

Committee	Dated:
Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee Committee	18 01 2016
Subject: Estates satisfaction survey 2015	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services Chamberlain	For Information

Summary

This report summarises the findings of estate surveys of the City's general needs and sheltered housing for 2014/15. Satisfaction with services is generally high amongst all residents. A large majority, 80% or more, are satisfied with the overall service, and satisfaction levels with customer service and the provision of information are particularly good. There is a marked difference in the perception of value for money between tenants and leaseholders and satisfaction levels vary across estates. It is likely that these findings are being driven by repairs and maintenance issues, an area where residents were least satisfied. The findings of the survey will be used to target action in service areas where the need for improvement has been identified.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The estate survey is carried out annually and is sent to all tenants and leaseholders of the City's general needs and sheltered housing. The survey measures resident satisfaction across all estates and a range of service areas, and gathers suggestions for improvements or changes to the way we operate.
2. Some changes have been made to the survey since last year to improve the usefulness of the data: there are now more questions; the choice of responses to the questions has been modified to create a clearer distinction between satisfaction levels, and the latest survey now includes returns from residents in sheltered housing as well as those in general needs housing. In addition, the rate of return across general needs housing estates this year (17%) is markedly lower this year than last year (32%) – a likely consequence of the inclusion of a question about a highly controversial issue (pets) in last year's survey
3. These factors require caution when comparing this year's figures with last year's (where available) and, similarly where reference is made in this report to regional benchmark data which is gathered in a slightly different way and has been

provided for contextual purposes only. From 2016 the City will be using the Housemark STAR survey which in future will allow more meaningful comparison, with other social housing providers.

Current position

4. A summary of the 2014/15 survey questions and satisfaction ratings (together with the 2013/14 ratings) are set out in Table 1 below. Respondents were asked to answer the questions choosing from the following categories: very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied. The figures provided show the percentages of residents who were either very satisfied or satisfied in response to the questions asked. Residents were also asked to provide additional comments in the form of positive feedback or suggestions for improvements if they wished.

Estate Satisfaction Survey 2014/15 – Table 1

Question	General Needs 2013/14	General Needs 2014/15	Sheltered 2014/15
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service we provide as your landlord?	82%	81%	95%
How satisfied are you with the cleanliness of your estate?	76%	74%	93%
How satisfied are you with the customer services provided by your estate staff?	82%	80%	n/a*
How safe do you feel on your estate?	69%	70%	77%
TENANTS ONLY - How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your rent provides value for money?	n/a**	80%	97%
LEASEHOLDERS ONLY - How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your service charges provide value for money?	n/a**	30%	n/a
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the City's Housing Service deals with repairs and maintenance?	n/a**	68%	89%
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the City's Housing Service listens to your views and acts upon them?	n/a**	67%	88%
How satisfied or dissatisfied with the information provided by the City's Housing Service about your housing?	n/a**	82%	97%
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'I am proud of my neighbourhood'	n/a**	76%	89%

Summary findings and analysis

5. Most residents who responded are proud of where they live, feel safe and are satisfied with the housing service they get from the City.
6. Satisfaction with services is generally high amongst all residents. A large majority, 80% or more, are satisfied with the overall service. This equates with other top performing housing providers in London. Satisfaction with the information and the customer service they receive from estate staff is at similarly high levels and there has been a slight increase in the percentage of general needs residents (70%) who feel safe or very safe on their estates. Sheltered housing residents are uniformly more satisfied with services, registering satisfaction levels in some areas up to 20% higher than general needs tenants.
7. A number of respondents across a range of estates also provided positive comments about the service they received describing estates as clean and tidy and staff as pleasant, friendly, helpful and 'top notch'.
8. Residents were least satisfied with repairs and maintenance (68%). This is slightly below the middle performing housing providers in London (70%) but above the lower quartile. However, this figure should be treated with extreme caution. The vast majority of repairs are carried out within tenants' homes and, when satisfaction with these repairs is measured, as it is after each job, it is very high. The figure of 68% includes the views of leaseholders, who can only comment on communal repairs, which can be far more complex.
9. Satisfaction with the way the City listens to resident views was also amongst the lowest scores (67%) although this compares favourably with other top-performing providers in London (63%). Elsewhere, there has been a slight dip of 1-2% in satisfaction since last year with estate cleanliness and customer services.
10. Within the overall scores there are noticeable variations between tenures and estates. There is, for example, a marked difference amongst tenures in the perception of value for money, with satisfaction levels amongst tenants of 88% compared to only 30% for leaseholders. This low satisfaction rate for leaseholders is common, particularly in London, where a 2012 report from the London Assembly identified the perception of leaseholders that service charges are artificially inflated as being an issue and highlighted one London borough where satisfaction was only 7%. (*Highly Charged – Residential leasehold service charges in London*, London Assembly Planning & Housing Committee, March 2012).
11. Satisfaction levels also vary geographically across the City's housing estates with lower overall satisfaction ratings tending to be concentrated in a small number of the City's estates, notably the larger ones such as Golden Lane (62%) and Middlesex Street (53%), and Holloway (61%). This may reflect the level of major work needed on those estates.
12. From the additional feedback provided by respondents it appears likely that many of the issues raised – repairs, windows, communal areas, cleaning, and security

– are related to known wider maintenance issues and are driving poorer overall satisfaction on these estates. Similarly there is a high degree of correlation on these estates between dissatisfaction amongst leaseholders with value for money and dissatisfaction with repairs and maintenance. However, where it is possible to make improvements to cleanliness, gardening and other estate management issues, then Estate Managers will include these in their plans.

Conclusion and next steps

13. Dissatisfaction with repairs and maintenance is clearly a significant factor behind low satisfaction levels on some estates and dissatisfaction amongst leaseholders with value for money. The survey data will allow officers to target remedial measures more effectively in those specific areas where there is the greatest potential for service improvements and an increase in residents' satisfaction.
14. The need for continued improvement in maintenance and in stock condition is recognised and has now been incorporated into the City's cyclical and planned maintenance programmes, including for example window replacement and environmental improvements and improvements to communal facilities on some estates.
15. The survey data has been collated into individual estate reports. Officers will use these to incorporate remedial measures into service plans and individual estate plans for 2016 to ensure the key findings from the survey are addressed.
16. A preliminary review of financial data relating to service charges is already underway. This will be followed by a comprehensive review of service charges across the City's entire stock to help underpin improvements in value for money for both tenants and leaseholders. The review will also look at improving transparency – identified as a key to improving leaseholder perceptions in the London Assembly report.

Appendices

- None

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