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**REPORT TO: HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE ON 8  
FEBRUARY 2022**

**SUBJECT: TENANT SURVEY 2021**

**BY: HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE ON 8  
FEBRUARY 2022**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the main findings of the 2021 Tenant Survey.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of 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 Committee:**

- (i) scrutinises the main findings of the Tenant Survey 2021; and**
- (ii) notes that the Tenant Survey Improvement Plan will be reviewed in the light of the findings of the 2021 survey and an updated plan presented to a future meeting of this Committee.**

**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 SHR expects landlords to carry out a survey of tenants at least once every 3 years. The Council has carried out surveys in 1994, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2012, 2015 and 2018.
- 3.3 The findings of the 2018 Tenant Survey were presented to the Communities Committee on 2 April 2019 (paragraph 12 of the Minute refers). On 1 December 2020, the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental

Committee scrutinised progress on the Tenant Survey Improvement Plan developed in response to the 2018 survey (paragraph 14 of the Minute refers).

- 3.4 In August 2020, Audit Scotland's Best Value Assurance Report highlighted lower than average tenant satisfaction levels compared with other landlords and recommended that the council should investigate and better understand the reasons for poorer satisfaction levels and learn from Councils with higher satisfaction levels.

#### **4. SURVEY DESIGN AND FIELDWORK**

- 4.1 Following a competitive tender process, the Housing Service commissioned Research Resource to carry out a survey to assess satisfaction with the Council's landlord function and the services it provides. 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, evaluate progress on the Tenant Survey Improvement Plan and allow comparison with previous baseline results. The survey 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 (including Covid 19 impacts); and
  - tenant priorities.
- 4.3 Tenant representatives were involved in the review of the questionnaire prior to commencement of the survey. Their 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 Previous surveys have been carried out using a combined methodology of electronic and postal questionnaires sent to all tenants for self-completion. The 2021 Tenant Survey was carried out by interviewer-led telephone survey. This methodology is in line with SHR guidance and is widely considered to provide the most comprehensive, representative and robust results. Following research, officers found that most social landlords have been using interviewer-led methodology for their surveys.
- 4.6 Research Resource interviewed 1,504 tenants by telephone as part of the 2021 survey providing data accuracy to +/- 2% (based on a 50% estimate and a 95% level of confidence). The interviews took place during September and October 2021.
- 4.7 To avoid over and under-representation of tenant subgroups on the basis of variables such as household age, size or location, survey results are normally

weighted to ensure the sample is representative of the whole survey population. For the 2021 survey, the researchers were satisfied that the interviewee profile, although showing slight variances, was sufficiently representative to report the findings unweighted.

## **5. MAIN FINDINGS**

5.1 On 19 January 2022, Research Resource presented the main findings of the 2021 Tenant Survey to Elected Members. The survey report is available on the Moray Council webpage at:  
<http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file107425.pdf>

5.2 The 2021 survey shows the results for the SHR key indicators for the ARC as well as local service indicators, compares the levels of satisfaction with the 2018 survey and the local authority average across Scotland, assists in the evaluation of actions set out in the Tenant Survey Improvement Plan and helps the Council identify service improvements on the basis of tenant priorities.

5.3 The findings of the 2021 were generally positive showing significant improvement in tenant satisfaction against both the 2018 survey and the Scottish average across a number of key indicators.

### **Respondent Profile**

5.4 Most of the responses received were from households aged 35-64 (43%) followed by those aged over 65 years old (42%), and from single adult households (54%) and two adult households (23%).

5.5 Almost two thirds of tenants (63%) 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 (39%) and chronic diseases or illnesses (23%).

### **Landlord Services**

5.6 At 83%, overall satisfaction with services (an ARC indicator) is a slight improvement on the 2015 and 2018 surveys, which were both at 80%, and is closer to the Scottish average of 86%. The most common reasons for satisfaction are that the Council is doing a good or great job and there are no complaints. The most common reasons for dissatisfaction are associated with repairs and included incomplete works, quality of workmanship and the time taken to complete repairs.

### **Views on accessing services, communication and tenant participation**

5.7 91% of tenants feel that the Housing Service is good at keeping them informed about services and decisions (an ARC indicator). This is a significant improvement from both the 2015 and 2018 surveys, which were 78% and 76% respectively. This is also higher than the Scottish average of 85.6%. Those who are dissatisfied identified specific issues with communication on repairs and home improvements. The most popular ways of keeping tenants informed continue to be letter (58%, up from 40% in 2018), information in the Tenants Voice newsletter (55%, up from 53% in 2018) and registering for email alerts through "myaccount" (14% up from 10% in 2018).

- 5.8 The most popular method of contacting the Council continues to be telephone (92%, up from 83% in 2018) with email at 6%. Due to COVID-19 and office closures, 13% of respondents said they now contact the Housing Service by phone or email rather than visiting offices. Over 60% of tenants have access to the Internet but with significant differences by age (91% of tenants under 35 but only 23% over 75).
- 5.9 49% of tenants indicated that they would be interested in getting involved in the Council housing decision-making process with the most popular method being taking part in surveys.
- 5.10 There was a considerable improvement in tenant satisfaction with opportunities to participate in decision making processes (an ARC indicator) with 96% of respondents either very or fairly satisfied compared with 60% in 2015 and 69% in 2018. This indicator is also significantly higher than the Scottish average of 80%.

#### **Views on repairs and housing quality**

- 5.11 At 84%, overall satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service (an ARC indicator) increased slightly from the 2018 level of 79%. However, satisfaction on this indicator continues to be lower than the Scottish average of 88%. The main reasons for increased satisfaction are keeping in touch about repairs and the appointment system. The reasons for dissatisfaction included incomplete repairs, the quality of workmanship and the length of time to complete repairs.
- 5.12 Satisfaction with the quality of the home (an ARC indicator) increased from 74% in 2018 to 83%. This is only slightly lower than the local authority average of 84%. The most common reason for dissatisfaction is the need for home upgrade/improvement. There were significant age differences in satisfaction levels with older tenants most satisfied (92%) and those under 35 less satisfied (77%). Tenants living in the Elgin and Forres Housing Market Areas (HMAs) are most satisfied (85% and 86% respectively) with lower levels in Speyside and Buckie (both 78%).
- 5.13 Tenants were asked what improvement or change to their home they would like to see. Almost one in three (32%, up from 22% in 2018) said their home did not need any improvement. Tenants' most popular choices for improvement are windows (23%), heating systems (19%), bathrooms (19%) and kitchens (14%).

#### **Views on the neighbourhood**

- 5.14 93% of tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live compared with 87% in 2018. Overall 82% expressed satisfaction with the grass cutting service provided by the Housing Service.
- 5.15 Performance on the landlord's management of the neighbourhood has shown a significant improvement. 90% of respondents indicated that they are very or fairly satisfied with the Housing Service's contribution to the management of their neighbourhood (an ARC indicator) with only 5% dissatisfied. This is higher than the Scottish average of 83%. In 2018, 80% of respondents were satisfied on the slightly differently worded indicator "management of the neighbourhood". The main reasons for dissatisfaction are nothing gets done

or maintained, antisocial behaviour and lack of visibility in terms of neighbourhood management.

- 5.16 There were significant differences neighbourhood satisfaction in terms of age and location with those over 75 most satisfied with their neighbourhoods (95%) and those age 35-54 least satisfied (85%), Those living in Forres and Cairngorm are most satisfied (98% and 100% respectively) and those in Speyside least satisfied (73%).
- 5.17 When asked about problems in their neighbourhood, the most frequent issues identified are parking (21% a problem and 79% not), dog fouling (19% a problem and 81% not) and litter (18% a problem and 82% not). Only 5% of respondents identified vandalism/graffiti as a problem.

#### **Views on rents and affordability**

- 5.18 Only 41% of respondents are not in receipt of any housing benefit or Universal Credit assistance towards their rent. 43% are in receipt of full housing benefit and 9% have their full housing costs covered by Universal Credit.
- 5.19 Those tenants making rent payments (excluding those not receiving full housing benefit) were asked whether the rent they pay is affordable. Whilst 64% thought it was very or fairly easy to afford (compared to 58% in 2018) and 32% just about affordable, 4% found their rents difficult to afford (compared to 8% in 2018). Those who do not receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit are less likely to find their rents easy to afford. Analysis by household composition found that adult only households are less likely to find their rents affordable than those with children. Around 61% of adult only households found their rents affordable compared to around 77% of households with children.
- 5.20 86% of respondents felt their rent represents good value for money (an ARC indicator), only marginally greater than in previous surveys (84% in 2015 and 83% in 2018) but higher than the Scottish average of 82%. The main reasons given for good value are satisfaction with the house and area, affordability and cheaper than private rents. Tenants who felt it was not good value for money said that the rent is expensive and keeps increasing or mentioned the condition of the property.
- 5.21 41% said they would be willing to pay a higher rent if it would make their home more energy efficient, warmer and cheaper to heat (compared with 56% in 2018; 32% are not willing (compared with 20% in 2018). 30% said they would pay a slightly higher rent for the Council to build more homes (compared with 31% in 2018); 40% are not willing (compared with 35% in 2018). Tenants said they would also be willing to pay an increased rent for showers, modernisations or home improvements, adaptations for disabilities, a larger home, a better neighbourhood and solar panels/eco heating systems.
- 5.22 The survey assessed whether a household was affected by fuel poverty within the last 12 months. 22% said they had wanted to put their heating on but had chosen not to because of affordability, a significant reduction from 45% in 2018. Those in receipt of benefits, younger households and tenants with electric storage heating are more likely to experience heating affordability issues.

- 5.23 The majority of respondents (78%) said they had not been affected financially by the COVID-19 crisis but there were differences by age and household composition. 32% of respondents aged 35-54 and 29% aged 16-24 said they were worse off compared with 6% of those aged 75 and over. Single adult households are least likely to feel worse off (19%) whilst single and two parent households are more likely to feel worse off. 35% of single parent households with one child and 39% with three or more children said they are worse off. The figures are roughly the same for two parent households with 32% with one child and 39% with three or more children saying they are worse off.

### **Service Priorities**

- 5.24 Tenants were asked about the range of services they considered the highest priority. Those rated most important are the quality of repairs, the quality of the home, value for money for rent and the overall service provided.
- 5.25 Tenants were asked if they agree that the Council should be seeking to minimise the impact of their homes on climate change. 82% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the Council should be doing this.

## **6. FUTURE ACTIONS**

- 6.1 Service Managers are considering the findings of the 2021 survey with a view to evaluating progress and updating the actions set out in the Tenant Survey Improvement Plan. The review of plan will be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.
- 6.2 The findings of the survey and the review of the Tenant Survey Improvement Plan will be reported to tenants via 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))**

Gathering the views of customers has a key role in evaluating how the Housing Service is performing in its landlord role and prioritising service improvements on the basis of the needs of its tenants. This ensures that the Council's housing services are efficient and sustainable and contribute to the delivery of the priorities of both the Corporate Plan and the LOIP.

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

The Scottish Housing Regulator's performance framework and the Scottish Social Housing Charter require that social landlords carry out regular tenant satisfaction surveys.

### **(c) Financial implications**

The cost of the Tenant Survey at £10,920 was met from the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2021/22. Any costs associated with implementing improvements will be met from within existing budgets.

**(d) Risk Implications**

There are no risk implications from this report.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications from this report.

**(f) Property**

There are no property implications from 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) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts**

This report contributes towards the Council's Climate Change by identifying tenants' views of energy efficient and carbon reducing improvements to council houses.

**(i) Consultations**

Consultation on this report has been carried out with The Head of Housing and Property Services, Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) and Housing and Property Service Managers and any comments received have been incorporated.

**8. CONCLUSION**

**8.1 This report presents the key findings of the Tenant Survey 2021. The Tenant Survey Improvement Plan will be reviewed on the basis of the survey findings and an updated plan presented to a future meeting of this Committee.**

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