

# HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

## Report of the Head of Landlord Services

Item 5

### STAR SURVEY 2021

#### 1. Purpose of report

To consider the results of the STAR survey at Appendix 1, and the actions in progress and proposed to support greater satisfaction with services.

#### 2. Recommendation

That the Board notes and comments on the STAR survey and the actions in progress and proposed to support greater satisfaction with services.

#### 3. Background

Approximately every two years, in line with best practice, the Council undertakes a survey focussed on tenants' perception of the housing service. The last survey was conducted in 2018, a copy of which can be found on the Council's website. Several actions / service improvements were linked to the findings of the 2018 survey. Progress on these items can be found at Appendix 2.

The 2021 survey was conducted later than planned due to the pandemic.

#### 4. Identified Areas of Service / Performance Focus

The survey identifies a drop in tenant satisfaction with the overall housing service provided. The following areas of service / performance focus have been identified as likely to have had a bearing on satisfaction. Improvements in progress, planned, or proposed are identified.

##### 4.1 Area of Focus - Quality of Home and Planned Investment

Key driver analysis contained on page 16 of the report identifies that where tenants are satisfied with the quality of their home, they are likely to be more satisfied overall with the overall housing service provided.

Planned programmes, including those for kitchen and bathroom replacement programmes, have not been delivered. Delivery in 2021/22 has been limited due to the contract with Fortem Solutions Ltd coming to an end, compounded by the previous year of limited delivery due to Covid-19-related issues.

It is reasonable to conclude that where part of the service is not delivered, the level of satisfaction will drop.

It is therefore likely the recommencement of planned investment in 2022 will support an improvement in the level of satisfaction. Customers awaiting works have been

kept updated, and the Board receives a regular update on the procurement process for new contractors.

#### **Actions**

- Recommencement of planned maintenance services.
- Press releases including electronic communications / articles in the tenants' magazine as contractors are appointed.
- Further correspondence with customers expecting works.

#### 4.2 Area of Focus - Listening to Residents' Views and Acting Upon them

The report identifies around a quarter (24%) of tenants are dissatisfied with this measure.

Several improvements to customer engagement activities took place as a direct result of the last STAR survey. These are detailed at Appendix 2. In 2020 customer engagement services were involved in supporting the Council's response to the pandemic, particularly at sheltered accommodation

An updated Customer Engagement Strategy features elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting. A second Customer Engagement Officer post is currently being recruited to. The level of resource will therefore be increased to deliver the updated strategy.

The report identifies those tenants whose contact preference is either email or online are the least satisfied with this measure, which may indicate that tenants feel that views given over a digital platform are not heard the same as those given through traditional methods. The draft new Customer Engagement Strategy has a focus on providing more digital routes for customer feedback. The Council's Scrutiny Committee is currently exploring the concept of an online customer portal. If implemented, this may support improved perception that the Council is easy to deal with.

It is likely delays in planned investment also have a bearing on this measure i.e., where a service requested (or expected) is not delivered, the customer may conclude they have not been listened to.

#### **Actions**

- Communication and delivery of Customer Engagement Strategy.
- Consideration of implementation of customer portal.

#### 4.3 Area of Focus - Anti-Social Behaviour Services

Those who have contacted the Council with an ASB complaint in the last 12 months are significantly less likely to be satisfied with the overall services provided compared to those who have not made an ASB complaint (58% cf. 79%).

An organisational review of ASB services is nearing completion. The tenant editorial panel has been involved in the development of website information.

It is proposed the Board considers a report at a future meeting on the changes made, which have been based on customer feedback.

##### **Actions**

- Delivery of ASB review.
- Communication of new processes arising from the review of ASB.

#### 4.4 - Area of Focus Neighbourhoods and Safety and Security

Satisfaction with neighbourhood was lowest amongst those in Loughborough Southfields (64%) and Loughborough Hastings, Loughborough Lymington (67%). These areas cover the town centre. Estate walks with residents and Councillors are currently being re-introduced having stopped due to the pandemic. Customer engagement estate-based activities will be prioritised in these areas.

Those in Thurmaston are significantly less likely (62%) to feel the Council provides a home that is safe and secure compared to the other areas. Further interrogation of the data, and potentially some further research with tenants and other stakeholders will take place to better understand this dynamic.

##### **Actions**

- Customer engagement estate activities to be prioritised in areas where satisfaction is lowest. Appropriate communications to be issued capturing outcomes.
- Further investigation to take place in respect of the results relating to tenants in Thurmaston and their sense of safety and security with their home.

#### 4.5 - Area of Focus - Rent Value for Money

The Council's rents are currently significantly lower than comparable authorities in its HRA Business Plan benchmarking group. The quality of services will have a (likely more) significant bearing on this indicator. It is proposed that an article about rent payments and the services funded, including benchmarking information, be included in the tenants' magazine, both hard copy and online.

#### **Action**

- Article in the tenants' magazine, both hard copy and online, setting out detail around the services funded, and benchmarking information.

#### 4.6 - Repairs and Maintenance

Positively, customer perception of the attitude of workers is identified as 93%. Perceptions were lowest regarding the time taken before work starts where 77% are satisfied with this measure. Responsive repairs delivery was paused several times over the life of the pandemic.

System developments are currently in progress in the repairs section with a view to tracking the completion of repairs which go beyond their planned completion dates. Currently, performance data is based on completed repairs. This development will provide the opportunity for enhanced tracking of repairs and analysis.

Whether the repair is completed "right first time" has a significant bearing on the customer perception of the service. The data will be interrogated with a view to identifying improvements.

#### **Action**

- Introduction of enhanced performance reporting for repairs not completed, and the identification of improvements.
- Review of Right First-Time data to identify improvements.

#### 5. Specific Areas of Consultation / Communication of Results of Survey

Several locally service-specific questions were asked of tenants, to inform service delivery. The findings are below.

**Rent Payment Pattern** - Tenants were asked whether they would be in favour of the council changing to rent being charged every week of the year, giving up the 'rent-free' weeks but having a lower weekly rent instead. 60% of residents were in favour of the existing pattern of rent payments, compared to 40% of residents expressing a preference for rent to be charged each week at a lower rate. No change to the current arrangement is therefore proposed.

**Communal Cleaning Improvements** - Tenants were asked whether they would be prepared to pay for enhancements to the communal cleaning scheme. Over half (54%) did however express not having a desire to pay more for the cleaning service with any of the improvements identified. No change to the current arrangement is therefore

proposed beyond the new use of scrubbing machines (rather than mopping) to reduce residual water and the risk of harm caused by a person slipping.

**Priorities for Investment** - When asked what future improvements tenants would like to see the council prioritise, building or acquiring more housing for people (46%), investment in sheltered accommodation (43%) and replacing kitchens, bathrooms, and heating systems more frequently (42%) were the most popular. This information will be used to inform the updated Asset Management Strategy scheduled to be brought forward later this year.

**Delivery of face-to-face services** - 83% of tenants feel that it is important to be able to come to the council offices in the future without an appointment to see a member for the landlord services team. Walk-in appointments at the Council offices will continue to be available for Landlord Services customers.

#### **Actions**

- Update and communicate Asset Management Strategy and HRA Business Plan based on tenant priorities. Issue appropriate communications to inform tenants of plans.
- Article in the tenants' magazine setting out the results of the STAR survey, and particularly the areas consulted on and the actions to be taken, therefore.

## 6. Context and 2023 Survey

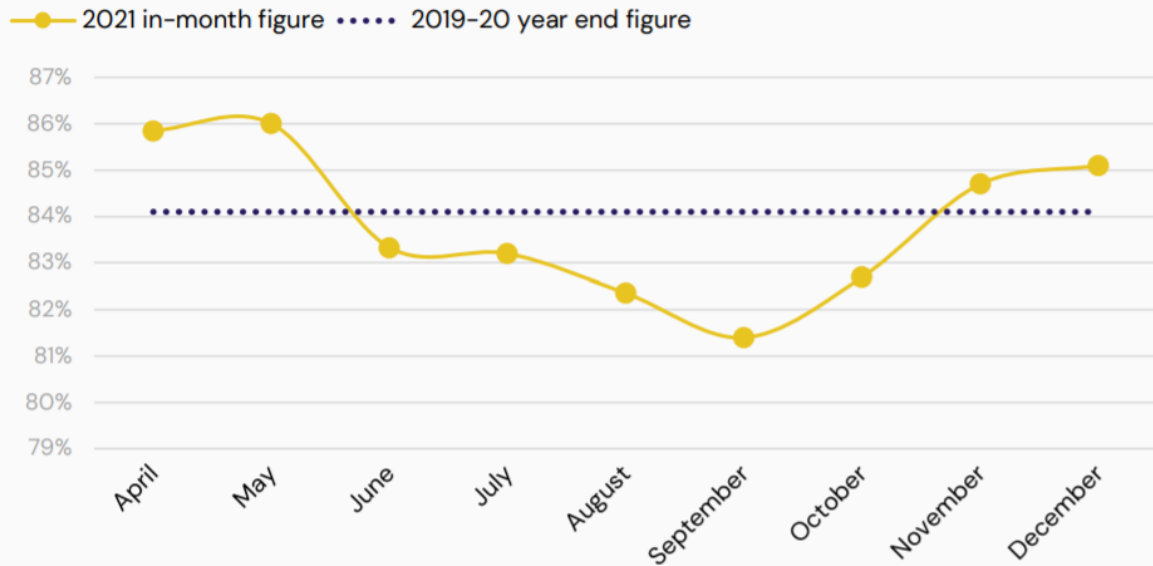
As stated, the hiatus in delivery of planned investment has likely had a significant bearing on the results of the survey, compounded by pressures on services due to the pandemic.

The Council conducted the bulk of its survey in September and October 2021. The Council is a member of Housemark and receives regular benchmarking information. Some landlords submit satisfaction data to Housemark on a monthly basis. The data from those landlords submitting monthly data indicates that satisfaction results were lowest for tenants over these months. The commentary in the extract from a recent Housemark report correlates with the notion that repairs and maintenance services have been under pressure. Housemark data also tells us that average satisfaction levels initially increased in 2020 when the pandemic first hit and the nation had a sense of pulling together, however by the Summer of 2021 average satisfaction levels started to dip compared to pre-pandemic levels, likely due to the impact of disrupted services.

It is proposed a new STAR survey be undertaken in 2023 and that the HMAB monitor the action plan arising from this report.

Where landlords carried out monthly STAR surveys in November and December, we found a 0.6 percentage point drop in satisfaction rates compared to November. This suggests that services are still under considerable pressure through continued shortages of labour and materials – as highlighted in previous Monthly Pulse reports.

### Satisfaction with the service the landlord provides



Source: Housemark (2022) ([www.housemark.co.uk](http://www.housemark.co.uk))

### Actions

- Plan for and undertake STAR survey in 2023.
- HMAB to monitor implementation of the action plan arising from this report.

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## **Appendix 1 - STAR Survey**

Attached as separate document.

## Appendix 2 - Actions Identified from 2018 STAR Survey

Action Identified	Progress	Progress RAG
A review of our customer engagement/tenant involvement strategy, including an expansion of the opportunities tenants have to become involved in decisions that affect them, and service delivery and scrutiny through a new 'menu of involvement' is already well advanced and seeks to address the clear findings of the survey that we need to improve the way in which we communicate to our tenants, the opportunities for them to become involved and to influence the services for which they pay us to provide and the extent to which they think we take their views into account when making decisions that affect them;	This item was completed in 2019. A new menu of involvement was completed and promoted. Subsequent delivery of involvement activities was hampered by the pandemic.	
A review of the tenants' magazine both in its format and its content to make it more appealing to read and to have content that is tenant-focused and tenant-produced. That review will also include the setting-up of an editorial panel involving tenants;	This item was completed in 2019, and the tenants editorial panel, continues to operate.	
a review of how we demonstrate that we have listened to tenants' views and taken them into account in our decision making;	A <i>you said, we did</i> section has been included in the tenants' magazine, containing information around learning implemented from analysis of complaints	
The implementation of a communal cleaning service for [general needs] tenants living in blocks of flats with shared internal areas, the cost of which will be recovered through a service charge;	The service was consulted on, introduced in early 2020, and continues.	
A review of our anti-social behaviour procedures in order to try to improve the time it takes to resolve an ASB case;	Work commenced on this item, however, has been subsumed into a wider review of ASB which is currently in progress, and due to conclude, with new processes implemented from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022. The timeline was impacted by the pandemic.	



A review of our approach to the provision of fencing at individual properties.

A new policy has been developed in consultation with the CHRF.

