  
 Scott Anderson  
 Research Officer  
 Marketing & Communications  
 Tel No. 01904 551022

Bill Hodson  
 Director

**Report Approved**  **Date** 12/1/09

### **Specialist Implications Officer(s)**

Financial: Jayne Close – Housing Accountant 554175

Equalities: Gemma Jackson – Equalities Data Officer 552057

Research Methodology: The report is co-authored by Marketing and Communications who commissioned the research

**Wards Affected:**

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

### **Background Papers:**

Status Survey Guidance

Data tables supplied by NWA Research

### **Annexes**

None