



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 2 APRIL 2019

SUBJECT: TENANT SURVEY 2018

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the main findings of the 2018 Tenant Survey.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (G) (15) of the Council's Scheme of Administration to develop and monitor the Council's Performance Management Framework for the Communities Services.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-

- (i) **considers the main findings of the Tenant Survey 2018; and**
- (ii) **notes that an improvement action plan in response to the Tenant Survey 2018 will be presented to this Committee on 27 August 2019.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council has carried out a number of independent surveys 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 Council's last Tenant Survey was completed in 2015 and the SHR expects landlords to carry out a survey of tenants at least once every 3 years.
- 3.3 On 14 February 2018, the Council approved the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget which included a provision of £18,000 for the 2018 Tenant Survey (paragraph 13 of the Minute refers).

4. SURVEY DESIGN AND FIELDWORK

- 4.1 Following a competitive tender process, the Housing Service commissioned Research Resource to carry out the 2018 survey and produce a report on the results. Research Resource is an independent market research organisation with extensive experience of working with social landlords on tenant surveys.
- 4.2 The survey aimed to assess tenants' views and experiences of the Housing Service, evaluate compliance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes and allow comparison with previous baseline results. The questionnaire was based around the following themes:
- views on landlord services;
 - views on accessing services, communication and tenant participation;
 - views on repairs and housing quality;
 - views on the neighbourhood
 - views on rents and affordability; and
 - tenant priorities.
- 4.3 Tenant representatives reviewed the questionnaire prior to it being issued to all tenants. This feedback helped the service to develop a questionnaire that was both reasonable in length and easy to understand.
- 4.4 Publicity was arranged to maximise the response rate and included promotion within the Tenants' Voice newsletter, the Council's website and on social media.
- 4.5 During September 2018, Research Resource invited all 5,908 tenants to take part in the survey by post (53%) or email (47%). When the survey closed in November 2018, the consultant boosted the response rate through targeted telephone surveys.

5. MAIN FINDINGS

- 5.1 On 14 February 2019, Research Resource presented the main findings to Elected Members. A briefing for tenant representatives took place on the same date. The consultant's full report is available on the Council's Committee Management Information System at <https://moray.cmis.uk.com/moray/CouncilandGovernance/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/369/Committee/10/Default.aspx>.

Respondent Profile

- 5.2 A total of 2,358 tenants (40%) responded to the survey providing data accurate to +/- 2% (based on a 50% estimate and a 95% level of confidence). This is an improvement on the 30% response rate to the 2015 survey which was also sent to all tenants. Most of the surveys returned were by post (66%) followed by phone (18%) and finally online (16%).
- 5.3 Most of the responses received were from households aged 35-64 (49%). This was followed by those aged over 65 years old (41%) and finally those aged under 35 (10%). There is a slight under representation of younger tenants and a slight over representation of older tenants. As has been the case in previous surveys, younger tenants tend to show lower levels of

satisfaction. This could imply that this demographic are more likely to respond if they have had a negative experience of the service.

- 5.4 Most of the responses received were mainly from single adult households (49%) and two adult households (25%).
- 5.5 Almost two thirds of tenants (64%) have someone in their household with a long term illness, health problem or disability. The most common health problems were mobility issues or physical disabilities (35%) and chronic diseases or illnesses (31%) which were evident mainly within older households. The next most common option selected was mental health conditions (19%) which were more likely to be reported by younger respondents.
- 5.6 Across the Moray housing market areas, the response was generally representative of the overall tenant profile. Elgin had the highest response (46.6%), followed by Buckie (21.4%), Forres (14.6%), Keith (9.3%), Speyside (7.6%) and finally the Cairngorms (0.5%).
- 5.7 Over 2,500 comments were included in the survey and whilst this identified many areas of tenant satisfaction, it will assist service managers to identify improvement actions that the service will take forward.

Views on landlord services

- 5.8 Satisfaction with the overall service remains at 80%, the same as the 2015 survey. This is a statutory performance indicator and will form part of the Council's 2018/19 Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). The main themes highlighted by tenants who were not satisfied were:
- the length of time to respond to or carry out repairs;
 - feeling their home needs upgraded or improved; and
 - communication or customer service issues.

Views on accessing services, communication and tenant participation

- 5.9 There were high levels of satisfaction with the ways tenants can get in touch (88%). Tenants who were not satisfied reported problems with the time to get through on the phone or that issues were not always passed on. Traditional methods of getting in touch remain popular (by phone 83%, in person 26%) although there has been an increase in getting in touch online/by email (13%). Over two thirds of tenants (68%) had access to the Internet, mainly through home broadband or mobile devices.
- 5.10 Tenants were asked how they would prefer to be kept informed about services and decisions. Written communications were the most popular options particularly the Tenants' Voice newsletter (53%), the Tenants' Handbook (45%) and letters sent to their home (40%). Most tenants (88%) read at least some of the Tenants' Voice and 91% find it useful.
- 5.11 The percentage of tenants who feel that the Housing Service is good at keeping them informed about services and decisions was 76%, a marginal decrease of 2% on the 2015 survey. This is another statutory performance indicator included within the Council's ARC submission. The main reasons for

dissatisfaction were not related to general communications but more about keeping in touch about services such as repairs and maintenance.

- 5.12 The survey assessed whether tenants may be eligible for the Council's downsizing incentive scheme and as a result 57 tenants will be contacted to discuss their options. The most common reasons for not wanting to be contacted about the scheme were being settled in the area, not wanting to move or using extra bedrooms for visitors/family.
- 5.13 Tenants are reasonably aware of tenant participation opportunities, with 66% being aware of at least one method. Interest in getting involved was also fair with 56% suggesting they would take part in some way. The most popular options were taking part in surveys (47%), mystery shopping (15%) and joining the list of interested tenants (13%).
- 5.14 Another statutory performance indicator relates to the satisfaction with opportunities to participate in decision making processes. This improved from 60% in 2015 to 69% in 2018. The result for this indicator is affected by a high proportion of neutral 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' responses. The main reasons for not wanting to get involved were lack of time or interest, feeling that age or disability made it difficult, not being aware of opportunities or not feeling that their involvement would make a difference.

Views on repairs and housing quality

- 5.15 Overall satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service remained at the same level as the 2015 survey (79%). This is another statutory performance indicator which forms part of the ARC submission but landlords also have the option to submit feedback gathered locally. Tenants were more likely to be satisfied with the ease of reporting repairs and the attitude of workers but were less satisfied with keeping in touch about a repair, the time before work started and the time taken to complete the work.
- 5.16 Satisfaction with the quality of the home fell from 86% in 2015 to 74% in 2018. Again, this indicator forms part of the ARC submission to the SHR. Tenants' main concerns were about the condition of some areas with kitchens, bathrooms, windows and heating being in need of upgrade or in need of repair. Some tenants commented about the features of their home and its suitability, such as it being too small.
- 5.17 Tenants were asked what improvement or change to their home they would like to see. Most said their home did not need any improvement (22%) but a quarter of those were occupying a new build. The most popular choices selected were upgrades to heating systems (18%) particularly for homes with electric storage heaters, window replacements (14%) and bathroom upgrades (13%).

Views on the neighbourhood

- 5.18 There was a slight increase in satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live (85% in 2015 to 87% in 2018).
- 5.19 Performance on the landlord's management of the neighbourhood has improved from 76% in 2015 to 80% in 2018. This is another statutory performance indicator which will be included in the 2018/19 ARC submission.

The comments made by tenants varied significantly and included problems with neighbours, pets, parking, upkeep of gardens, landscape maintenance, rubbish, the condition of roads and paths, drug issues, speeding cars, lack of visibility of officers and the condition of play areas. The most serious problems were parking (20%), dog fouling (17%) and lack of play areas (11%). Some of these issues are out with the control of the Housing Service.

- 5.20 Most of those responding (86%) said they were living in the town or village that they wanted to live in.

Views on rents and affordability

- 5.21 Just over half of tenants (53%) receive no financial assistance with their rent. Of those who receive financial assistance, 35% receive full housing benefit or full Universal Credit and 12% receive partial housing benefit or Universal Credit. At the time of the survey just 3% of those responding received either full or partial Universal Credit.
- 5.22 Tenants making rent payments (those not receiving full housing benefit which is paid direct to the landlord) were asked whether the rent they pay is affordable. While most said it was very or fairly affordable, 34% felt it was just about affordable but 8% felt it was fairly or very difficult to afford.
- 5.23 A similar proportion of tenants feel their rent represents good value for money (84% in 2015 and 83% in 2018). This is another statutory performance indicator included within the ARC submission. Tenants who felt it was not good value for money said that the rent is too expensive; it keeps increasing or mentioned the condition of the property.
- 5.24 Tenants were asked whether they were prepared to pay a higher rent to fund energy efficiency measures or the Council's new build programme. The survey showed that 56% were willing to pay more for energy efficiency measures but 20% were not. A smaller proportion (31%) would pay to increase the number of new build properties but 35% would not. Other suggestions of what tenants would pay an increased rent for were varied and included showers, modernisations or home improvements, adaptations for disabilities, a larger home, better parking, garages, estate improvements, a decorating service or rent to buy schemes.
- 5.25 The survey assessed whether a household was affected by fuel poverty within the last 12 months. Almost half (45%) said they had wanted to put their heating on but had chosen not to because of affordability issues. Those in receipt of benefits, younger households and tenants with electric storage heating were more likely to be affected.

6. FUTURE ACTIONS

- 6.1 Tenants were asked to rate the importance of services based on the key performance indicators for the Annual Return on the Charter. The analysis shows that the most important areas to tenants were the quality of the home (80%), the quality of repairs (76%) and value for money of rent (70%).

- 6.2 Service managers are now considering the findings with a view to identifying improvement actions which will be presented to this Committee on 27 August 2019.
- 6.3 The findings of the survey and associated improvement actions will be publicised to tenants within future editions of the Tenants' Voice newsletter. The results will also be made available on the Council's website and on social media.

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

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

Moray 2026 identifies that customer engagement is a priority to improve service quality. This is also 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

The Tenant Survey cost under £10k which is an under spend of approximately £8k against the budget of £18k. Any costs associated with implementing improvements will be met from within existing budgets and has been factored into the Housing Investment Programme for 2019/20.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications associated with this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications associated with this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equalities implications arising from this report. Any equalities implications arising from improvement actions to be developed as a result of the Tenant Survey will be considered when actions are proposed.

(h) Consultations

Consultation on this report has been carried out with Acting Head of Housing and Property, senior managers in the Housing and Property Service, Senior Solicitor (Kathryn MacPherson), the Principal Accountant (Deborah O'Shea), and Committee Services Officer (Caroline Howie) who agree with this report where it relates to their area of responsibility.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This report presents the key findings of the Tenant Survey 2018. A further report will be presented to this Committee in August 2019 which sets out the improvement actions identified by service managers.**

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