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| Committee: Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee | Dated: 24 October 2023 |
| Subject: Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023-24 | Public |
| Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly? | 1, 4 |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | Y/N |
| If so, how much? | £ |
| What is the source of Funding? | |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department? | Y/N |
| Report of: Executive Director of Community and Children's Services | For Information |
| Report author: Liam Gillespie, Head of Housing Management and Liane Coopey, Housing Business Support Manager | |

Summary

As part of a new regulatory regime for social housing which came into effect on 1 April 2023, social landlords are now required to submit annual returns against a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), with the first submission to the Regulator for Social Housing due in April 2024. A report providing details of the TSM regime was submitted to the Community and Children's Services Committee in July 2023.

This report updates Members on the planned survey of the City Corporation's tenants, which is scheduled for October 2023.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) introduced a suite of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) as part of the overhaul of social housing regulation arising from the Social Housing White Paper, published in 2020.
2. Following substantial public consultation, a final set of TSMs was created and the first regulatory return is due in April 2024. This applies to all social landlords with 1,000 or more homes under their management.

3. There are 22 TSMs, covering the following areas:
 - Building safety
 - Antisocial behaviour
 - Repairs and Decent Homes Standards
 - Complaints handling
 - Respectful and helpful engagement
4. Ten of the TSMs are measured by landlords directly, from data already held by them. The remaining twelve will be measured through an annual Tenant Perception Survey. For ease of reference, the TSMs are shown at **Appendix One**.
5. The regulatory obligation to complete the survey and statistical return applies to residents living in:
 - ‘Low-Cost Rental Accommodation’: in our case, secure tenants of general needs and sheltered housing accommodation (1,860 households)
 - ‘Low-Cost Home Ownership’: homes which are managed by a social landlord but not fully owned by the tenant, for example shared ownership properties (this is not applicable in the City Corporation’s case)
6. Members may wish to note that there is no requirement to survey long leaseholders and submit leaseholder satisfaction data to the RSH. However, in common with many landlords, we will include leaseholders in the survey to identify areas of concern and inform service improvements.
7. Landlords have the freedom to design and conduct their surveys as they wish, provided they meet the requirements specified by the RSH in their guidance. Landlords may carry out a single annual survey, or monthly/quarterly ‘tracker’ surveys. Indications are that most landlords will conduct an annual survey; a poll by *Inside Housing* indicated that 60% of respondent landlords were intending to carry out a single survey for the first return¹.
8. The wording of the TSM questions is specified by the RSH and the response options are also stipulated. Additional questions may also be asked at the landlord’s discretion but will not form part of the regulatory submission.
9. Detailed guidance has been issued by the RSH on the conduct of the survey. The RSH has made it clear that landlords are expected to obtain sufficient survey returns to provide statistically significant data, to provide high levels of assurance that the results are representative of the tenant population and their satisfaction with their landlord’s services.
10. Landlords must also ensure that their returns are weighted appropriately to give an accurate reflection of tenant satisfaction across different tenures. For instance, it is known that satisfaction among tenants in sheltered housing tends to be much

¹ *Social landlords reveal approach to carrying out surveys for tenant satisfaction measures*, Inside Housing, 2.5.2023.

higher than those living in general needs homes. The RSH expects landlords to be able to demonstrate that their satisfaction figures are weighted appropriately to be representative of the tenures they manage. For example, surveying only sheltered housing residents and presenting the results as representative of the whole tenant population would not be acceptable.

11. Given the need to reach a minimum number of tenants and ensure that people have more of a choice in how they participate, many landlords are planning to carry out online and telephone surveys.
12. To ensure the survey is conducted as impartially as possible, many housing providers intend to use independent market research companies to carry out their surveys. This reduces the possibility of bias or undue influence and encourages respondents to be as open as possible in their answers, in addition to providing assurance around obtaining adequate numbers of responses.

Current Position

13. The Housing Division has appointed Acuity Research and Practice Ltd, a market research company specialising in the housing sector, to carry out the Tenant Perception Survey on its behalf. The provisional timetable for the survey campaign is 25 September to 21 October 2023.
14. While the main purpose of the Tenant Perception Survey is to obtain reliable data on *tenant* satisfaction, long leaseholders will also be surveyed as in previous years, though we are not required to submit this information to the RSH.
15. To meet the requirements of the RSH and ensure that responses are as representative as possible, a target has been set to complete 320 surveys with social tenants.
16. These figures have been calculated by Acuity in accordance with the RSH's guidance on the completion of the survey, to ensure statistical significance and provide the necessary level of confidence that the responses provide a true reflection of satisfaction levels.
17. For the first time, in addition to an online survey, we will use telephone surveys to gather responses. There are several reasons for this:
 - To increase the response rate when compared to online-only or online/paper surveys as employed in previous years
 - To address obstacles to participation, for instance among households with no access to digital media, literacy issues or language barriers
 - Telephone surveys are much more time and cost effective
18. Once the survey is complete, Acuity will provide a full analytical report across the twelve TSMs and this will be shared with Members and residents early in 2024.

19. Further information on Acuity, and how the survey will be delivered, is shown at **Appendix Two**.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

20. Acuity adheres to the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct, meaning that respondents can be assured that the survey will be conducted in a professional and ethical manner. The organisation also meets our data protection and security requirements for commissioned services.

21. This also complies with the requirements of the RSH for the conduct of tenant surveys by external providers.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

The completion of the annual survey will enable us to satisfy regulatory requirements. The data collected through the survey will be used to inform service improvements as part of the ongoing review of strategic aims for housing management.

Financial implications

The cost of completing the survey has already been accounted for as part of local risk budgets for 2023/4.

Resource implications

The compiling of data and the completion of the regulatory return will be handled by the Housing Division and colleagues within DCCS. The management information required to be submitted has been collected monthly as part of the new housing KPI dashboard, which is jointly maintained by the Housing Division and DCCS performance analysts.

Legal implications

None.

Risk implications

None.

Equalities implications

There are positive equalities implications in that the methodology of the survey will enable wider participation among groups with protected characteristics, due to the use of telephone surveys. This approach will enable a wider and more representative set of responses compared with previous online/paper surveys. The results of the survey are more likely to reflect the priorities and needs of a wider range of residents than in previous years.

Climate implications

None.

Security implications

None.

Conclusion

22. The Housing Division is due to conduct its first Tenant Perception Survey under the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures regime, the results of which will be reported to the Regulator for Social Housing in April 2024.

23. An independent market research organisation, Acuity Research and Practice Ltd, has been appointed to carry out the survey on the City Corporation's behalf. The survey will be conducted online and by telephone in September and October 2023.

Appendices

- Appendix One – Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Questions
- Appendix Two – Further detail on conduct of survey

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