



**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC GROWTH, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE ON 1 DECEMBER 2020**

SUBJECT: TENANT SURVEY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of progress on the Tenant Survey Improvement Plan 2019-21.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee following a decision of Moray Council on 17 June 2020 to agree a simplified committee structure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of this committee the combining of the delegated responsibilities of Economic Development and Infrastructure, Community Services (Housing and Property) and Finance (budget, capital and revenue monitoring) (para 9 of the minute refers).

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee:**
- i) scrutinises the progress achieved on implementing the actions set out in the improvement plan;**
 - ii) notes that the next Tenant Survey will be carried out in 2021; and**
 - iii) notes that progress will be monitored through the Annual Performance Report and performance monitoring as set out in paragraph 4.2.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council carries out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey every three years to gather tenants' views on Housing Services. Tenant feedback has an important role in assessing how the Council is performing in its landlord role and for prioritising service improvements.
- 3.2 Social landlords are required to report on tenant satisfaction as part of the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). The SHR expects landlords to carry out a survey of tenants at least once every three years.
- 3.3 On 2 April 2019, the Communities Committee considered the main findings of the Tenant Survey 2018 and agreed that a further report would be presented which would set out improvement actions required by the Housing Service (paragraph 12 of the Minute refers). On 27 August 2019, the Communities Committee considered progress on achieving the improvement actions (paragraph 12 of the Minute refers).
- 3.4 The next Tenant Survey will be carried out in 2021 and will provide an opportunity to compare progress on addressing the issues raised by tenants in the 2018 survey.

4. TENANT SURVEY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 4.1 The Tenant Survey Improvement Plan is attached at **APPENDIX I**. The actions set out in the plan have been developed in response to views expressed by tenants in the 2018 survey and as such represent a reiteration of the actions previously agreed in 2019. In recognition of the comments made in the recent Best Value review regarding tenant satisfaction, and noting that the actions previously agreed in 2019 were not SMART and so progress could not accurately be monitored across all activities, the Improvement Plan has now been framed with measures and milestones to address this issue.
- 4.2 The actions to be taken forward by service managers are detailed under each improvement area and associated outcome. Many of the measures linked to the actions are monitored through the existing performance framework as part of the Housing Service Plan, as well the social landlord regulatory framework, including the Annual Return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the Landlord's Annual Performance Report. Where available, the plan has compared plan performance measures with the Scottish local authority averages. Progress will be monitored through each of these reports and annual benchmarking results will help to demonstrate whether overall key tenant satisfaction levels are improving.

Summary of Plan Progress

- 4.3 A total of 11 actions included in the Plan were due for completion by the end of October 2020 with 8 completed as planned.

Action Area	No. of Actions	Completion by end of October 2020	Actual Completion by end of 2019/20
Repairs	6	4	2
Housing Stock Condition	4	1	1
Communication and customer service	1	1	0
Rents and affordability	3	2	2
Tenant Participation	4	2	2
Neighbourhood management	3	1	1

Repairs

- 4.4 Actions in this area have been developed in response to tenant concerns about the time taken to complete and respond to repairs and also comments suggesting appointments were not being kept and follow on appointments were not always arranged.
- 4.5 Performance on the action around repair response time has been generally good, with target timescales met during 2019/20. Timescales for repairs are monitored closely by service managers as part of the Housing Service's performance management framework. Good progress has also been made on the action to improve the measurement of tenant satisfaction with the repairs service with a new method of collection achieving a higher level of customer feedback. A target response rate of 30% has been set for 2020/21, exceeding Scottish Housing Regulator guidance on acceptable levels of customer feedback for inclusion in Annual Return on the Charter submissions.
- 4.6 Progress on related actions around reviewing targets and work processes have been delayed by working restrictions caused by COVID-19. However, with the easing of restrictions, it is anticipated that these actions will be completed in the second half of 2020/21.
- 4.7 A working group, which includes the Head of Transformation and the Contact Centre Manager, has been established to oversee improvements across a range of repair reporting and delivery processes. The Building Services Manager will be reporting progress to this group on the action to review the ICT repairs appointment system as well as on the wider actions to review work processes and targets.

Stock Condition

- 4.8 Actions in this area have been developed in response to a 12% reduction between the 2015 and 2018 surveys in tenant satisfaction with the quality of their homes and a number of tenants saying that their home is in need of upgrading.
- 4.9 The Housing Service has responded positively on the action to take account of tenants' preferences when prioritising the details of the Council's planned maintenance programme. In response to tenant priorities identified in the 2018 survey, the main focus of Council's Housing Investment Programme has been the provision of new heating systems, windows, bathrooms and kitchens.
- 4.10 With some tenants finding their homes difficult or expensive to heat, the Council has allocated additional funding to energy efficiency improvements as part of its programme to ensure that its housing complies with the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH). Progress on the action around ESSH compliance will be reported in more detail to this Committee in February 2021 as part the Housing Performance Report but, during 2020/21, it has been evident that the programme has been subject to significant delay due to working restrictions caused by COVID-19.
- 4.11 The Stock Condition Survey has also been delayed by COVID-19 but has commenced during the second half of 2020/2021 in line with national guidance.

Communication and customer service issues

- 4.12 The communication and customer services raised by tenants in the 2018 survey were mainly about keeping them informed on the progress of repairs requests and other maintenance activity. There were also concerns that sometimes it takes too long to get through to the right person or for the service to respond to queries. Some progress has been made on the action developed in response to this with the Housing Service agreeing to consult on a Change Management Plan in 2019/20 which will introduce tenant liaison officers within the DLO. A key role of these officers will be to improve communication with tenants on repair matters. However, the implementation of this plan has been delayed in 2020/21 by COVID-19 but service managers are progressing in the second half of the year.

Rent and affordability

- 4.13 Actions in this area aim to address the survey finding that some households experience difficulties with rent affordability and the related issue of fuel poverty.
- 4.14 Good progress has been made on the two plan actions due for completion. In 2019/20, the Housing Service consulted on and implemented a rent freeze. In 2020/21, the level of rent increase took account of the affordability recommendations contained in the 2019 Business Plan review.
- 4.15 Progress on the action to reduce tenants' heating costs is covered in paragraph 4.10 of this report.

Tenant Participation

- 4.16 Although the 2018 survey found that there was an 8% increase in tenant satisfaction with opportunities to participate in landlord decision making, some

tenants commented that they were not aware of these opportunities and felt that their input would not lead to meaningful changes. Despite the improvement, the Council was still lagging behind the Scottish average on this indicator.

- 4.17 Good progress has been made in this area with the completion of actions in relation to membership of the North East North East Tenant, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) and participation in the Scottish Government's tenant participation Next Steps programme. A key output of the programme was to develop an action plan for landlords to improve their tenant participation and scrutiny arrangements.
- 4.18 Despite promotion through social media and the Council website, progress on the action to establish a digital tenants' group has been uncertain with limited engagement from tenants. Work will continue on this action in the remaining period of the plan.
- 4.19 The Council's Tenant Participation Strategy will be reviewed in 2021 and will set out actions for promoting and developing new approaches to tenant engagement in landlord decision making. The review of the strategy will be guided by the action plan developed for the Council as part of the Next Steps programme.

Neighbourhood Management

- 4.20 Many of the issues raised by tenants such as parking, dog fouling, speeding cars, the condition of roads, footpaths and common landscaping fall outwith the scope of the landlord role and are the responsibility of other Council services and partners. Actions on Neighbourhood Management have therefore focussed on ways in which the Housing Service can work with other services, as well as residents, to address the concerns raised by tenants.
- 4.21 To ensure that the quality of common landscape areas is maintained, the Housing Service has funded grass-cutting services within Council estates since 2019/20.
- 4.22 The action on the introduction of participatory budgets has been delayed by COVID-19.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Moray Council's Corporate Plan 2019-24 aims to empower local communities by understanding what they need and building their capacity to work with the Council and other partners to deliver and improve services and outcomes for people. This priority is reflected within the Housing and Property Service Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

There is a requirement to carry out regular satisfaction surveys under the Scottish Housing Regulator's performance framework and to comply with the outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

(c) Financial implications

Any costs associated with implementing improvements will be met from within existing budgets and will be factored into the Housing Investment Programme.

(d) Risk Implications

The Audit Scotland Best Value Assurance Report in 2020 found declining levels of customer satisfaction with Council services, including Housing. Audit Scotland expects the Council to implement urgent improvements in services Scotland before its next report in 2022.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no direct staffing implications associated with this report.

(f) Property

There are no direct property implications associated with this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no direct equalities implications associated with this report.

(h) Consultations

Consultation on this report has been carried out with Acting Head of Housing and Property Services, senior managers in the Housing and Property Service, Legal Services Manager, the Principal Accountant (Deborah O'Shea), and Committee Services Officer (Lissa Rowan) who are in agreement with the report where it relates to their area of responsibility.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 This report details progress on the improvement plan developed in response to the findings of the 2018 Tenant Survey.

Author of Report: Daska Murray, Senior Housing Officer (Information)
Background Papers: Held by author
Ref: