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

14 August 2006

Report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Housing Services Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2006/7

Summary

1. To advise the Executive Member of the governments mandatory requirement to conduct the three yearly tenant satisfaction survey during 2006 using a postal survey method.

Background

2. Housing Services carries out a tenant satisfaction survey, the Annual Housing Service Monitor every year. Every third year we have to carry out a statutory satisfaction survey which has set questions provided by central government. The 2006/7 statutory three yearly survey must be completed before 31st October 2006. The results will be reported in the Councils Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) at the end of 2006/7.
3. During 2006/7 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have made it a mandatory requirement for Local Authorities nationwide to use a postal survey methodology in conducting tenant satisfaction surveys. This is to reduce the financial burden on organisations, ensure consistency and improve the validity and reliability of results nationwide.
4. City of York Council has surveyed the satisfaction levels of it's tenants, annually, via a face to face survey for the past 16 years. Unfortunately, despite appealing to the Audit Commission who are leading the tenant surveys to allow York to continue to carry out a face to face survey, which we believe provides more qualitative data, this appeal has been denied due to the requirement for a consistent approach nationwide. There is no further opportunity for appeal.
5. This survey will replace the Annual Housing Service Monitor during 2006/7.
6. A report outlining the process for undertaking the tenant satisfaction survey was approved at Housing Services Management Team in July. Housing Services Group Managers have agreed a small number of additional questions to be added to the basic statutory survey, these are based on key questions

from the existing Annual Housing Service Monitor Survey and reflect local information requirements.

7. The questions included in the statutory 'STATUS' satisfaction survey to tenants relate to demographic and diversity information, information about quality of housing and neighbourhood, methods and effectiveness of contact with landlord, quality and efficiency of repairs service, opportunities for participation and access to information. The questions that have been added to this survey by Housing Services Group Managers have been adapted from the traditional Annual Housing Service Monitor Survey. They relate to key local priorities and the results will be used to inform local service improvement. Examples include experience of neighbourhood nuisance, quality of services including paying rent and value of 'Streets Ahead' newsletter.
8. Marketing and Communications have sought three quotes from research companies to conduct the survey and BMG research has been selected as the preferred partner on the basis of value for money. City of York Council are currently using this company for the BVPI General Survey (Residents Opinions). BMG has a good reputation in local government research and are used by the DCLG. The estimated cost of the 2006/7 postal survey is outlined in financial implications below.
9. Respondents will be selected at random to complete the survey. BMG research have advised that a sample of 1800 will achieve the response rate required of 800, representing 22% of the total 8086 tenants. The survey will be posted with a covering letter from Housing Services, bearing the councils logo, two follow up letters with surveys enclosed will following over the forthcoming weeks. BMG will work pro-actively to ensure that this response rate is achieved within published timescales.
10. The cost of a postal survey is slightly less than the cost of the traditional Annual Housing Service Monitor, as outlined in paragraph 16 below. The balance will be used to fund more detailed qualitative research, including telephone surveys, small face to face surveys and theme based focus groups, as agreed appropriate.
11. To ensure equal opportunities and maximise the quality and quantity of the response rate, tenants can access advice and assistance in completing the survey. This might be due to vulnerability or disability for example. The preferred research agency will provide a free phone telephone number to assist respondents in obtaining large print and audio versions etc. The council can provide the survey in different languages and options for additional local support to be offered, within statutory guidelines, is being explored.
12. Tenants will be offered incentives to return fully completed surveys within timescale. This should maximise the response rate received. Cost implications are outlined in Para 16.

Consultation

13. Consultation / information sharing has commenced with key stakeholders, including the Marketing and Communications department; tenants representatives via the Tenants Federation (August); tenants through 'Streets Ahead' newsletter (September), posters in council offices and leaflets in rent statements; Housing Services staff through 'Team Brief' newsletter, Neighbourhood Pride Unit staff and Neighbourhood Services staff through staff briefings.

Options/Analysis

14. This report is provided for information only and so options/analysis are not applicable.

Corporate Priorities

15. The AHSM contributes towards the corporate priorities of the council, including:
- Reduce the actual and perceived impact of violent, aggressive and nuisance behaviour on people in York;
 - Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city;
 - Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city;
 - Improve our focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services;
 - Improve efficiency and reduce waste to free-up more resources.

Implications

16. The following implications have been noted:

- **Financial**

2005/6 Annual Housing Service Monitor	£8960
2006/7 Statutory Postal tenant satisfaction survey + cost of incentives	£7576 (inc VAT) + £250 = £7826
Balance to fund focussed research	£1434

- **Human Resources (HR):** No HR implications
- **Equalities:** No equalities implications
- **Legal:** No legal implications

- **Crime and Disorder:** No Crime and Disorder implications
- **Information Technology (IT):** No I.T implications
- **Property:** No property implications
- **Other:** No other implications

Risk Management

17. Housing Services must complete its mandatory three yearly tenant satisfaction survey prior to 31st October 2006. The results will be reported in the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) at the end of 2006/7. Failure to report this data within published timescales will result in the performance indicator (P.I) being qualified.
18. Housing Services must ensure the high profile of the satisfaction survey amongst key stakeholders, including key council staff and tenants to maximise the response rate and quality of responses. Positive messages should be reinforced to tenants regarding the importance of tenant feedback in informing future service development.

Recommendations

19. Members are advised to note the content of this report.

Reason: To inform the Executive Member.

Contact Details

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Report Approved **Date** 21/7/06

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Specialist Implications Officers:

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: None