

**Meeting of the Housing and Safer Communities  
Select Committee**

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2023 at 6pm  
In Committee Room 2, The Council House, Priory Road,  
Dudley**

**Agenda - Public Session  
(Meeting open to the public and press)**

1. Apologies for absence
2. To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee.
3. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct
4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 as a correct record (Pages 4 – 27)
5. Public Forum
6. Quarterly Housing Performance Report – Quarter 1 (1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023) (Pages 28 – 37)
7. Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Tenant Perception Survey (Pages 38 – 79)
8. Customer Engagement and Involvement (Pages 80 – 85)
9. Progress Tracker and Future Business (Pages 86 – 94)



10. To consider any questions from Members to the Chair where two clear days' notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Council Procedure Rule 11.8).

**Distribution:**

Councillor A Davies (Chair)

Councillor S Bothul (Vice-Chair)

Councillors D Bevan, J Cowell, T Creed, P Drake, I Kettle, K Lewis, J Martin, C Reid and M Webb

Cc: Councillor L Taylor-Childs (Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities); Councillor S Ridney (Substitute for Councillor P Drake)



**Chief Executive**

**Dated: 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2023**

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## **Minutes of the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee**

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 at 6.00 pm  
In Committee Room 2  
At the Council House, Dudley**

### **Present:**

Councillor A Davies (Chair)  
Councillors D Bevan, J Cowell, T Creed, I Kettle, P Lee, W Little, J Martin,  
S Ridney and D Stanley

### **Officers:**

K Jones - Director of Housing and Communities, I Cartmell – Interim Strategic Lead for Customers and M Lyons – Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety (Directorate of Housing and Communities) and K Malpass - Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Finance and Legal)

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### **8. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Bothul, P Drake, K Lewis and M Webb.

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### **9. Appointment of Substitute Members**

It was reported that Councillors P Lee, W Little, S Ridney and D Stanley had been appointed as substitute Members for Councillors K Lewis, S Bothul, P Drake and M Webb, respectively, for this meeting of the Committee only.

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10. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor J Cowell declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 7 (Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Housing and Communities Directorate – Quarter 1 (1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023)), Agenda Item No. 8 (Impact of the 2023/24 Rent Increase for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Tenants) and Agenda Item No. 9 (Update on Property Condition and Compliance) as a Council tenant.

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11. **Minutes**

**Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2023, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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12. **Public Forum**

The following three questions were raised by a member of the public who was unable to attend the meeting due to health issues.

- What were the timescales involved in allocating Housing Officers to areas within the Borough.
- Consideration of a review to take place on how Aerial Funding was allocated moving forward. It was considered that quorum numbers for meetings were currently too high which was affecting the voting requirements on how to use funding.
- In referring to the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), the member of public, together with Councillor J Cowell queried the number of high and low rise blocks within the Dudley Borough that were affected and where those buildings were located.

The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety acknowledged the risks associated with RAAC following the media coverage and had started carrying out surveys on all stock within the Borough, including void properties to ascertain the level of risk, given the age of Dudley's assets. It was anticipated that, following the completion of the surveys and the collation of data, information would be available in December 2023 in relation to the number of properties affected by RAAC and the financial consequences associated with those properties. Members were advised that surveys previously carried out indicated that RAAC material was not present in high-rise and some medium-rise blocks, however, an understanding of the level of the information contained in the original surveys carried out in 2018/2019 was required.

### **Resolved**

That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to provide written responses to the Member of the public.

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### 13. **Progress Tracker and Future Business**

In referring to Minute Number 6(3) of the minutes of 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 in relation to accessing additional data and intelligence on all housing stock within the Borough and whether there were any bodies or organisations that would be able to provide information on property condition, particularly in owner occupied homes, the Director of Housing and Communities indicated that the Local Authority would need to commission an external organisation to undertake the level of work Members may require, which would impact significantly on Council budgets. Whilst it was considered that a reasonable level of data could be acquired through the census data, it was accepted that the information accessible would not meet Member expectations, however, information could be provided to all Members of the Committee if necessary.

Councillor I Kettle referred to the number of properties moving towards dereliction in the Borough and how challenging it currently was to identify those properties, particularly within the private/owner occupier sector. It was essential that properties in poor condition were identified early to enable minimal repair/maintenance to support the re-letting process, which would in turn improve the housing position in the Borough. Councillor A Davies indicated that figures evidenced a small proportion of social housing within Dudley's housing stock and whilst additional data was essential to ensure the Local Authority achieved its housing obligations, it was accepted that the cost involved in acquiring the information was significant.

In response to a question from Councillor A Davies, the Director of Housing and Communities indicated that specific figures involved in instructing an external organisation to carry out a more detailed analysis of owner occupier housing stock could not be provided as it would depend on the Council's requirements, however, it was expected that the amount would be significant. Funding would not be authorised through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as the budget was funded from Council tenant rent and could only be used to fund projects associated with Council owned properties. Information in relation to the private rented sector would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor P Lee queried the Local Authority's responsibility in replenishing Council stock. Whilst Members expressed their appreciation of the level of work currently being carried out within the Housing and Communities Directorate in terms of Council owned properties, it was essential that consideration be given to the wider stock and explore opportunities to purchase properties to support the increasing demand and needs of residents in the Borough.

In responding, the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that a programme to acquire properties back into the Council's housing stock had been developed to support housing demand, particularly those customers requiring to purchase properties through the Right To Buy (RTB) scheme. Whilst it was acknowledged that additional assets were required, robust systems were followed to determine properties that required disposal. Members were advised of the benefits of acquiring new build properties and confirmed that twenty-seven new build properties would be available for immediate release in the next three months. Whilst significant investment would be required to bring existing properties in dilapidation back into use, new build properties were covered under the National House Building Council (NHBC) warranty resulting in minimal maintenance during the warranty period. The Council was committed to purchasing good quality housing stock in all areas of the Borough that supplemented the Council's current housing stock to support customer demand.

In responding to a question from Councillor A Davies in relation to the number of RTB properties that had been purchased over the last twelve months, the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that whilst exact figures could not be provided at the meeting, he confirmed that twenty-six Council properties had been lost during the last six-month period. Properties would continue to be purchased through the Council's RTB scheme; however, various methods were being explored to maximise opportunities to increase housing stock levels within the Borough.

In referring to the Committee's programme of business, Councillor D Stanley questioned the decision to submit a report on Community Safety Partnership including anti-social behaviour to the 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 meeting. It was considered that anti-social behaviour was an increasing problem in all areas of the Borough and progress reports should be provided regularly. It was essential that Members were updated on work associated with the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team, number of cases, action taken, and lessons learned to date to tackle ASB in the Borough. Particular reference was made to tenants being refused a transfer to alternative properties as a result of the level of ASB identified in areas as specific requirements of some tenants were unable to be met. Councillor A Davies acknowledged the comments made and indicated that further discussion would take place at the next agenda setting meeting, with the possibility of bringing the Community Safety Partnership report forward to an earlier programmed meeting.



In responding to a question from Councillor J Martin, the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that capital receipts arising from RTB sales were used to fund the development of affordable housing, both new build properties and refurbishment of existing stock. Members were advised that the proportion of new build properties purchased using capital receipts was currently slightly lower in comparison to the number of disposals. Various initiatives and the demographic trend of the Borough were being considered to ensure that the core housing needs of customers were preserved, whilst ensuring a reasonable level of housing stock was maintained. The strategy and plans around disposals and purchases was queried and Members were advised that the idea was to generally replace properties in areas where disposals had been identified. The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety referred to the ongoing work associated with the Stock Condition Survey (SCS) programme that Savills, an industry expert, was currently undertaking on all Council housing stock and indicated that an update would be provided to Members at a future meeting of the Committee following the development of the Council's five, ten and thirty year investment plans and priorities.

Councillor J Martin referred to the plans around acquiring properties in more affluent areas of the Borough and what safeguarding processes were in place to protect investment when applying RTB discounts for customers. The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that whilst RTB schemes did not apply to new build properties, the Right to Acquire scheme did, however, the requirements differed. Core housing needs of families were being considered to support longer tenancies. Ongoing consideration was also being given to ensure the Council did not lose funding on housing eligible for the RTB scheme and updates would be provided to Members at a future meeting.

In responding to a question from Councillor S Ridney, the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety confirmed that the Council had completed twenty-six RTB sales in the last six-month period, however, whilst it was acknowledged that the level of RTB applications were high, only a proportion of those applications received resulted in successful purchases. Members would be provided with accurate statistics of RTB sales for the last five-year period including the type of properties purchased.

In responding to a question from Councillor S Ridney, the Director of Housing and Communities indicated that the RTB scheme would not generally apply to properties that had been specifically developed or adapted for particular customer groups. Regulations and exemptions were considered with each application received, which was one of the reasons why not all RTB applications were successful.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business, as outlined in the report, be noted.
- (2) That the Chair and Vice-Chair be requested to review the timings of the Community Safety Partnership report to an earlier programmed meeting.
- (3) That an update be provided to Members of the Committee at a future meeting on information in relation to private rented housing.
- (4) That an update be provided to Members of the Committee at a future meeting on the work associated with the Stock Condition Survey programme that Savills was currently undertaking on all Council housing stock.
- (5) That an update be provided to Members of the Committee at a future meeting on information in relation to the Right to Buy scheme.
- (6) That information be provided to all Members of the Committee on accurate statistics of Right To Buy sales for the last five-year period to including the property types purchased.

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14. **Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Housing and Communities Directorate – Quarter 1 (1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023)**

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on Quarter 1 of the Corporate Quarterly Performance report for the financial year 2023/24 covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023, specifically referring to services within the Housing and Communities Directorate. Further detail relating to directorate service delivery were outlined in the Service Summary Sheets attached as appendices to the report submitted.

The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that the report provided progress against the delivery of the new three-year Council Plan priorities and the Future Council Programme. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets were used to measure performance and were monitored regularly and reported on a quarterly basis.

Dashboard summaries highlighted four corporate quarterly measures for Housing and Community Services, one with improvements, zero consistent and three with worsening trends.

Areas of concern were being monitored closely within the Directorate of Housing and Communities to identify improvements. Targets below KPIs were reported to management teams at both service and strategic levels to ensure an understanding of the issues and ensure appropriate actions were being taken to address the concerns moving forward.

In referring to PI 2027 – Satisfaction on how anti-social behaviour complaints were handled, it was reported that satisfaction within the service was decreasing due to the lack of contact and time taken to resolve issues. The structure and operating model of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team was currently being reviewed to address the issues raised. Work was underway to further interrogate the survey data to identify the extent of any correlation between outcome and satisfaction, and to review the associated cases to get a better understanding of whether there were operational issues that must be addressed or whether customer perception relied entirely upon achieving desired results.

In terms of PI 1191 – Average re-let time for standard re-let, it was reported that the average re-let times had decreased from 60.23 days in Quarter 4 2022/2023 to 49.26 days in Quarter 1 2023/2024, compared to 61.7 days for the same period last year. However, the re-let time for standard voids continued to vary between property types. Members were assured that all Teams involved in the void process continued to review and refine procedures working together to minimise rent loss and void turnaround times.

In terms of PI 1899 – Rent loss, it was reported that the outturn was 1.97% compared to 1.92% for the same period last year, primarily due to an increase in void properties. Whilst improvement programmes were currently being identified to improve figures, rent loss associated with strategic voids would continue and managed through efficient decision making and project management. The end-to-end review on voids continued to have a positive impact on void turnaround times, which would in time have a profound effect on void rent loss in the future. Current focus within the services was on stock condition, which could potentially see an impact on void loss in the short term as additional checks were undertaken at void stage. A further review of voids requiring an investment decision was currently underway and a recommendation for each property would be made during Quarter 2.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions, make comments and responses were provided, where necessary, as follows:-

- (a) In referring to PI 2027, satisfaction in which the way anti-social behaviour complaints were handled, Councillor S Ridney indicated that Members were being advised that delays were being experienced due to the lack of resources in the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team which impacted on the ability to deliver adequate services. In responding, the Director of Housing and Communities referred to the recent restructure of the Housing and Communities Directorate that had been carried out and indicated that a number of staff that had been successful in obtaining a position within the Directorate were from internal applications and had knowledge of the anti-social behaviour policies and procedures. Whilst Members were advised that there were vacancies within the ASB Team, it was considered that it should not be used as an excuse for failure in delivering adequate services.

- (b) In referring to the various sanctions imposed by the Local Authority for different levels of anti-social behaviour, Councillor S Ridney considered eviction to be the last option. Customers often complained to Members about the level of anti-social behaviour experienced from neighbours and whilst eviction was not necessarily the sanction required, Members wanted to be reassured that appropriate action was being taken by Officers. The Director of Housing and Communities explained the robust legal process involved when attempting to evict a tenant and the obligations of the Court system. Stringent requirements were requested to satisfy Court proceedings, which often caused delays and disappointed tenants. It was essential that communication between the Local Authority and Members improved to ensure that all parties were updated on any progress made in relation to anti-social behaviour complaints.

It was acknowledged that tenants needed to be educated on tenancy conditions and responsibilities involved in taking on a tenancy, together with the consequences of breaching those conditions. The lack of enforcement continued to be an issue and it was considered that imposing sanctions for breaches would encourage tenants to maintain property conditions. Robust measures were being considered as part of the new Neighbourhood Model to tackle breaches of tenancy, together with improved collaborative work with Members to explain the reasoning behind imposed sanctions to reduce Members querying officer decisions.

- (c) Councillor J Cowell queried whether performance indicator figures could be separated between the work associated with Housing Officers and the specialist ASB Team to provide Members with a more accurate figure of performance levels for each section. The Interim Strategic Lead for Customers indicated that as part of the new approach to targeting anti-social behaviour, it was envisaged that Housing Officers would identify and deal with the low-level anti-social behaviour incidents early and agree appropriate measures to satisfy all parties, whereas the specialist ASB Team would focus on the more severe complex ASB complaints received from tenants. However, collaborative work with both teams was essential to ensure anti-social behaviour issues were dealt with accordingly, which would see performance indicator figures improving moving forward. It was essential that Housing Officers were visible in communities to ensure customer expectations were met, together with improved communication with customers and Members. Leaflets would be circulated to tenants and Members highlighting key details of Housing Officers which would include photographs once the project had been completed.
- (d) Councillor J Martin referred to the current staffing structure, operating model and performance levels across the Housing and Communities Directorate, together with strategies to fill any vacancies. Current pressures of the Housing and Communities Directorate were referred to and the associated challenges as a result of the lack of resources in services that were currently struggling. In referring to the remit of the Select Committee, it was suggested that Members could, if deemed appropriate, submit recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities to consider providing support to areas where performance levels were reported low. The benefits of having optimal staff levels and the right level of skills were referred to, particularly, Housing Officers, which would improve customer relationships, tenant behaviours, and reduce the number of anti-social behaviour complaints moving forward.

The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that adequate resources were available within the Directorate, however, may not necessarily be in the right service or role, which had created challenges. Regular restructures and reviews had recognised these anomalies and action had been taken where appropriate to transfer roles to utilise resources more effectively. A requirement of the new Social Housing Regulation Act was for Managers in the Housing Services to possess an appropriate level of housing management qualification to fulfil the requirements of the Act.

- (e) In responding to a question from Councillor J Martin, the Interim Strategic Lead for Customers indicated that a number of key factors including the profile of areas recorded from historical intelligence were considered when allocating Housing Officers to areas. Housing Assistants had also been allocated to support the housing functions of the role. In responding to a question from Councillor A Davies, the Director of Housing and Communities confirmed that there were currently thirty-six Housing Officers and eight Housing Assistants appointed compared to twenty-nine Housing Officers and five Housing Assistants previously employed.
- (f) Councillor D Stanley referred to PI 1899, percentage of rent loss and expressed concern in relation to the amount of money being lost on void properties, particularly when the demand for properties was increasing. It was considered that officers should take accountability for the failure and consider initiatives to bring figures to a more realistic level.
- (g) Members referred to the £108,580.04 loss attributed to 95 properties currently awaiting an investment decision and queried the reasoning behind the delays. In responding, the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that the properties awaiting investment decisions were assets that had been identified as not being financially viable or did not fit into the current demographic requirements of the Council's housing portfolio.
- (h) Councillor D Stanley expressed concern with the level of void properties currently identified within the Borough and the cost involved in repairing/upgrading those properties to bring them back to a decent standard. It was essential that regular property condition inspections were carried out on all housing stock, which would reduce the costs involved when a property became void.

It was noted that properties in that category remained void in the event of an urgent reactivation of a property being requested. Delays had been experienced due to the significant number of properties identified, however, Members were assured that decisions would be made in the very near future. It was reported that the disposal of assets created significant financial benefits for the Council which would allow many properties to be added back into the Council's housing portfolio. Multiple factors were considered when making investment decisions, however, processes were currently being reviewed and improved figures would be observed moving forward.

Whilst the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety acknowledged the comments raised, he indicated that not all properties in poor condition were due to tenant neglect. The Local Authority were required to fulfil the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard and invest appropriately in properties prior to allowing them to be placed back on the housing market. The Local Authority was committed to delivering and maintaining homes that were appropriate to customer need, however, whilst robust property condition assessments were carried out to determine the condition and future financial viability of properties, not all assets reached the standard required by the regulations and subsequently included in the disposal programme.

- (i) Councillor D Stanley referred to the lack of information included in the report in relation to capital lost as a result of rent arrears, particularly from tenants that had been evicted. The Director of Housing and Communities reported that performance indicators on rent arrears were performing better than expected with figures reported significantly lower in comparison to other West Midlands Local Authorities and Housing Association stock. Reviews were carried out frequently to monitor the way in which rent was collected and improvement were made where necessary.
- (j) In responding to a question from Councillor J Cowell in relation to the increased void turnaround times for bungalows, the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that whilst bungalows were a popular property type, it was expected that void turnaround times for that type of property to be swift. He undertook to raise the issue with the supply chain that currently delivered the void programme and provide a written response to all Members of the Committee.



- (k) Councillor J Cowell referred to the Government's initiative in standardising modern methods of construction in order to remove barriers to innovation and encourage the wider use of modern building material, equipment and techniques and queried whether the requirements included new build properties. Challenges were experienced when new build properties were transferred to the Local Authority's housing stock when replacement materials were required as many materials initially used were supplier or housing development specific. The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety confirmed that opportunities were being explored to standardise materials and equipment used across the housing stock, as it was important that sustainable materials were used moving forward.
- (l) In response to a question from Councillor J Cowell, the Interim Strategic Lead for Customers confirmed that three fixed Community Hubs would be provided and located in the main office of the Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Association (DFTRA), in the neighbourhood office in Chapel Street at the Highfields Estate. In communities where tenants were unable to attend any of the fixed Community Hubs, it was intended that surgeries would be held in public buildings at various locations within the Borough.
- (m) Councillor J Cowell expressed concerns in relation to the lack of tenants appointed to the Tenant Housing Board. The inclusion and empowerment of tenants to ensure appropriate feedback from tenant groups were provided to the Local Authority was essential. The Interim Strategic Lead for Customers acknowledged the concerns raised and informed Members of the interview process recently carried out and confirmed that two tenant roles had now been appointed to the Tenant Housing Board. It was important that the Membership of tenant groups consisted of both tenants and residents to understand the concerns across all communities within the Borough. Whilst acknowledging the comments raised, Councillor J Cowell referred to the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standards and raised concern that those Standards were currently not being complied with. In acknowledging the concern raised, the Director of Housing and Communities indicated that the new Customer Involvement Strategy was currently being developed and would include the involvement of various customer groups to ensure the objectives of the Strategy were met.

## Resolved

- (1) That the Quarter 1 Corporate Quarterly Performance report covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023, be noted.
- (2) That the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety be requested to provide a written response to all Member of the Committee on the details associated with the timescales around void bungalow turnaround times.
- (2) That “Know Your Community Housing Officer” information, including pictures and contact details for each of the six areas be submitted to all Members of the Council.

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### 15. **Impact of the 2023/24 Rent Increase for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Tenants**

A report of the Director Housing and Communities was submitted to provide Members with an overview on the 2023/2024 rent increase for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) homes and the impact of the increase on tenants and Dudley MBC budgets.

The Director of Housing and Communities referred to the requirements of the Government’s Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing 2022, and following appropriate consultation, the Government capped rent increases for 2023/24 at a maximum of 7% and on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2023, Dudley Council approved a rent increase of 7% for 2023/2, equating to an additional £6m of income to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Substantial consideration of the level of rent increase was carried out through the budget setting process, recognising the financial impact on all tenants and what would be considered affordable, particularly in the current cost of living crisis.

Whilst it was recognised that a high percentage of customers received full or partial support to cover their rent, low-income households not entitled to claim financial support were mostly affected by the rent increase and provision had been put in place to signpost customers to available organisations for additional advice and assistance.

As at the end of Quarter 1, rent arrears amounted to £2.2m, down on the previous year by 0.90%, however, the number of accounts in arrears was up on the same time last year by 2.72%, indicating that there were more accounts in arrears but not necessarily larger debts. The average debt owed to Dudley in comparison to Local Authorities in the Region was recorded as one of the lowest. Accurate figures were provided in paragraph 9 of the report submitted. Support was provided to tenants to assist in maintaining tenancies and reduce rent arrears.

Although there had been an increase in the number of customers with rent arrears, the level of arrears currently remained low and manageable and had not resulted in any increase in customers at risk of losing their home due to non-payment of rent.

Whilst the impact of the rent increase on tenants was considered, Members were advised that the benefits of increased rental income to the HRA to fund essential works to improve property conditions and efficiency outweighed the impact of the 2023/24 rent increase to customers. However, the impact would be closely monitored to allow for early identification of and respond to any increasing concerns around affordability and tenancy sustainment.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions, make comments and responses were provided, where necessary, as follows:-

- (a) In responding to a question from Councillor P Lee, the Director of Housing and Communities indicated that the average rent for the different property types across the Brough varied. Whilst accurate figures could not be provided at the meeting, a written response would be provided to Members of the Committee, however, Members were assured that the cost of rent was in line with local housing allowance rates.

- (b) Councillor P Lee expressed concern with the level of rent arrears accumulated and queried at what stage did the Local Authority intervene and offer support to tenants struggling to pay rent. The Interim Strategic Lead for Customers indicated that Officers were proactive in addressing issues relating to rent arrears. At the start of a tenancy, appropriate guidance and advice was provided to tenants to ascertain whether tenants would potentially struggle to pay their rent due to various issues, particularly due to the cost-of-living crisis. A measure currently adopted by officers at all levels was “think rent”, which encouraged officers to check tenant rent accounts prior to attending programmed home visits and provide advice on potential financial assistance to tenants struggling to pay their rent.
- (c) Councillor P Lee queried whether there was a system that could be adopted where the Local Authority was notified immediately when tenant rent accounts fell into arrears. The Interim Strategic Lead for Customers acknowledged the comment made and indicated that various initiatives were being explored to maximise opportunities to improve the level of arrears moving forward, whilst still considering the demographic profile of the Council’s customers. Members were advised that following a benchmarking exercise, the average rent owned by Dudley’s tenants was one of the lowest in the region. The Director of Housing and Communities indicated that whilst Members perceived the level of rent arrears to be excessive, the average rent arrears for tenants, which was calculated by the level of arrears divided by the number of rent accounts that were currently in arrears, equated to £108.16. Members were advised that the Council’s Income Team carried out an affordability check on all tenants with a rent account in deficit to ascertain whether a percentage of rent could be paid and set up affordable payment plans, rather than a customer deciding to cancel a direct debit simply because they were unable to pay the rent.
- (d) Councillor J Cowell expressed concern by the lack of support previously provided to tenants from the Income Team and the confusion between work associated with the team and that of the Council Tax Team. Customers that experienced difficulty in paying rent, usually had similar difficulties in paying Council Tax and it was considered that a more structured collaborative approach be adopted between the two teams when contacting customers to provide advice and support in relation to negotiating appropriate payment plans.

- (e) In referring to the 40% of tenants in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) payments, Councillor J Cowell indicated that not all tenants received full contributions towards their rent for various reasons.
- (f) Councillor S Ridney referred to the rent loss associated with supported housing and queried whether the Local Authority was eligible to claim any funding back due to the significant delays experienced from organisations employed to improve sheltered housing across the Borough. The Director of Housing and Communities confirmed that the Local Authority was unable to claim funding back on assets identified for decanting, however, should a breach be identified during an agreed refurbishment programme which caused significant delays and costs incurred as a result, appropriate legal advice and action would be taken.
- (g) In responding to questions from Councillors S Ridney and J Martin, the Director of Housing and Communities indicated that the arrears accumulated were from a range of tenants, whether in receipt of UC, housing benefit and those not eligible for any housing support. UC was generally paid directly to customers who were responsible for paying the housing costs, however, payments were not always received. The Local Authority was able to arrange for housing costs to be paid directly, however, a number of obligations would need to be fulfilled. More complicated cases of rent arrears were dealt with by the Complex Case Team to ensure tenants received the necessary support. Regular monitoring was essential to ensure customers felt supported by the Local Authority, especially during periods where tenant circumstances may have changed, and temporary financial payment plans were required.
- (h) In responding to a question from Councillor J Martin, the Director of Housing and Communities indicated that accurate figures of customers that were currently charged the underoccupancy rate would be circulated to all Members of the Committee.
- (i) In responding a question from Councillor D Stanley, the Director of Housing and Communities indicated that a written response would be provided to all Members of the Committee on the figure that had been “written off” as unrecoverable debt during the 202/2023 financial year.

## Resolved

- (1) That the content of the report submitted to the meeting and comments made by Members, be noted.
  - (2) That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to provide Members of the Committee with information on the average cost of various property types across the Borough.
  - (3) That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to circulate to all Members of the Committee accurate figures of customers that were currently charged the underoccupancy rate.
  - (3) That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to circulate to all Members of the Committee the accurate figure that was “written off” as unrecoverable debt during the 202/2023 financial year.
- 

### 16. **Update on Property Condition and Compliance**

A report of the Director Housing and Communities was submitted on Property Condition and Regulatory Compliance in Council owned homes.

In presenting the report, the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety referred to issues with data quality and performance reporting that were identified relating to property checks and efficiency data in 2022, which had resulted in the Service’s self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH) on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 to determine any breaches of RoSH Regulatory Standards. Following the results on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 a recovery programme had been developed to fulfil the Local Authority’s obligations to bring all elements of the housing stock back into compliance with progress reported to the RoSH through monthly meetings.

Following communication from the Secretary of State in November, 2022 following the introduction of Awaab’s Law, the Local Authority outlined its intention to undertake a Stock Condition Survey (SCS) of 100% of homes in the Borough to verify information on damp and mould and highlight any potential future issues in assets with an average age of 60 years. The Local Authority had commissioned Savills, an industry expert, to undertake the SCS, through the Places for People Procurement Hub “Strategic Assets Management Services Framework”, which would provide significant information on every home in the Borough to enable the Council to review its five, ten and fifteen year investment priorities.

The SCS programme had been broken into three separate programmes, each consisting of circa 7,000 properties, which allowed Savills to manage the access process and allow resources to respond to any immediate Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSTS) or Decent Homes works that may be required. The no access properties would be addressed as the three phases progressed. The Local Authority had recently progressed to phase two of the programme and tenants had responded well in terms of access. Members were advised that following the completion of the first phase of the programme, it had been identified that the current position on Decent Homes was approximately 90.7% compliant and it was anticipated that Decent Homes compliance would be in the region of 80% following the completion of the SCS exercise. The potential volume of works and associated costs involved to recover the decent homes position would be observed in Quarter 4 of the performance report and updates following the Electrical Installation Condition Report would be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

The recovery programme for the Building Safety and Compliance (BS&C) project had been split into two distinct streams and had moved at pace since it commenced in March 2023, which had included the establishment of a dedicated recovery team to deliver and oversee all strategic, operational and governance arrangements associated with the recovery of the Decent Homes and BS&C position across Asset Management and Housing Maintenance. The work to recover from a non-compliant position continued to deliver positive results and robust framework and governance arrangements had been put in place to validate the current recovery phase and to ensure that the Local Authority had effective arrangements and measures in place to prevent the risk of any future breaches of the RoSH Regulatory Standards.

Whilst the programme management and future arrangements were being embedded, the BS&C Team were working with the Housing Management and Communications Team to ensure that open and up-to-date communications with Members, customers, tenant groups and the Housing Board were maintained.

Following the presentation, Members had the opportunity to ask questions, make comments and responses were provided, where necessary, as follows:-

- (a) In referring to an issue raised by a constituent, Councillor D Stanley expressed concern at the lack of communication between gas contractors and tenants, particularly when arranged appointments were cancelled at the last minute. The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety acknowledged the concern raised and requested that further details be provided to him, and action would be taken accordingly. Significant work had taken place between the gas contractor and the Local Authority recently to improve performance, however, the lack of engineers remained an issue. Steps had been taken to redeploy resources within the Council to ensure that emergency cases were attended, as well as considering recruitment opportunities to respond to out of hours and weekend incidents rather than relying on contractors to carry out the required work as well as focusing on the needs of vulnerable customers to ensure the right level of support was provided.
- (b) In responding to a question from Councillor J Cowell, the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that frequent reviews were carried out to ensure customers needs were met and appropriate measures put in place to ensure that required inspections were carried out. Collaborative working with various housing services was essential moving forward to combine visits, identify work and carry out work in a timely manner which would improve efficiencies moving forward. Customers refusing access to properties would no longer be accepted and appropriate legal action would be taken to gain access to those properties. The BS&C project would incorporate all elements of materials and utilities to ensure the condition of all assets in the Borough were known.
- (c) Having clarified that the SCS programme would be funded from the HRA, Councillor J Martin queried the impact the £3.25m had on the planned repair/refurbishment programme. The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that funding ringfenced for the SCS and property condition surveys would have been taken from the HRA, however, carried out over a longer period of time. The outcome of the programme would inform the short, medium and long term investment needs of homes within the Borough. The programme of investment had been paused whilst work to ensure properties were made safe for tenants was carried out which would provide financial efficiencies moving forward.



- (d) Councillor J Martin indicated that the £3.25m budget identified for the SCS project seemed high in comparison to previous funding allocated for property surveys and queried where the additional funding had been found. The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that additional funding had been pulled from the 2024/25 investment and Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) programmes as each SCS generated an EPC for the property, which would, over a period a time, improve efficiencies and budgetary situations. The Director of Housing and Communities confirmed that the SCS programme would provide information to allow the Local Authority to develop an investment programme targeted towards property requirements and needs. Decisions had been made to pullback on non-essential projects in the short-term and prioritise HRA budgets on investing in existing stock in the Borough.
- (e) In commenting positively on the SCS project, benefits and improvements moving forward, Councillor J Martin queried whether any feedback had been provided from the Housing Board and Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Association (DFTRA) on the work associated with the SCS. The Director of Housing and Communities confirmed that the level of feedback received had been disappointing and welcomed feedback from Members. Following the self-referral to the RoSH, it was expected that the number of concerns and queries raised by tenants would increase and as a result, increased staff levels and resources were allocated to contact centres, however, the number of enquiries reported were low. Frequent joint meetings with the Housing Board and DFTRA continued to be arranged to ascertain tenant views. Following an invitation from the Chair, Mr M Smith, a representative of DFTRA, commented positively on the collaborative arrangements between the Local Authority and DFTRA and whilst complaints had been received from tenants, they had been actioned accordingly by the Service.

- (f) In responding to a question from Councillor T Creed, Members were advised that five posts were allocated for Building Inspectors focused on the housing stock condition with four currently in post, however, those four employees had been redeployed to support the work carried out by Savills. Members considered, however, that had an adequate level of staff been employed previously to carry out property condition surveys, the decision to commission Savills would not have been necessary. The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that Savills currently employed around fifty-two staff focused on carrying out the SCS on Dudley's assets and considered that increasing staff levels within the Local Authority would not have been an effective use of Council budgets. It was essential that, in the short term, focus was made to ensuring the housing stock was made sustainable and in good condition to prevent inefficiencies moving forward. It was anticipated that, following the SCS project, a 10% SCS programme would be carried out year-on-year on properties to monitor condition and keep data up to date to ensure repair/maintenance work was carried out on the basis on need.
- (g) Councillor T Creed queried whether the decision to commission Savills was considered good value for money. The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety indicated that tendering exercises were carried out which identified that the cost for Savills services was considered market average. Commissioning Savills was considered a good investment decision as the organisation currently provided services to approximately 60% of social housing and understood appropriate housing requirements. The viability model developed included 21,106 assets to be assessed which would establish clear future investment programmes moving forward.
- (h) In responding to a question from Councillor A Davies, the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety explained the criteria used when identifying the order in which the SCS programme was carried out within the Borough, with properties having no record of condition surveys being carried out as a priority.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the content of the report submitted to the meeting and comments made by Members, be noted.

- (2) That Councillor D Stanley be requested to provide information associated to the complaint received by a constituent relating to the cancellation of a gas safety inspection at short notice to the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety for appropriate consideration and action.
- 

17. **Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8**

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

The meeting ended at 8.20pm

CHAIR

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**Housing and Safer Communities Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**Report of the Director of Housing and Communities**

**Quarterly Housing Performance Report – Quarter 1 (1 April – 30 June 2023)**

**Purpose**

1. To present the Housing quarterly performance figures to Select Committee Members following the presentation of the Quarter 1 Corporate Quarterly Performance report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that the Select Committee Members review the contents of the Quarter 1 performance report and raise any identified performance concerns for discussion.

**Background**

3. The Quarter 1 performance report provides the committee with progress against the delivery of the corporate KPIs and service improvement plan actions for discussion. These figures are reported quarterly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within the wider corporate performance report, and the information contained within Appendix 1 of this report is taken directly from the corporate report to allow Select Committee Members opportunity to discuss performance directly relevant to the work programme of the Select Committee.

**Key Performance Indicators for the Housing and Communities Directorate**

4. Overall, there are four Corporate KPI's that the Directorate reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis, along with progress in achieving the 38 actions identified in the Directorate Service Improvement Plan. A high level dashboard showing these KPIs is included at Appendix 1 of this report.

5. Of the four Housing KPIs, during Q1 one is "On or Exceeding Target", with the other three being "Below Target", and a more detailed summary of those measures below target is included below.

6. PI.1191 Average re-let time for Standard Re-Lets

Average relet times for standard voids have shown a decrease from 60.23 days in Q4 2022-23 to 49.26 days in Q1 2023-24. This is below for the same period last year when the figure for Q1 2022-23 was 61.7 days.

This positive progress has been driven by an ongoing review of the end to end void process and the target of 40 days is achievable. However with the ongoing stock condition survey work taking place across DMBC housing stock, there has been a slight impact on void turnaround times as additional works over and above the usual void works are being informed by the stock condition surveys and completed at void stage.

As always, there will be some properties across the borough that may appear empty but for which there may still be a legal tenancy agreement in place which must be ended by mutual agreement or through the Court process before it can be turned around and relet. These properties are not included in void figures until such time as the tenancy comes to an end.

7. PI.1899 Rent loss - % of potential receipts lost (dwellings)

This performance indicator is intrinsically linked to PI.1191 above in that the quicker void properties are brought back into use, the lower the rent loss associated with the void.

The cumulative rent loss in Q1 of 2.28% equates to £559k, of which £311,555 is attributable to routine voids.

The reduction of average re-let times from 61.7 days (Q1 22/23) to 49.3 days (Q1 23/24) will have a corresponding positive impact upon void loss, and this is evidenced by the reduction of rent loss attributed to routine voids from 70% to 56%.

The remaining rent loss of £247,043 in Q1 is made up as follows:

- £119,219.62 due to improvement programmes in our sheltered stock or decanting people to facilitate them (85 properties).

- £19,243.43 attributable to properties being used for decant or held for future decant (not as part of the sheltered improvement programme) (19 properties).
- £108,580.04 attributable to 95 properties awaiting an investment decision.

A report is currently being prepared for Cabinet making recommendations with regard to the disposal of the homes currently being held pending an investment decision, recognising that the investment needs of these homes are significant. In line with the disposal strategy, factors other than cost are also considered on a home by home basis before making a final decision on disposal including location, property type and size, and desirable features such as space, adaptations and driveways.

#### 8. PI.2027 Satisfaction - way your anti-social behaviour complaint was handled

Having mainly increased through 2022/23, satisfaction with ASB complaint handling dipped in Q1 of 2023/24. The target of 70% was set as a stretch target, and is almost 10% higher than the benchmarking median of 60.7%. When compared to the benchmarking median, the Q1 performance is only marginally lower at 59.8%, however the Q1 performance is lower than throughout 2022/23 which is cause for some concern and further discussion.

Having reviewed the performance of the ASB service throughout 2022/23, Committee Members will have seen initial issues with staffing levels and processes within the service which were addressed, leading to an improvement in customer satisfaction. However a number of staff have subsequently successfully gained promotion and development opportunities in other service areas and this, along with sickness absences, has once again impacted upon capacity with a knock on impact upon customer satisfaction.

A full review of staffing, systems and processes now underway and this, along with the handing over of lower level ASB issues to the housing team, is expected to lead to improvements in case handling and customer satisfaction.

Progress on improving service delivery and customer satisfaction will be included in the report on Community Safety and ASB Services which will be presented at the January Committee meeting.

### **Finance**

9. There are no direct financial implications in receiving this report.

## **Law**

10. There are no direct law implications in receiving this report.

## **Risk Management**

11. For the current performance reporting period, risk management is contained and reviewed in the performance reporting, however as part of the new risk management framework approved at audit and standards committee, risk reporting will not sit within performance and each directorate will need to develop a risk register for monitoring purposes. A full review and refresh of the Housing and Communities Risk Register was undertaken in March 2023, with ongoing quarterly reviews in place.

## **Equality Impact**

12. There are no special considerations to be made with regard to equality and diversity in noting and receiving this report.
13. No proposals have been carried out.
14. No proposals have been made, therefore does not impact on children and young people.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

15. There are no specific direct human resource issues in receiving this report.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

16. There is no direct commercial impact.

## **Council Priorities**

17. The Council Plan and Corporate Performance Management Framework enables a consistent approach for performance management across the organisation, aligning the Council Plan, Borough Vision and Future Council Programme and provides that golden thread between them.
18. Performance management is key in delivering the longer-term vision of the Council. Quarterly Corporate Performance Reports are reported and reviewed by Strategic Executive Board, the Deputy and Shadow Deputy Leader and Scrutiny/Select Committees.

K. Jones

## Director of Housing and Communities

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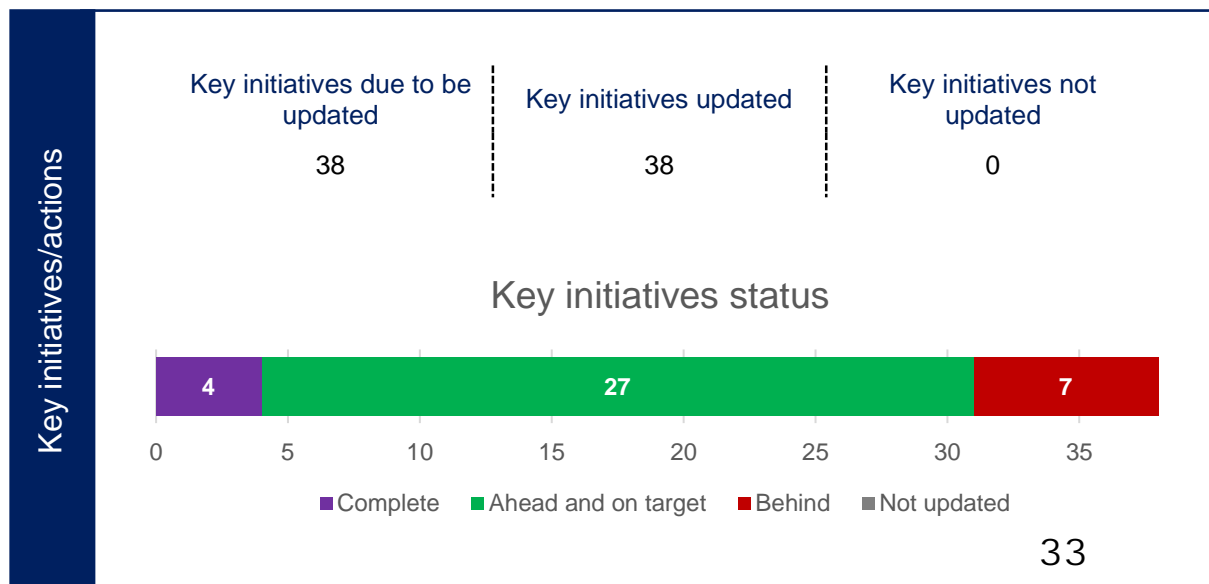
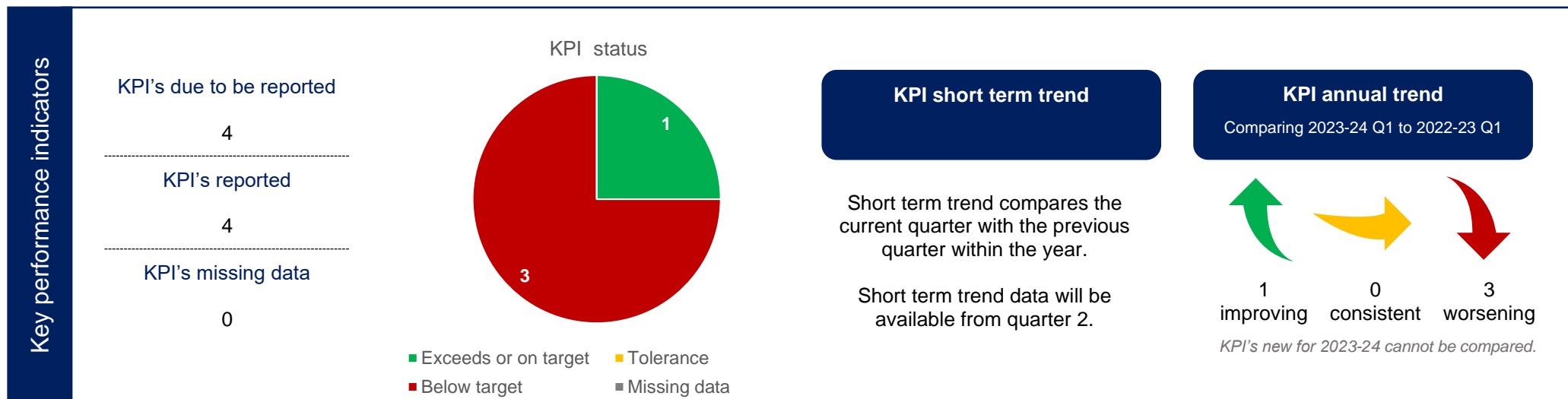
## Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Performance Dashboard



## Appendix 1 - Housing & Communities Q1 dashboard

The following pages provide a dashboard overview for the directorate of Housing & Communities, showing the status of corporate key performance indicators and of key initiatives/actions being delivered. Exception commentary for those measures below target are set out below. This Housing and Communities dashboard was included within the Q1 Corporate Performance Report presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2023.



Council plan links

The table below provides a breakdown of key initiatives and corporate KPI's by directorate for this financial year including any not due to be reported this quarter.

Council plan priority	Key initiatives	Corporate KPI's
Dudley the borough of opportunity	4	0
Dudley the safe and healthy borough	11	1
Dudley the borough of ambition and enterprise	3	0
Dudley borough the destination of choice	6	4
Future council	14	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>5</b>

## Housing & Communities scorecard

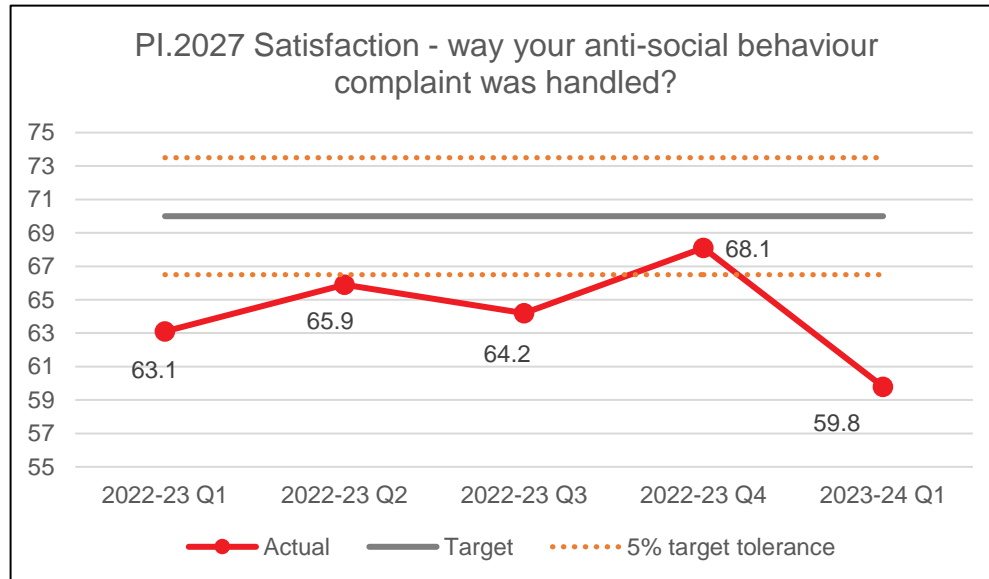
	Performance Indicator	2022-23				2023-24					Benchmarking comparator data
		Qtr. 1 outturn	Qtr. 2 outturn	Qtr. 3 outturn	Qtr. 4 outturn	Qtr. 1 outturn	Target	Score	Short term trend	Annual trend	
Safe & healthy	<b>PI.2027</b> Satisfaction - way your anti-social behaviour complaint was handled?	63.1%	65.9%	64.2%	68.1%	<b>59.8%</b>	70%	▲	Available Q2	↘	60.7% (HouseMark Median 2021/22)
Destination of choice	<b>PI.913</b> RP01 Proportion of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	0.41%	0.46%	0.97%	0.58%	<b>8.04%</b>	20%	★	Available Q2	↘	Local measure
	<b>PI.1191</b> V&L05 Average re-let time for Standard Re-lets.	61.7 days	65.91 days	66 days	60.23 days	<b>49.26 days</b>	40 days	▲	Available Q2	↗	36 days (HouseMark Median 2021/22)
	<b>PI.1899</b> Rent loss- % of potential rent receipts lost (Dwellings) Non-Acct PI	1.92%	1.95%	1.94%	1.97%	<b>2.28%</b>	1.8%	▲	Available Q2	↘	1.42% (HouseMark Median 2021/22)

Short term trend compares current quarter with previous quarter within the same year. Annual trend compares the same quarter between years.

## Housing & Communities exception commentary

### PI.2027 Satisfaction - way your anti-social behaviour complaint was handled?

PI	2022-23				2023-24			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarter 1			
	Outturn	Target	S	T	Outturn	Target	S	T
PI.2027	63.1	65.9	64.2	68.1	59.8%	70%	▲	-



#### Performance: what is the data telling us?

The data tells us that satisfaction with the service is decreasing. Upon reflecting on comments made by service users it indicates a theme around contact and time taken to resolve matters.

This result represents all residents and shows 52 residents were satisfied out of 87 who responded to this question.

#### Impact: what are the issues/risks for service delivery?

The decrease in satisfaction infers a shortcoming, which if left unaddressed could lead to reputational damage and/or increased risks to service users/tenants.

Poor feedback can have an impact on staff morale, leading to staff loss and the inability to deliver services.

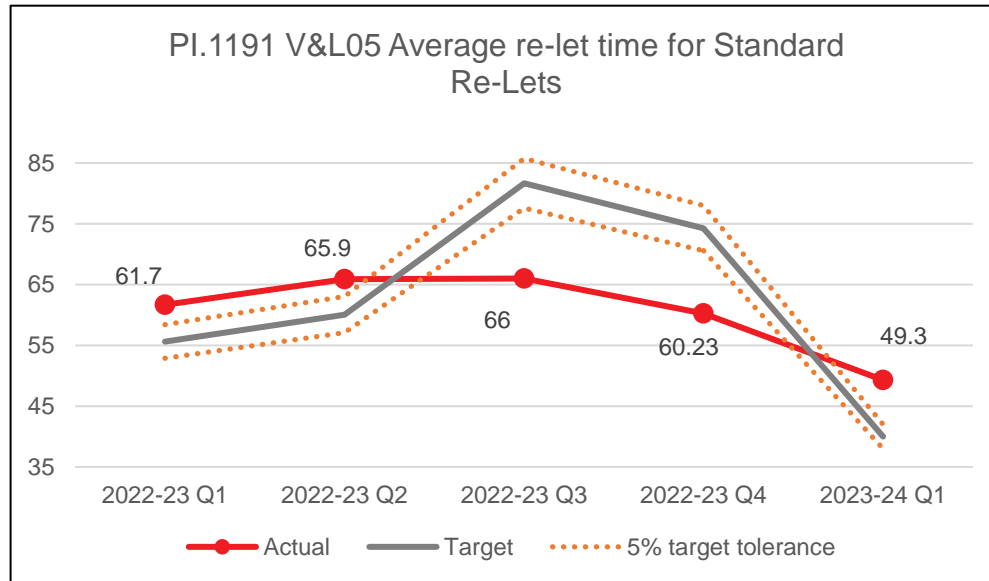
#### Assurance: evidence that actions are in place and having an impact

The structure and operating model of the team is currently being reviewed and changes have been/will be made.

Work is underway to further interrogate the survey data to identify the extent of any correlation between outcome and satisfaction, and to review the associated cases to get a better understanding of whether there are operational issues that must be addressed or whether customer perception relies entirely upon achieving the desired result.

## PI.1191 V&L05 Average re-let time for Standard Re-Lets

PI	2022-23				2023-24			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarter 1			
					Outturn	Target	S	T
PI.1191	61.7	65.9	66.0	60.2	49.26 days	40 days	▲	-



### Performance: what is the data telling us?

Average re-let times for standard re-lets have shown a decrease from 60.23 days in Q4 2022/2023 to 49.26 days in Q1 2023/2024. This is below the same period last year when the figure for Q1 2022/2023 was 61.7 days.

The re-let time for standard voids continues to vary between property types.

- Performance for houses shows no significant change with a minimal increase to 31 days.
- For bungalows there has been an increase from 36.65 to 51.85 days.
- For maisonettes there has been an increase from 49.22 to 59.13 days.
- For all flats excluding sheltered there has been a decrease from 53.85 to 41.89 days.
- Bedsits excluding sheltered have shown a decrease from 43.24 to 28.33 days.

### Impact: what are the issues/risks for service delivery?

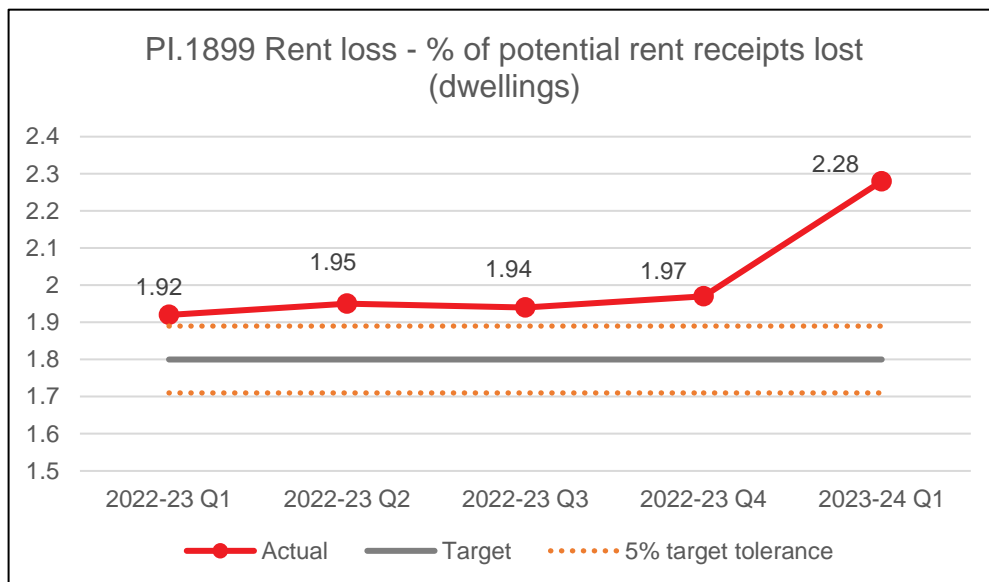
Loss of revenue. Impact on reputation.

### Assurance: evidence that actions are in place and having an impact

All teams involved in the void process continue to review and refine procedures working together to minimise rent loss and void turnaround times.

## PI.1899 Rent loss - % of potential receipts lost (dwellings)

PI	2022-23				2023-24			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarter 1			
	Outturn	Target	S	T	Outturn	Target	S	T
PI.1899	1.92	1.95	1.94	1.97	2.28%	1.8%	▲	-



### Performance: what is the data telling us?

The total cumulative rent loss in Q1 equates to £558,598.31.

The cumulative rent loss due to voids shows an increase from 1.97% in Q4 2022/23. This is an increase from 1.92 for the same period last year.

£119,219.62 is directly attributable to void loss where we are carrying out improvement programmes in our sheltered stock or decanting people to facilitate them. (85 properties)

£19,243.43 is attributable to properties being used for decant or held for future decant (not as part of the sheltered improvement programme) (19 properties)

£108,580.04 is attributable to 95 properties awaiting an investment decision.

Therefore a total of £247,043.09 of rent loss in Q1 (44% of rent loss) is attributable to 199 properties that were at these statuses at the end of the quarter.

### Impact: what are the issues/risks for service delivery?

As a result of delivering our Asset Management Strategy we will continue to have a certain level of rent loss associated with strategic voids, which will be managed through efficient decision making and project management.

We also recognise that routine voids therefore account for over 56% of rent loss, this is a decrease from 70% in Q4 2022/23. There is a significant opportunity to increase our income by improving processes and performance.

### Assurance: evidence that actions are in place and having an impact

The end-to-end voids review continues and has started to have a positive impact on void turnaround times which will, in turn, impact positively on void rent loss in the future. With the current focus within the service on stock condition we may see an impact on void loss in the short term as additional checks are undertaken at void stage. A further review of voids requiring an investment decision is currently underway and recommendations for each of these properties will be made during Q2.

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**Meeting of the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**Report of the Director of Housing and Communities**

**Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Tenant Perception Survey**

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview to Committee Members of the introduction and implementation of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM). Examining specifically the Baseline Tenant Perception Survey 2023 element of the research.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that Committee Members note the content of the report.

**Background**

3. The Regulator of Social Housing has created a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services. Called ‘Tenant Satisfaction Measures’, they are intended to:
  - make landlords’ performance more visible to tenants,
  - help tenants hold their landlords to account,
  - point the regulator to which landlords might need to improve things.
4. Following a consultation exercise during early 2022 it has been concluded that there will be twenty-two TSM’s, covering five themes of keeping properties in good repair, maintaining building safety, respectful and helpful engagement, effective handling of complaints and responsible neighbourhood management. Ten of these will be measured by landlords

directly (for example RP02: Repairs completed with target timescale), and twelve will be measured by landlords through carrying out tenant perception surveys – see table below.

5.

<b>Measured by Landlords</b>	<b>Tenant Perception (TP) - measured by surveys</b>
RP - Keeping properties in good repair	
RP01: Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	TP02: Satisfaction with repairs
RP02: Repairs completed within target timescale	TP03: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair
	TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained and safe to live in
BS - Maintaining building safety	
BS01: Gas safety checks	TP05: Satisfaction that the home is safe
BS02: Fire safety checks	
BS03: Asbestos safety checks	
BS04: Water safety checks	
BS05: Lift safety checks R	
RP - Respectful and helpful engagement	
	TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
	TP07: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them
	TP08: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect
CH - Effective handling of complaints	
CH01: Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	TP09: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of complaints
CH02: Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	
NM - Responsible neighbourhood management	

NM01: Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	TP10: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean, safe and well maintained
	TP11: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
	TP12: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of anti-social behaviour

6. The regulator has provided detailed definitions of each of the TSMs measured by the landlord and given clear guidance around how the perception surveys are to be carried out to capture accurate, robust and representative satisfaction scores. The Regulator has published 2 comprehensive technical documents to ensure a consistent approach is taken by social landlords in undertaking the perception survey and how the TSMs are calculated.
7. Social Landlords will need to start to record these measures during 2023/24 to submit a report to the Regulator at end of the financial year. Once the first year's performance has been reported, performance will be benchmarked across landlords and published so that tenants can see how their landlord is performing compared to other landlords.
8. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC) chose to carry out an initial 'Baseline Survey' to understand how tenants perceived the council and to understand how the survey was to be conducted and results presented. This would provide excellent data on areas of concern that could be concentrated on prior to the actual survey to be conducted later in the year.

### **Baseline Tenant Perception Survey**

9. DMBC following a procurement exercise commissioned Acuity Research & Practice (Acuity) to carry out both the baseline and actual Tenant Perception Surveys on behalf of the Authority. The baseline to be carried in Quarter 2 of 2023/24 and the actual in quarter 4.
10. Acuity devised a representative sample of tenants based on the Regulators guidance for the size of the Council housing stock. This required 1,016 tenant responses. Stratified sampling using quotas based on tenure, area, age and ethnicity.
11. The Baseline Perception Survey was conducted solely through telephone contact between 3<sup>rd</sup> July and 12<sup>th</sup> August 2023. Telephone interviews are popular with tenants and allow the interviewer to clarify responses.
12. 16,077 telephone numbers were provided to Acuity. The team at Acuity rang these numbers until the required rate of responses was received.



1,299 calls reached an answer machine, 1,277 received no answer and 88 arranged call backs. 206 tenants chose to opt out of the survey.

## **Analysis of Baseline Tenant Perception Survey**

13. A full report provided by Acuity is provided at Appendix A
14. Where possible the results of the Baseline Tenant Perception Survey were compared to a previous survey carried out with tenants in 2018.
15. **Overall Satisfaction** – This is a key over-arching question of the survey. Two-thirds of the tenants surveyed are satisfied with the service provided by DMBC. 65% stated they were satisfied; however, this was significantly down from previous satisfaction levels recorded in 2018 of 85%. Although, there is evidence that satisfaction levels are falling across the country, the fall in Dudley is far higher. A reason for the lower percentage of satisfaction is determined by the percentage of tenants who stated they were ‘neither’ satisfied or dissatisfied. This figure was only five per cent in 2018.
16. **Keeping Properties in Good Repair** - Two-thirds of tenants felt their homes are well maintained, although 20% are dissatisfied, whilst more feel they are safe (74%). This is a common finding with the safety of the home often rated higher than its maintenance. Three-quarters of tenants (76%) are satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service in the last 12 months, whilst fewer (72%) are satisfied with the time taken to complete their last repair, a fifth being dissatisfied.
17. **Responsible Neighbourhood Management** - Over a third of tenants (36%) say they live in a building with communal areas that Dudley MBC is responsible for maintaining. Of these tenants, 53% are satisfied that Dudley MBC keeps their communal areas clean and well maintained, although 36% are dissatisfied. The neighbourhood as a place to live is popular with 73% of tenants being satisfied, just 13% being dissatisfied, although satisfaction is down from 81% in 2018. Fewer tenants (59%) are satisfied that Dudley MBC makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhood. Around a fifth of tenants are dissatisfied with the contribution made (22%). Additionally, in 2023, satisfaction with how anti-social behaviour is handled is 46% with 37% dissatisfied.
18. **Respectful and Helpful Engagement** - Seven out of ten tenants find dealing with the Council easy, just 15% finding it difficult. However, just 62% of tenants are satisfied with how they are kept informed about things that matter to them, this having fallen from 68% in 2018. Fewer tenants (55%) are satisfied that Dudley MBC listens to their views and acts upon them, down from 60%, and 30% are dissatisfied with this aspect of service. Two-thirds of tenants (67%) agree that they are treated fairly and with respect, just 11% are dissatisfied. There are 29% of tenants who said they had made a complaint to Dudley MBC in the last 12 months, although it is not clear how many are genuine complaints following a failure of service or service requests yet to be fully actioned. Despite this caveat just 25% are

satisfied with the way complaints are handled, with more than twice as many dissatisfied (60%).

19. **Tenant Comments** - Tenants were asked if there was anything else they would like to say about their home, or the services provided by Dudley MBC. By far the biggest area for comments is the repairs service, attracting 29% of the comments made. In particular, the timescales for completing repairs and dealing with outstanding works. However, some have issues with the condition of their property, including damp and mould, whilst others would like some improvements to their homes, like updated kitchens and bathrooms. The remaining comments cover a range of issues including grounds maintenance, customers service and neighbourhood problems. Encouragingly, 16% of the comments are positive about the current service, suggesting nothing needs to be improved.
20. **Tenant Feedback** – There were 746 comments provided by tenants as part of the survey. Each comment was individually analysed and if need be, responded to. 372 comments required no further investigation, 256 resulted in some form of further investigation and response back to the tenant. For the remaining 118 the tenant did not provide consent to follow up or tenant did not request it. The specific service areas are looking into the comments to see what learning can be obtained and how services can be adapted to better meet tenants needs. In the area of Tenant Complaint Handling the procedure for responding to complaints has been significantly changed – moving from target of providing complaint response from 20 to 10 days, reconfiguring the internal complaint handling process so that all Heads of Services within the Housing and Communities Directorate receive a weekly update on all outstanding complaints and creating a learning focus group so we ensure we not only respond to complaints but learn from them.
21. **Benchmarking Results** – As this is the first year of conducting Tenant Perception Surveys it is difficult to accurately benchmark until all the surveys are completed and we can make comparisons with similar Councils. Acuity have provided initial benchmarking data for social landlords who have already carried out Perception Surveys and Dudley's result mainly fall below the median for this group, but this needs to be caveated with the fact that these were not similar Councils and included Registered Providers who tend to perform better than Councils at this type of survey. However, the comparisons clearly provided many areas of improvements for DMBC to work on.

## **Conclusion**

22. The baseline Tenant Perception Survey has provided a valuable starting point for understanding our tenants and key areas of improvements for our Housing and related services. The results of the survey and specifically comments that tenants have provided will be further analysed and responded to. The survey provides clear direction for required improvements in all areas of our business with a clear focus on our repairs service, tackling anti-social behaviour and complaint handling.

## **Finance**

23. There are no additional finance considerations or implications over and above those contained within the body of this report.

## **Law**

24. There is a regulatory responsibility to provide Tenant Satisfaction details for 2023/24 to the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing. This will be done in quarter one of 2024/25

## **Risk Management**

25. The content of this report has no direct risk management impact.

## **Equality Impact**

26. The content of this report has no direct equality impact.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

27. There are no human resources or organisational development implications arising directly from this report.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

28. There are no commercial or procurement implications arising directly from this report.

## **Environment/Climate Change**

29. There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

## **Council Priorities and Projects**

30. This report relates to our statutory functions as a social housing landlord and will contribute to the health, wellbeing, and safety of our tenants.

The report supports our aims for Housing summarised in the Council Plan:

- the provision of excellent services for tenants
- offering high quality housing
- supporting vulnerable people

K. Jones

## **Director of Housing and Communities**

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Telephone: 01384 817279  
Email: ayaz.maqsood@dudley .gov.uk

## **Appendices**

- Dudley MBC TSM Survey 2023 Report

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# Dudley MBC TSM Survey

2023 Report

September 2023

Prepared by: Acuity Research & Practice

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# Contents

- Introduction
- Key Metrics Summary
- Overall Satisfaction
- Keeping Properties in Good Repair
- Responsible Neighbourhood Management
- Respectful & Helpful Engagement
- Further Comments
- Understanding Satisfaction
- Subgroup Breakdown
- Conclusion
- Recommendations



# Introduction

Acuity has been commissioned to undertake annual, independent satisfaction surveys of the tenants of Dudley MBC over the next two years, to collect data on their opinions of, and attitudes towards, their landlord and the services provided. The survey only focuses on the tenants of Dudley as the Council does not have any LCHO properties.

The survey was designed using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures from the Regulator of Social Housing, which became mandatory in April 2023 and will be reported to the Regulator for the first time in 2024.

Each year for the next two years, tenants are telephoned and invited to take part in a telephone interview. The survey is designed to collect the views of approximately 1,014 tenants per year, proportionately sampled by tenure, area and age.

A report is produced for each year and this report presents an analysis of the results based on the 1,016 completed interviews. As this is a one-off survey for 2023/24, additional analysis is included on the results and what is driving satisfaction at Dudley MBC.

The telephone survey is confidential, and the results are sent back to Dudley MBC anonymised unless residents give their permission to be identified – 83% of tenants did give permission to share their name and 97% of these tenants are happy for Dudley MBC to contact them to discuss any issues they raised.

The aim of this survey is to provide data on tenants' satisfaction, which will allow Dudley MBC to:

- Provide information on tenants' perceptions of current services
- Compare the results with previous surveys, where possible
- Compare the results with other landlords (where appropriate)
- Report to the regulator from April 2024 onwards.

For the overall results, Acuity, Housemark and the Regulator of Social Housing recommend that landlords with between 10,000 and 25,000 properties achieve a sampling error of at least  $\pm 3\%$  at the 95% confidence level. For Dudley MBC, 1,016 responses were received, and this response is high enough to conclude that the findings are accurate to within  $\pm 3.0\%$  so meeting the requirement from the Regulator and giving good accuracy of the results.





**65%**

**Overall Satisfaction**

The survey has revealed that around two-thirds of tenants are satisfied with the overall services provided by Dudley MBC.

However, higher satisfaction is received for a number of measures including the repairs service in the last 12 months (76%), the Council providing a safe home (74%) and the neighbourhood as a place to live (73%).

The lowest ratings are for the upkeep of the communal areas (53%) and the way the Council deals with anti-social behaviour (46%), whilst just 25% are satisfied with the way complaints are handled.

# Key Metrics Summary 2023



**66%** Well maintained home



**46%** Anti-social behaviour



**74%** Safe home



**71%** Easy to deal with



**76%** Repairs - Last 12 months



**55%** Listens & Acts



**72%** Time taken - Last repair



**62%** Keeps you informed



**53%** Communal areas clean & well maintained



**67%** Treats fairly & with respect



**59%** Positive contribution to neighbourhood



**25%** Complaints handling



**73%** Neighbourhood as a place to live





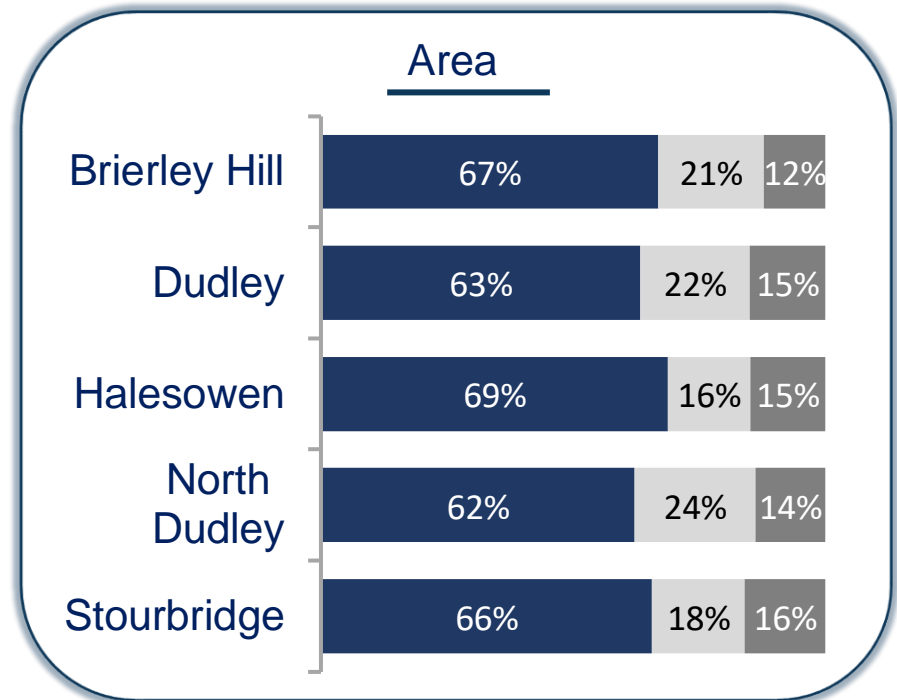
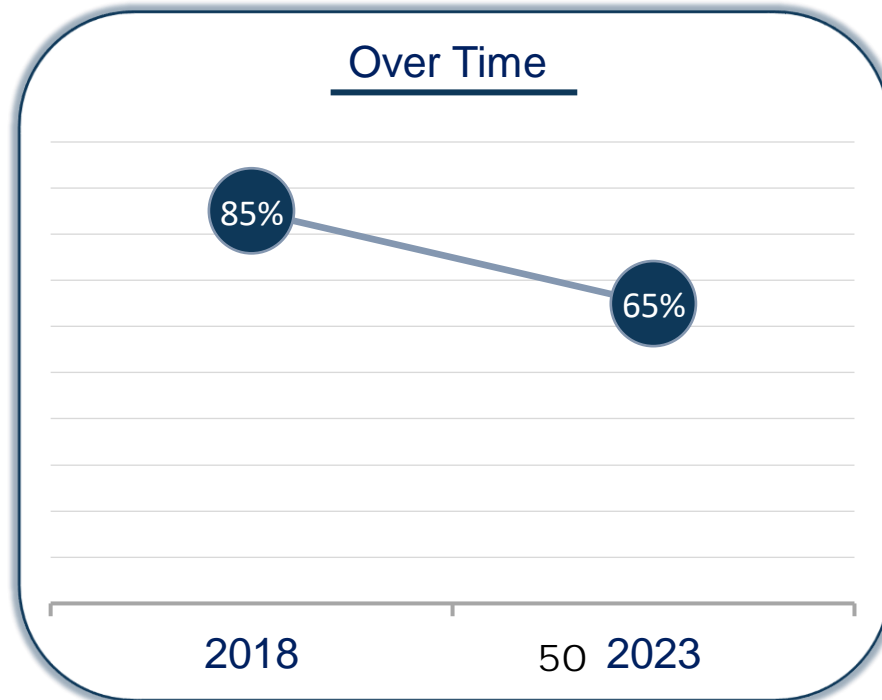
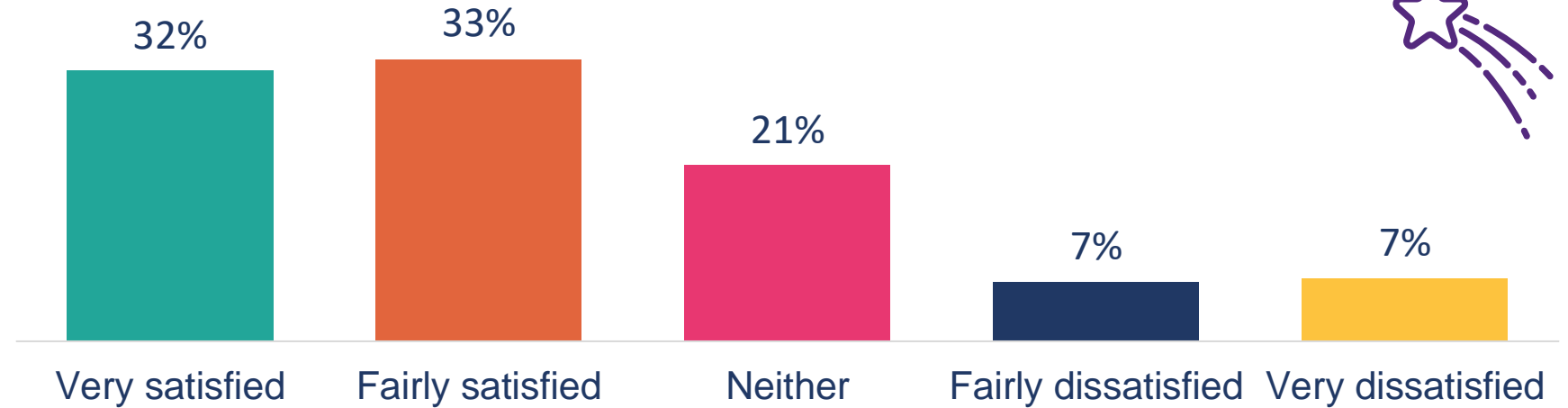
# Overall Satisfaction

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# Overall Satisfaction



Tenants were asked, "Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Dudley MBC?" This is the key metric in any tenant perception survey.

Two-thirds of tenants (65%) are satisfied, with slightly fewer very satisfied (32%) as fairly satisfied (33%). Just 14% of tenants are dissatisfied with the overall services provided and a further 21% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This is a high number who are sitting on the fence and if the Council were to target this group to find out more about them, it may be possible to move some in the satisfied category.

The last survey of this type that the Council carried out was in 2018. Many of the questions will be different but where they match it will be possible to plot the changes between this two surveys.

What this shows is that satisfaction was 85% in 2018 but is now 65%. There is evidence that satisfaction is falling generally across the sector, but this does mark quite a difference and will be a source of concern.

There is little between the areas but those in Halesowen are the most satisfied and North Dudley the least.

# National Context

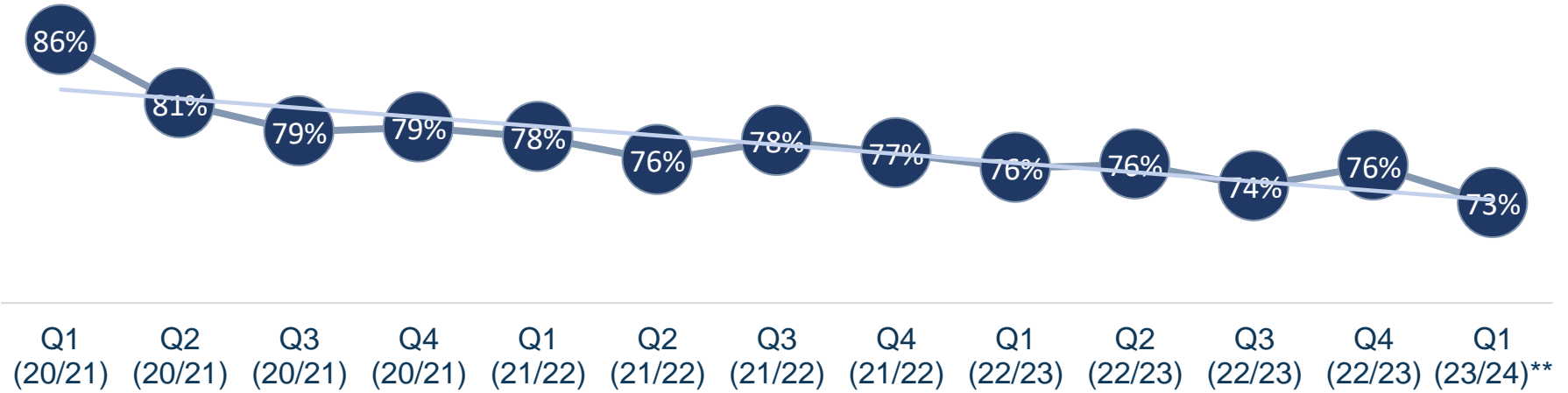
When considering the results, it is important that the national context and external factors should also be taken into account. For example:

- Cost of Living Crisis
- Government & Political Changes
- Uncertainty about the Future
- Brexit and the economy

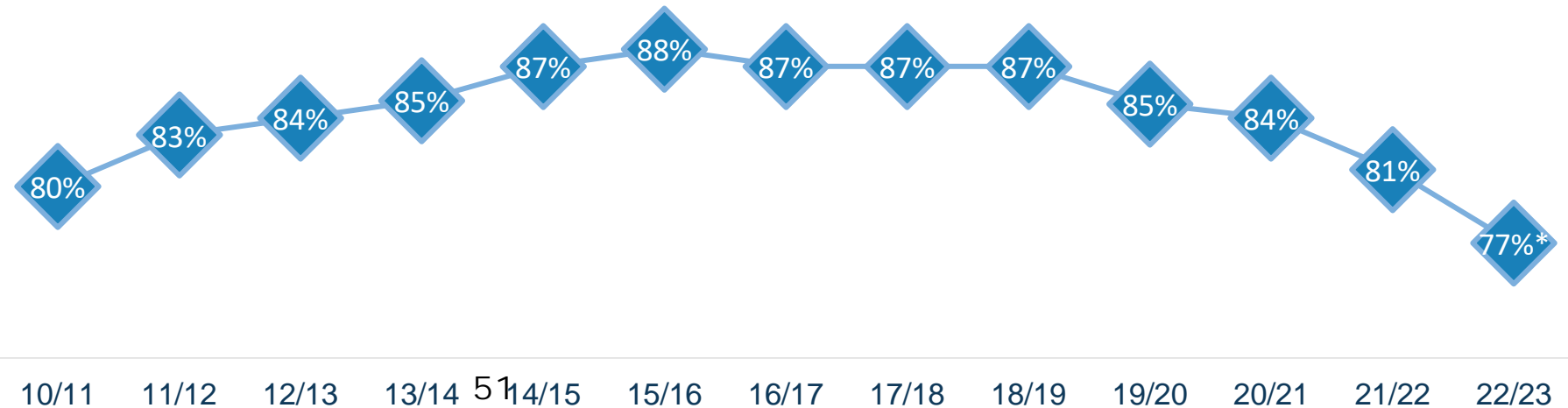
Satisfaction is based on perception rather than specific values so can be affected by these factors and how positive people feel about their lives. Factors such as the pandemic also altered the way social landlords operate, perhaps making them less accessible and responsive.

The top graph demonstrates how overall satisfaction has changed over time for Acuity's clients (tracker only). The trendline is downward over the last few years. The lower chart shows the results from Housemark members with a peak in 2015/16 but a steady fall ever since, even before the effects of the pandemic started to influence service.

Overall Services (Acuity Clients)



Satisfaction with services provided (NHF/Housemark median - general needs)



\*As reported by Housemark in January 2023. \*\*LCRA only onwards





# Keeping Properties in Good Repair

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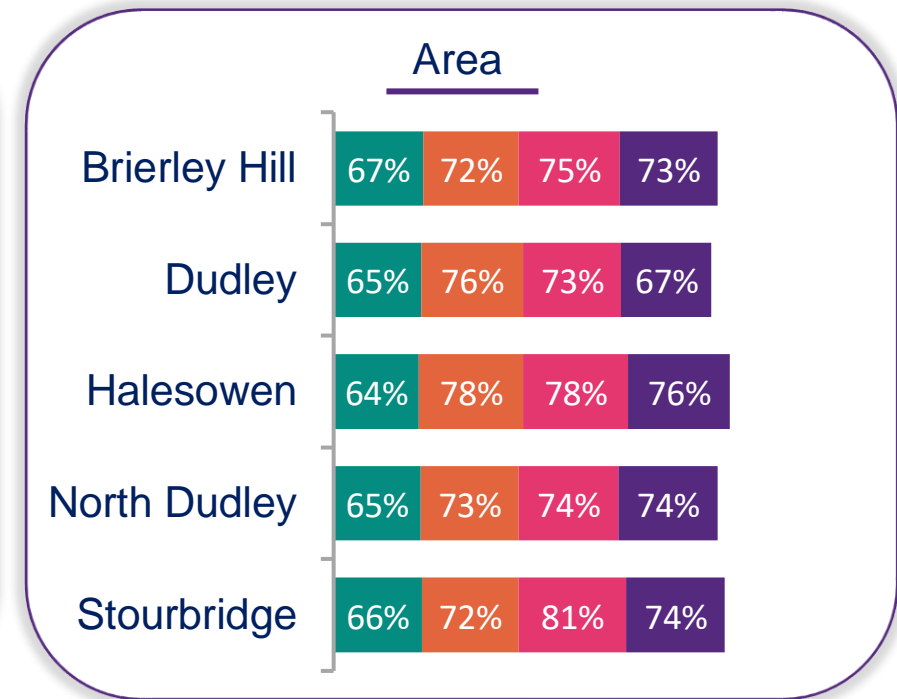
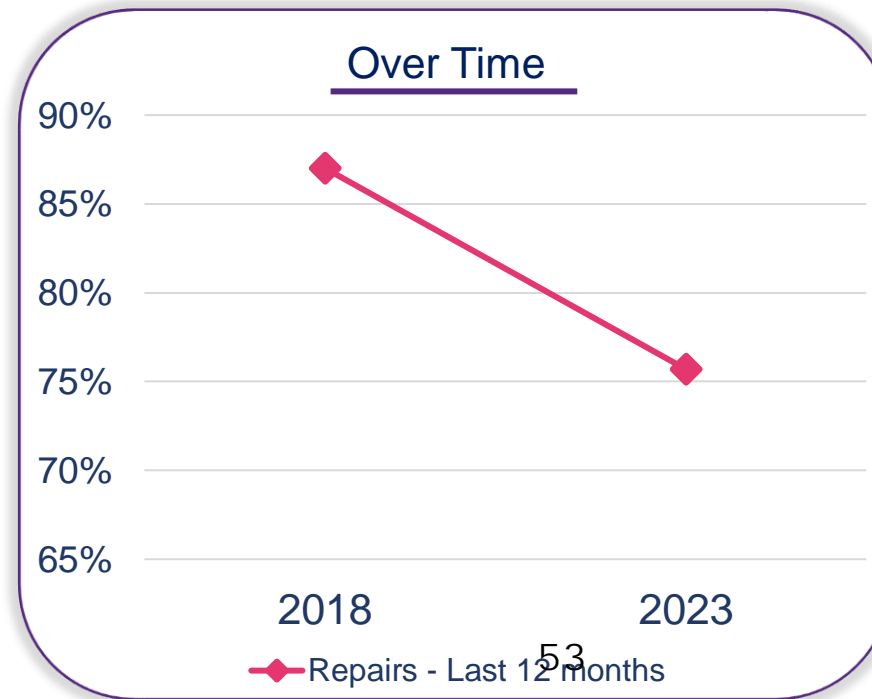
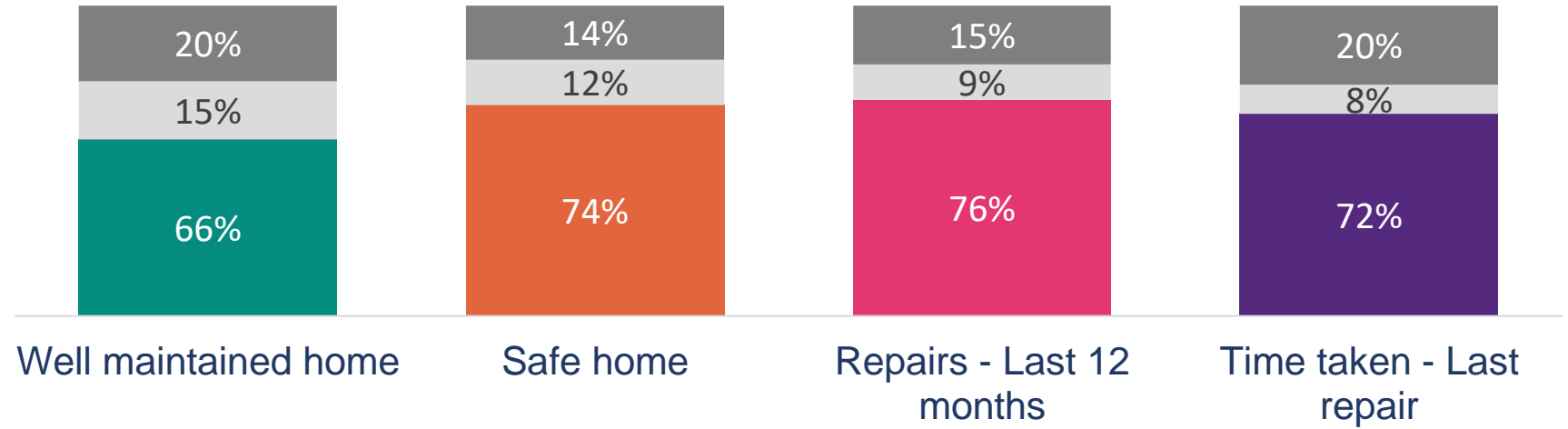
# Keeping Properties in Good Repair

Two-thirds of tenants feel their homes are well maintained, although 20% are dissatisfied, whilst more feel they are safe (74%). This is a common finding with the safety of the home often rated higher than its maintenance.

Three-quarters of tenants (76%) are satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service in the last 12 months, whilst fewer (72%) are satisfied with the time taken to complete their last repair, a fifth being dissatisfied.

The only consistent question between the two surveys is about the recent repairs service and this has changed from 87% satisfied in 2018 to 76% currently.

Again, there is little between the areas suggesting service delivery is quite consistent. Halesowen tenants are marginally the most satisfied and Dudley the least.







# Responsible Neighbourhood Management





# Responsible Neighbourhood Management

Over a third of tenants (36%) say they live in a building with communal areas that Dudley MBC is responsible for maintaining. Of these tenants, 53% are satisfied that Dudley MBC keeps their communal areas clean and well maintained, although 36% are dissatisfied.

The neighbourhood as a place to live is popular with 73% of tenants being satisfied, just 13% being dissatisfied, although satisfaction is down from 81% in 2018. Fewer tenants (59%) are satisfied that Dudley MBC makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhood. Around a fifth of tenants are dissatisfied with the contribution made (22%).

Additionally, in 2023, satisfaction with how anti-social behaviour is handled is 46% with 37% dissatisfied.

Once again, Halesowen tenants are the most satisfied with little between the other areas.

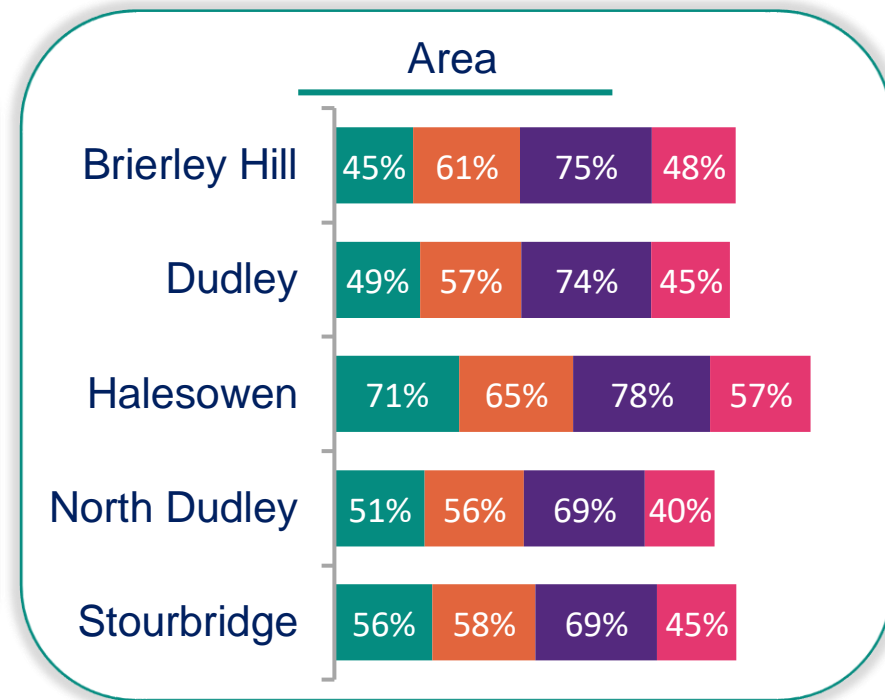
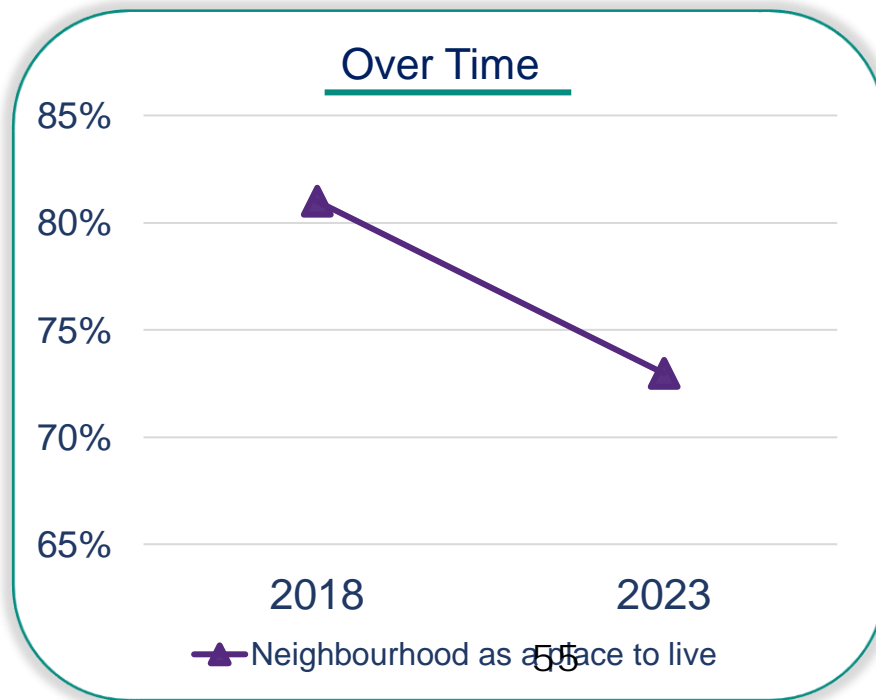


Communal areas clean & well maintained

Positive contribution to neighbourhood

Neighbourhood as a place to live

Anti-social behaviour





# Respectful & Helpful Engagement

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# Respectful & Helpful Engagement

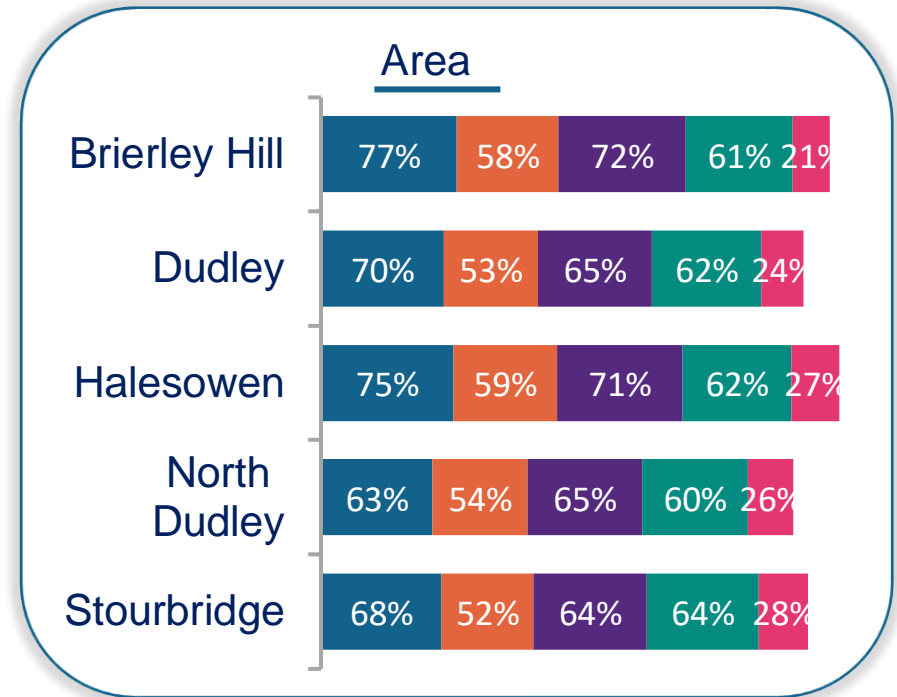
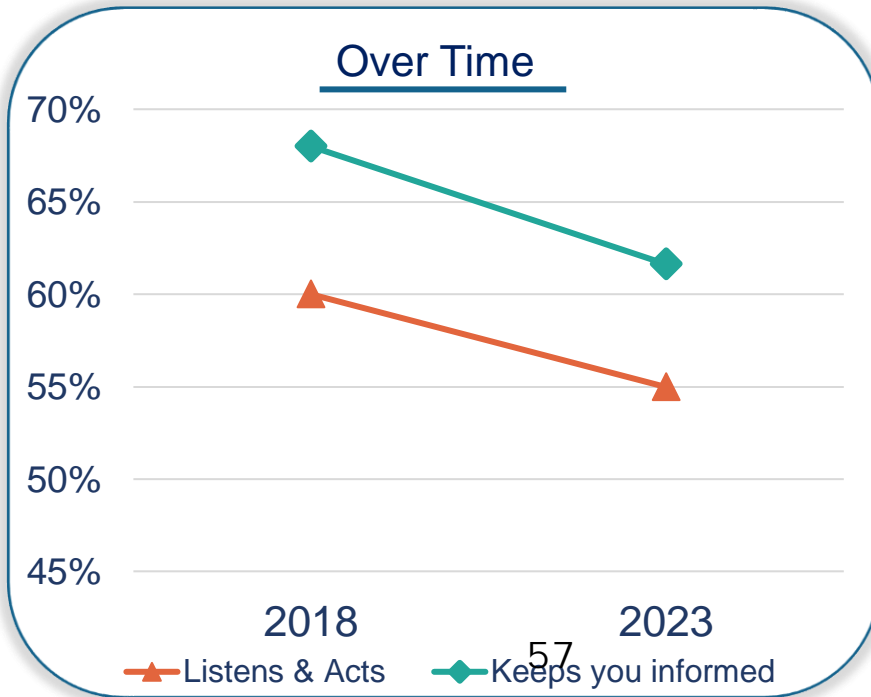
Seven out of ten tenants find dealing with the Council easy, just 15% finding it difficult.

However, just 62% of tenants are satisfied with how they are kept informed about things that matter to them, this having fallen from 68% in 2018. Fewer tenants (55%) are satisfied that Dudley MBC listens to their views and acts upon them, down from 60%, and 30% are dissatisfied with this aspect of service.

Two-thirds of tenants (67%) agree that they are treated fairly and with respect, just 11% are dissatisfied.

There are 29% of tenants who said they had made a complaint to Dudley MBC in the last 12 months, although it is not clear how many are genuine complaints following a failure of service or service requests yet to the fully actioned. Despite this caveat just 25% are satisfied with the way complaints are handled, with more than twice as many dissatisfied (60%).

Brierley Hill tenants find the Council the easiest to deal with but are the least satisfied with the handling of complaints.





# Further Comments

58



Tenants were asked if there was anything else they would like to say about their home, or the services provided by Dudley MBC and 1,001 tenants gave comments.

By far the biggest area for comments is the repairs service, attracting 29% of the comments made. In particular, the timescales for completing repairs and dealing with outstanding works.

However, some have issues with the condition of their property, including damp and mould, whilst others would like some improvements to their homes, like updated kitchens and bathrooms.

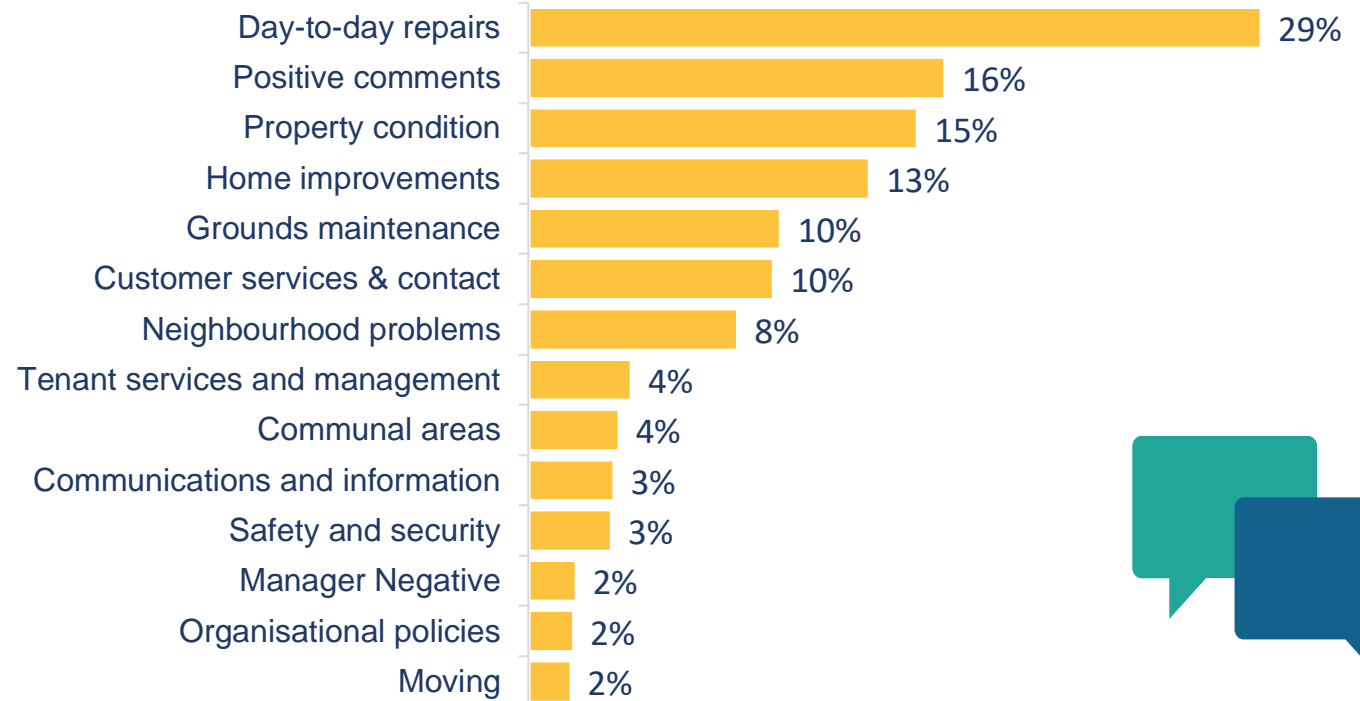
The remaining comments cover a range of issues including grounds maintenance, customers service and neighbourhood problems.

Encouragingly, 16% of the comments are positive about the current service, suggesting nothing needs to be improved.

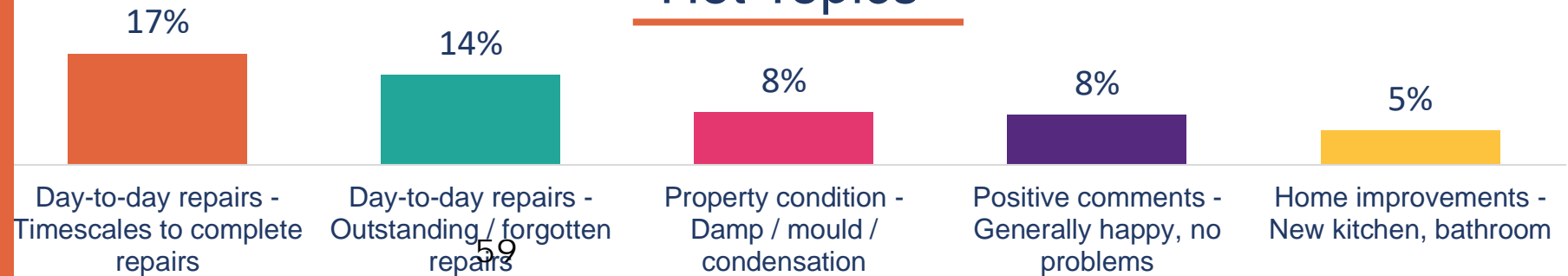
Some examples of the comments are shown on the following page and the full text of the comments is included in the accompanying data file and on the dashboard and these provide real insight into what tenants are most concerned about and should help Dudley target areas for improvement.

# Further Comments – General Needs

## Top Comment Areas



## Hot Topics



# Further Comments

## Day-to-day repairs

“My gas fire was condemned 12th June; they have promised me an electric fire, but I am still waiting to hear.”

“The rent increases but when you report a repair you are on a waiting list for ages, and whilst you are waiting things are damaged (for example the floor). I had to wait 3 years for a new front door.”

“I have damp on the one wall (living room) which was reported December 21. An engineer came Jan 22, and I am still waiting for the damp to be treated.”

“Somebody came to check the electrics, he said he would be back to change a switch but never returned.”

“Maybe recruit more staff because I am having to wait until the end of the month for repair work to be carried out.”

“Repairs are done to a basic standard.”

“I am still waiting for my toilet to be fixed, it has been a couple of weeks.”

## Property condition

“I have mould in my bathroom, in the kitchen near the pipes and also the corner of my bedroom, my carpets are wet in the winter.”

“We have damp in the kitchen, somebody came to treat it, but they have made it worse, the damp seems to be spreading.”

“Where we live, we are in a tiny cul-de-sac (4 houses). The ground is sinking outside my gate which has been inspected quite a few times. Me and next door have complained about the same old thing. We have had to put our own pebbles down to stop it from being dangerous.”

“I have mould in the kitchen and bathroom and can't decorate as it keeps coming back.”

“They are bit slow on keeping the guttering, fascias and external brickwork up to date.”

“I do think they are very good if you have a leak for example (the little jobs). Recently I have had issues with asbestos and mould, but they do not want to come, and they do not keep me informed.”

## Home improvements

“I would like a new kitchen.”

“When the wind picks up the house whistles through the windows, it sounds like an organ playing.”

“Our boiler was replaced by E-Plan. The laminate flooring was removed but we weren't told that we could not put the flooring back, the next day they came to fit a thermostat which they were unable to fit because the flooring had been refitted. We asked for a wi-fi controlled thermostat which was not possible.”

“What I can do I maintain myself in my property. I was promised a new kitchen in 2013 which never happened. The doors keep falling off, I am sick of repairing them.”

“The kitchen needs replacing (cupboards and worktops).”

“I would like a new bathroom. Sometimes it can take 40-50 minutes to get through to somebody on the telephone, but then other times you can get through straight way.”

## Grounds maintenance

“They do not maintain the communal grass properly, when they mow it, they do not clean the grass cuttings up. The children's play area is outdated and has not been maintained properly for 20 years.”

“It could do with an estate manager walking around. I am doing the garden now and the grass is waist high in the neighbours. The tenancy agreement used to say you have to look after your property inside and out, but it looks like a bomb site. We have problems.”

“It has only been this year that we have had a problem with the grass cutting for the communal garden. The quality has slipped, and they don't do it so regularly. Its just the garden area, the rest is fine.”

“They could do more with sprucing the blocks up and the gardens outside. Visit the tenants and ask them what they want.”

# Further Comments – HfOP

## Top Comment Areas



“I am just very happy and feel very safe because of everything I have there and if I need help it is all there, so I am very satisfied.”

“I am 82 and it is the best place that I have ever lived.”

“I have no problems here. Good neighbours.”

“The communal garden is a right mess; all the weeds are overgrown. The gardeners come but they do not cut the weeds.”

“Every year we are surrounded by trees, it is dark all year old. You can not see the sun when it is out, it keeps it cold all of time. There is draught coming in everywhere and dust from the trees and dirt. You can not keep up with the dust. I sent an e-mail 4 months ago and I am still waiting to hear. They come and cut the grass but leave all of the mess, we have to clear it up.”

“Prior to a tenant moving into the property I think the property should be painted and deep cleaned.”

“The property needs new carpets.”

Very few HfOP tenants responded to the survey and just 12 gave comments about their home and the services from Dudley MBC. Of these three gave a ‘not applicable’ answer.

Most of these comments are positive, with some of these shown opposite.

However, two comments are about the grounds maintenance, and two reflect on the condition of their property.

Whilst few in number, these comments help to sum up the feeling of those in HfOP accommodation and the specific service they get. They will also help the Council improve service to this group of tenants.





# Understanding Satisfaction



# Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction

The charts opposite show the satisfaction and dissatisfaction over the range of service areas included in the survey.

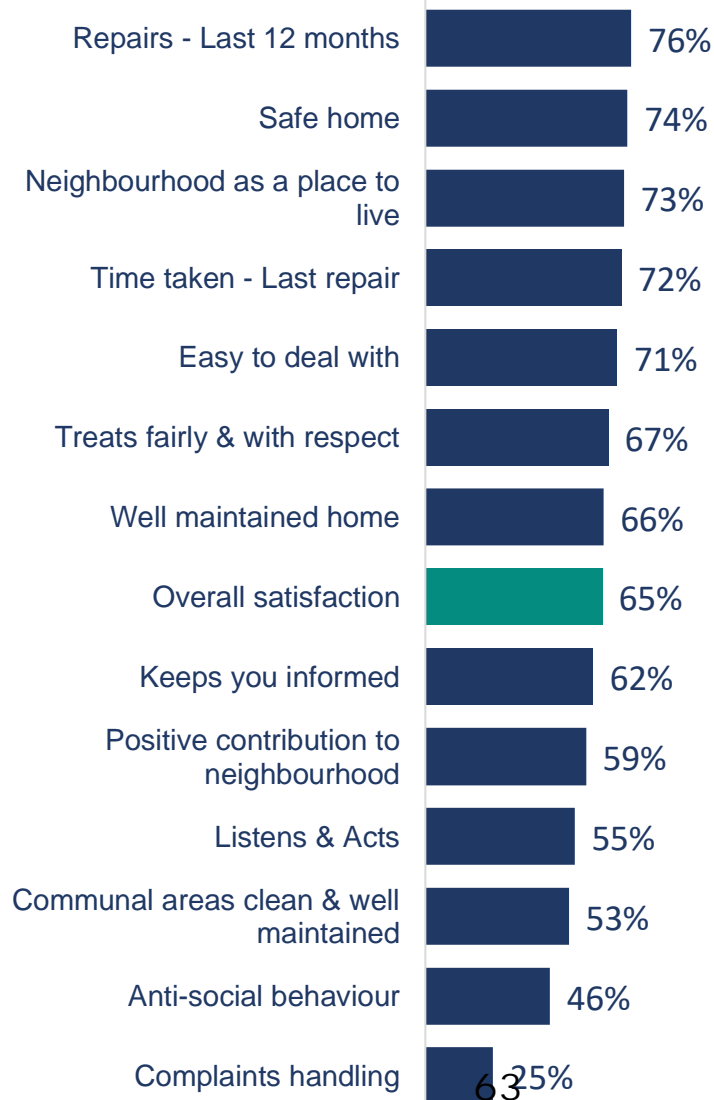
This shows that whilst 65% are satisfied overall, satisfaction is highest for the recent repairs service (76%) and the provision of a safe home (74%).

At the other end of the scale are the upkeep of the communal areas (53%) and how ASB (46%) and complaints are handled (25%).

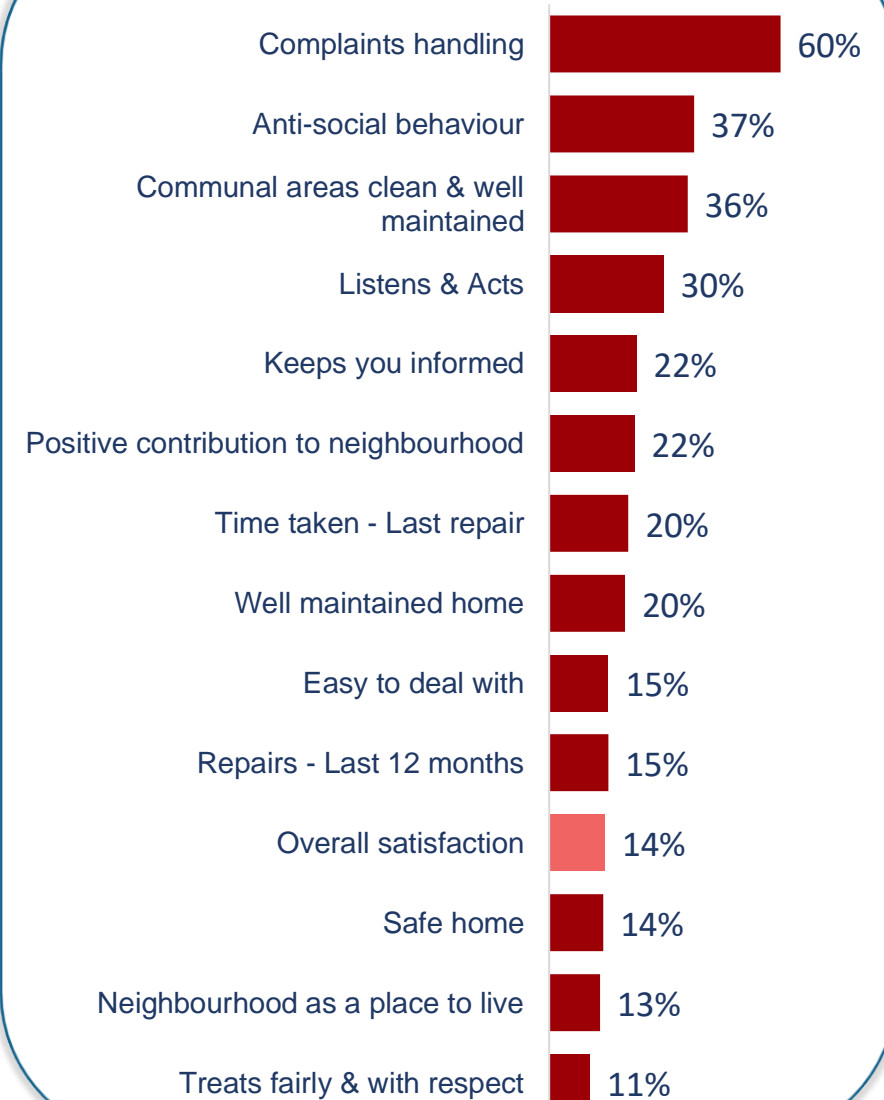
These areas correspondingly have the highest dissatisfaction, the most for the way complaints are dealt with (60%).

However, just 14% are dissatisfied with the overall services which suggests that the Council are doing a good job, although some areas are still in need of improvement.

## Satisfaction with measures



## Dissatisfaction with measures



# Year on Year Change

The last survey of this type carried out by Dudley MBC was in 2018 and only five measures match the current set of questions.

Of these, all show lower levels of satisfaction than previously, with overall satisfaction moving from 85% in 2018 to 65% currently, but smaller falls for the other measures.

Satisfaction with the recent repairs service is down 11%, the neighbourhood as a place to live is down 8%, listening to views is down 5% and 6% fewer are satisfied with how they are kept informed about things that matter to them.

As shown earlier, satisfaction has been falling across the sector and a lot has happened to both landlords and tenants since 2018 so the Council shouldn't be unduly worried, although there are clearly some areas which could be improved as the service starts to return to some sort of normality after the disruption caused by the pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis.

	2018	2023	Change
Overall satisfaction	85%	65%	-20%
Well maintained home	--	66%	
Safe home	--	74%	
Repairs - Last 12 months	87%	76%	-11%
Time taken - Last repair	--	72%	
Communal areas clean & well maintained	--	53%	
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	--	59%	
Neighbourhood as a place to live	81%	73%	-8%
Anti-social behaviour	--	46%	
Easy to deal with	--	71%	
Listens & Acts	60%	55%	-5%
Keeps you informed	68%	62%	-6%
Treats fairly & with respect	--	67%	
Complaints handling	--	25%	



# Key Driver Analysis

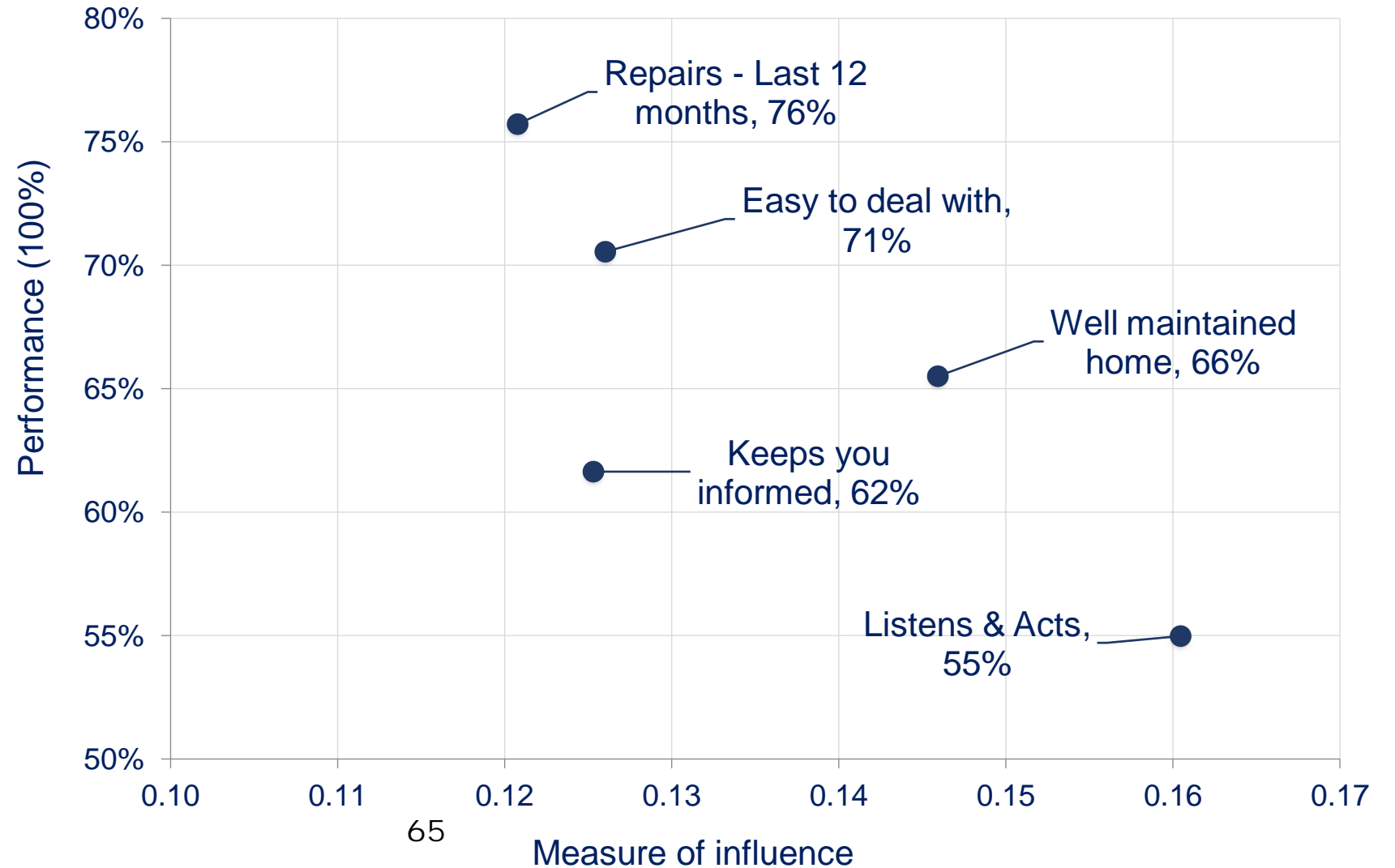
Key driver analysis is used to examine the relationship between the different variables (the questions asked in the survey) and determine which elements of the service are the key drivers for tenants' overall satisfaction.

All landlords will have a unique pattern of drivers and for Dudley MBC, the most important driver for tenants' satisfaction with the overall services is that Dudley MBC listens to their tenants' views and acts upon them, followed closely by providing a well-maintained home. Being easy to deal with, keeping tenants informed and the repairs service are also important but not as influential.

This pattern is a little unusual as often it is the well-maintained home and being easy to deal with that are the most influential.

The implication of this analysis is that if improvements around the most influential measures can be achieved, it is more likely to lead to increased satisfaction with the overall services provided.

Key Driver Analysis – Overall Satisfaction



# Benchmarking – Acuity

## Satisfaction Levels Acuity Clients Q1 23/24

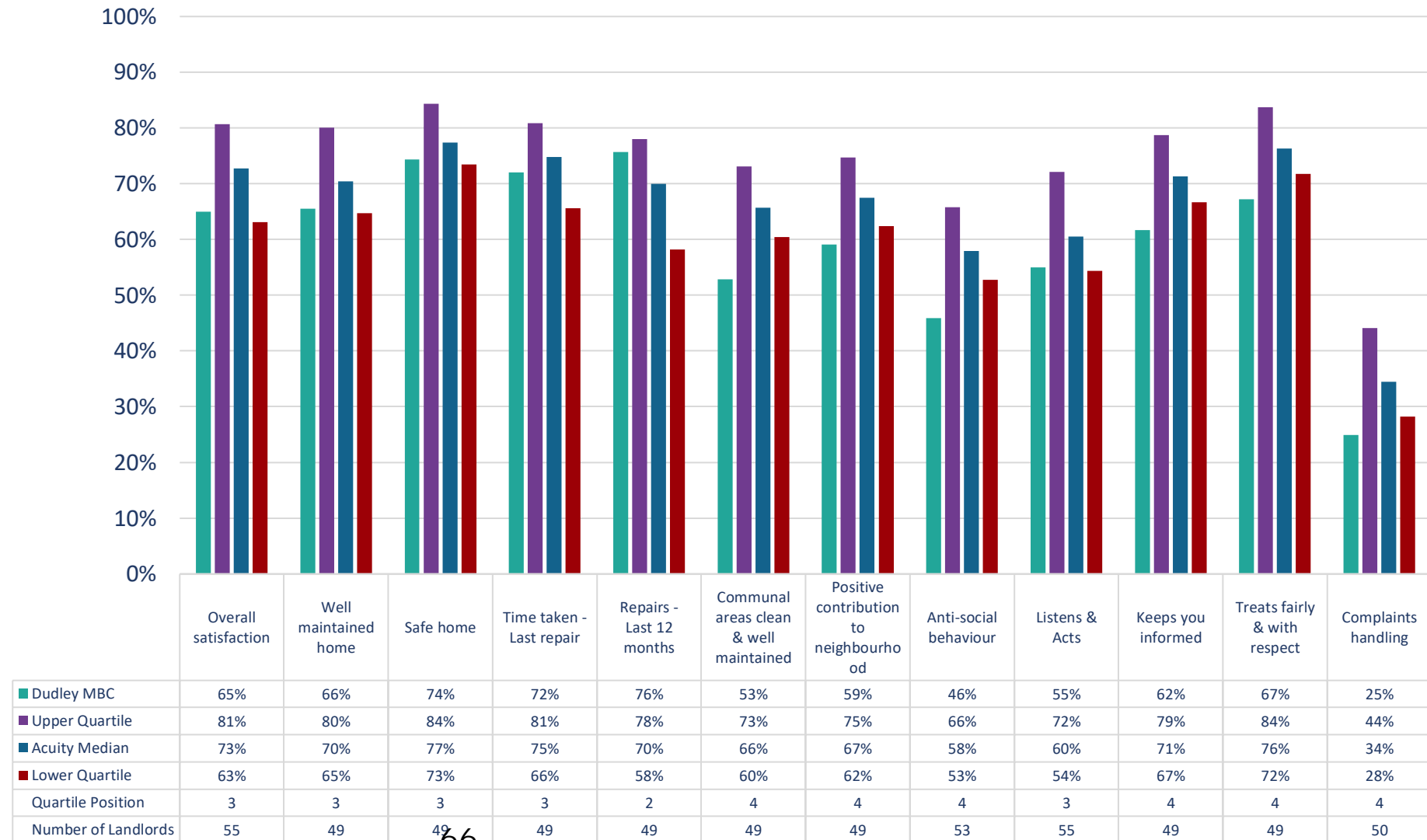
It is also possible to compare performance on the core questions against Acuity clients that have been using the new TSM questions during the year. The chart shows the quartile positions based on the results collected from Q1 2023/24.

All but one of the ratings fall below the group medians with five in the third quartile, including the overall satisfaction, and six in the lower quartile.

The exception is for the recent repairs service which is 6% above the group median and in the second quartile.

This cohort of around 50 landlords varies in type, size and location and won't match the characteristics of Dudley MBC, however, given the current lack of available benchmarking information against the TSM questions, this does help to provide some context.

After landlords have submitted their TSM results to the Regulator next year, more benchmarking data will become available, and the Council will be able to choose a more relevant peer group to compare results against.



# Tenure

	General Needs	Housing for Older People
Overall satisfaction	65%	83%
Well maintained home	65%	92%
Safe home	74%	83%
Repairs - Last 12 months	76%	67%
Time taken - Last repair	72%	67%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	52%	83%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	59%	56%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	73%	67%
Anti-social behaviour	46%	33%
Easy to deal with	70%	91%
Listens & Acts	55%	80%
Keeps you informed	61%	75%
Treats fairly & with respect	67%	75%
Complaints handling	25%	33%

Just 12 HfOP tenants responded to the survey against 1,004 general needs tenants. That makes direct comparisons almost meaningless but does still confirm that the general view is that HfOP tenants are more satisfied.

However, it is suggested that little should be concluded about this, and the other breakdowns of the results are of more importance.



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Base: General Needs = 1,004, Housing for Older People = 12

# Area

Dudley MBC operates its housing service over five main areas with the most responses coming from Dudley (327) and the least from Halesowen (141).

The table opposite shows that the tenants of Halesowen are the most satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council (69%), and they are also the most satisfied on seven of the other measures in the survey.

Least satisfied overall are those in North Dudley (62%) and tenants here are the least satisfied across five of the other measures.

However, the differences between the areas is quite small suggesting that there is some consistency of service across the operating area. It may also be the case that these differences are driven by other factors such as tenant age, so perhaps more work could be done to see if this is the case.



	Brierley Hill	Dudley	Halesowen	North Dudley	Stourbridge
Overall satisfaction	67%	63%	69%	62%	66%
Well maintained home	67%	65%	64%	65%	66%
Safe home	72%	76%	78%	73%	72%
Repairs - Last 12 months	75%	73%	78%	74%	81%
Time taken - Last repair	73%	67%	76%	74%	74%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	45%	49%	71%	51%	56%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	61%	57%	65%	56%	58%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	75%	74%	78%	69%	69%
Anti-social behaviour	48%	45%	57%	40%	45%
Easy to deal with	77%	70%	75%	63%	68%
Listens & Acts	58%	53%	59%	54%	52%
Keeps you informed	61%	62%	62%	60%	64%
Treats fairly & with respect	72%	65%	71%	65%	64%
Complaints handling	21%	24%	27%	26%	28%

# Age Group

It is common in surveys of this type that satisfaction tends to increase with age, and this does largely appear to be the case here.

One theory for this is that older tenants have lower expectations and have learned to live with problems and just get on with it, whereas younger tenants are more likely to expect more and show their disapproval if standards drop.

Whatever the reason is, the table does show that those in the 75 to 84 age group are consistently more satisfied than the other groups. There are 86% satisfied with the overall service compared with just 54% of those aged 45 to 55.

The 'age effect' is well known across the sector and will also influence other results breakdowns so having a knowledge of the age profile will help better understand the differences in satisfaction that may occur.



	0 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 59	60 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+
Overall satisfaction	60%	62%	62%	54%	64%	62%	76%	86%	69%
Well maintained home	57%	54%	56%	59%	66%	73%	78%	85%	85%
Safe home	53%	61%	66%	72%	85%	79%	85%	88%	90%
Repairs - Last 12 months	68%	68%	69%	70%	82%	80%	87%	94%	80%
Time taken - Last repair	79%	71%	66%	65%	73%	68%	84%	87%	80%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	43%	44%	54%	49%	47%	45%	60%	83%	44%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	57%	58%	52%	51%	64%	58%	67%	71%	69%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	70%	68%	71%	66%	78%	74%	78%	83%	79%
Anti-social behaviour	40%	42%	48%	44%	42%	43%	51%	57%	50%
Easy to deal with	77%	68%	68%	60%	67%	73%	78%	85%	82%
Listens & Acts	52%	55%	46%	45%	51%	53%	64%	81%	67%
Keeps you informed	48%	57%	53%	56%	63%	61%	69%	82%	84%
Treats fairly & with respect	67%	66%	65%	63%	71%	61%	68%	81%	74%
Complaints handling	22%	20%	24%	28%	14%	29%	28%	33%	25%

Base: 0-24 = 30, 25-34 = 151, 35-44 = 195, 45-54 = 184, 55-59 = 94, 60-64 = 85, 65-74 = 143, 75-84 = 94, 85+ = 39

# Length of Tenancy

Whilst it is true that older people are more likely to hold the longest tenancies and that factor influences satisfaction, surveys of this type also tend to show that new tenants are also highly satisfied, and that is the case with Dudley MBC.

It is possible that new tenants will be highly delighted to get an offer of a property, perhaps having waited for some time or coming from poor accommodation. However, as the realities of life start to take affect and they experience some issues with their home and their environment, satisfaction may start to fall a little.

The results show here that 85% of those tenants of less than a year are satisfied with the overall services they get from the Council, compared with just 59% of those with Dudley for 6 to 10 years. In fact, this group tends to be the least satisfied across the range of services.



	< 1 year	1 - 3 years	4 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	11 - 20 years	Over 20 years
Overall satisfaction	85%	65%	60%	59%	67%	69%
Well maintained home	74%	63%	60%	59%	66%	76%
Safe home	74%	67%	66%	71%	77%	86%
Repairs - Last 12 months	76%	71%	71%	76%	76%	82%
Time taken - Last repair	88%	73%	70%	66%	73%	75%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	73%	56%	48%	48%	50%	57%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	68%	67%	59%	53%	56%	62%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	79%	74%	72%	66%	74%	78%
Anti-social behaviour	36%	47%	46%	39%	53%	46%
Easy to deal with	85%	69%	73%	68%	69%	73%
Listens & Acts	66%	57%	53%	47%	55%	62%
Keeps you informed	67%	61%	53%	57%	63%	71%
Treats fairly & with respect	79%	67%	69%	63%	68%	68%
Complaints handling	20%	24%	26%	16%	30%	31%

Base: <1 year = 39, 1-3 years = 161, 4-5 years = 135, 6-10 years = 234, 11-20 years = 227, Over 20 years = 220

# Property Type

	Bungalow	Flat	House	Maisonette
Overall satisfaction	69%	66%	64%	55%
Well maintained home	72%	71%	62%	50%
Safe home	85%	70%	75%	60%
Repairs - Last 12 months	85%	76%	74%	58%
Time taken - Last repair	83%	75%	69%	63%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	60%	52%	65%	29%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	65%	61%	57%	44%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	79%	68%	75%	60%
Anti-social behaviour	44%	44%	49%	28%
Easy to deal with	75%	69%	71%	60%
Listens & Acts	59%	53%	55%	41%
Keeps you informed	66%	63%	61%	47%
Treats fairly & with respect	69%	65%	68%	67%
Complaints handling	29%	29%	21%	27%

Base: Bungalow = 127, Flat = 297, House = 552, Maisonette = 31

There appears to be a clear split of satisfaction based on the type of property occupier with those in the bungalows the most satisfied and those in maisonettes the least.

Whilst bungalows are seen as a desirable type of property, they are also most likely to be occupied by older tenants, and as shown, these tend to be more satisfied. Whereas the maisonettes are likely to be occupied by younger families and are less desirable because of the lack of outside space, which can be a big issue particularly for young children.

The differences are quite large with 69% of those in bungalows satisfied compared with 55% in the maisonettes.

Satisfaction of those from the flats and houses tend to sit in the middle.





# Property Size

Splitting the results down by property size, perhaps, empathises the same issues as with the property type.

Older people are more likely to be in the smaller properties and it is this factor which is the most likely to be affecting the differences in results. Younger tenants and those with children are more likely to be in the larger properties.

On the overall services, 69% of those in the one-bedroomed homes are satisfied compared with 61% with three.

However, the difference on some of most of the measures is small, for example, just a range of 1% on the way ASB is dealt with, although on the neighbourhood as a place to live, there are 78% of those in the two-bedroomed homes satisfied compared with just 57% of those with four bedrooms.



	1 Bedroom	2 Bedrooms	3 Bedrooms	4 Bedrooms
Overall satisfaction	69%	65%	61%	66%
Well maintained home	72%	65%	60%	63%
Safe home	78%	73%	72%	74%
Repairs - Last 12 months	82%	70%	75%	73%
Time taken - Last repair	80%	71%	68%	65%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	54%	51%	50%	75%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	65%	57%	55%	61%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	70%	78%	74%	57%
Anti-social behaviour	46%	46%	45%	45%
Easy to deal with	74%	69%	69%	69%
Listens & Acts	59%	52%	53%	61%
Keeps you informed	66%	64%	56%	71%
Treats fairly & with respect	69%	67%	66%	63%
Complaints handling	31%	26%	20%	25%

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Base: 1 Bedroom = 318, 2 Bedrooms = 243, 3 Bedrooms = 411, 4 Bedrooms = 35



# Gender

Female tenants outnumber male tenants by almost two to one, but they are consistently less satisfied with their homes and the services they get from Dudley MBC.

Again, the differences are small, just 3% between the groups on the overall service and just 1% more male tenants find the Council easy to deal with.

However, 8% more male tenants are satisfied with the maintenance of their home and 7% more feel they are kept informed about things that matter to them.

This is a pattern seen at other landlords, perhaps female tenants are a little more critical of the level of service and have higher expectations.



	Female	Male
Overall satisfaction	64%	67%
Well maintained home	63%	71%
Safe home	74%	76%
Repairs - Last 12 months	75%	77%
Time taken - Last repair	70%	76%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	50%	55%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	57%	63%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	72%	75%
Anti-social behaviour	45%	47%
Easy to deal with	70%	71%
Listens & Acts	54%	57%
Keeps you informed	59%	66%
Treats fairly & with respect	66%	69%
Complaints handling	24%	26%

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Base: Female = 664, Male = 352

# BME/Non BME

Finally, the results are split by ethnicity, this page showing the clear split between BME and non BME tenants and the following page focusing on the main ethnic groups.

The table opposite shows a mixed picture with the non BME tenants the more satisfied overall, with their homes and the repairs service and feel a little more satisfied with ease to deal with and being kept informed.

However, the BME tenants are the most satisfied with their communal areas, the contribution to the neighbourhood made by the Council and are more satisfied with the handling of complaints.

Overall, 58% of BME and 66% of non BME tenants are satisfied but the difference between most measures is small, perhaps suggesting this is not a major factor in determining satisfaction.



	BME	Non BME
Overall satisfaction	58%	66%
Well maintained home	58%	67%
Safe home	69%	75%
Repairs - Last 12 months	69%	77%
Time taken - Last repair	70%	72%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	57%	52%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	64%	59%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	72%	73%
Anti-social behaviour	51%	45%
Easy to deal with	70%	71%
Listens & Acts	56%	55%
Keeps you informed	59%	62%
Treats fairly & with respect	70%	67%
Complaints handling	40%	22%

# Ethnicity

The results are shown here split by the main ethnic groups with Dudley. The vast majority class themselves as White British with similar numbers on the other classifications. However, the small numbers of these groups makes drawing firm conclusions difficult.

Despite this caveat, those in the Other groups tend to be the most satisfied and the White & Black Caribbean group are the least satisfied, although it is the Black Caribbean group who are just the least satisfied with the overall services.



	Black African	Black Caribbean	Pakistani	White and Black Caribbean	White British	Other White Background	Other Ethnic Group
Overall satisfaction	50%	42%	63%	43%	66%	73%	87%
Well maintained home	56%	50%	63%	43%	67%	60%	80%
Safe home	72%	65%	74%	57%	75%	80%	87%
Repairs - Last 12 months	75%	61%	75%	45%	77%	58%	77%
Time taken - Last repair	88%	56%	56%	55%	73%	58%	86%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	67%	42%	50%	33%	52%	44%	100%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	87%	40%	69%	42%	58%	73%	93%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	78%	62%	79%	64%	74%	67%	100%
Anti-social behaviour	60%	35%	14%	40%	45%	86%	100%
Easy to deal with	78%	65%	58%	43%	71%	47%	93%
Listens & Acts	67%	46%	53%	36%	55%	80%	80%
Keeps you informed	72%	58%	53%	31%	62%	73%	87%
Treats fairly & with respect	78%	56%	84%	36%	66%	87%	93%
Complaints handling	44%	20%	25%	0%	22%	50%	50%

Base: Black African = 18, Black Caribbean = 26, Pakistani = 19, White and Black Caribbean = 14, White British = 866, Other White Background = 15, Other Ethnic Group = 15

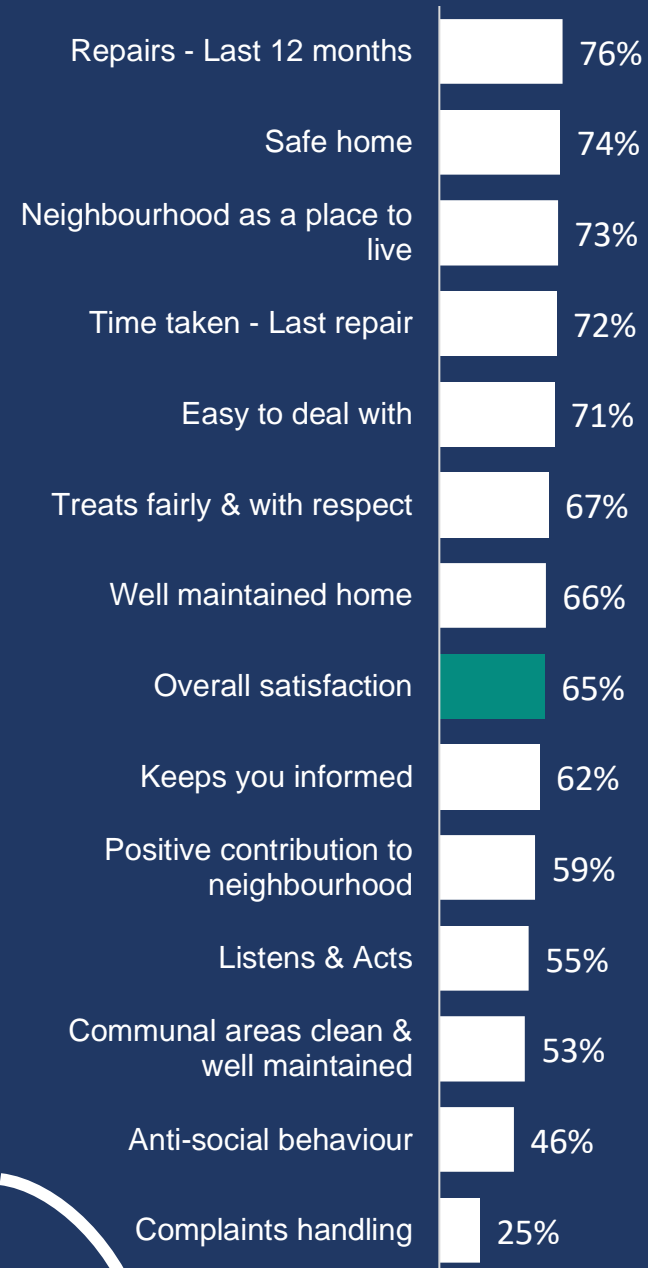


# Conclusion

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## Satisfaction 2023



# Conclusion

- Acuity has a two-year commission to undertake annual tracker surveys of the tenants of Dudley MBC using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures from the Regulator of Social Housing.
- The survey was conducted by telephone interview and 1,016 tenants responded giving a margin of error of  $\pm 3.0\%$ , as required by the Regulator and giving good accuracy of results.
- Two-thirds of tenants are satisfied with the overall services provided by the Council with the highest ratings for the repairs service in the last 12 months and the provision of a safe home, whilst just 53% are satisfied with the upkeep of the communal areas, 46% with the handling of ASB and just 25% with complaints; 60% being dissatisfied.
- The Council carried out a similar survey in 2018 and satisfaction is down since then. Overall satisfaction was 85% in 2018 but is now 65%, satisfaction with the recent repairs service is down 11%, the neighbourhood is down 8%, 5% fewer are satisfied that the Council listen to their views and act upon them and 6% fewer feel informed.
- The results generally fall below those of other landlords with most measures falling into the third or lower quartiles. However, the range of suitable benchmarks is currently limited but will become much wider when landlords report their results to the Regulator next year.
- When looking at the results from the five main areas within Dudley, those in Halesowen tend to be the most satisfied and those in North Dudley the least. However, the differences are small suggesting service delivery is fairly consistent across the areas.
- When asked about the service, the comments are dominated by repair issues. The repairs service itself attracted 29% of the comments, but this is followed by comments about the condition of the properties and the need for some home improvements such as kitchens and bathrooms. The upkeep of the communal areas is also important to tenants with the ground maintenance in particular attracting a number of comments.
- Overall, this has been a successful exercise allowing the Council to report results to the Regulator from next year. It will also act a baseline for the TSM questions to compare future surveys against.

# Recommendations

The survey reveals many areas of very good performance, but it has also highlighted some areas where improvements could be made.

The comments made by tenants give insight into what they are most concerned about and will help Dudley MBC target services that may need some improvement.

Shown opposite are some recommendations that Dudley MBC may wish to follow up on to help improve satisfaction in the future.



## Communications & complaints

The key driver for overall satisfaction is for the Council to listen to tenants' views and act upon them, and this is one of the lowest ratings in the survey with just 55% satisfied and 30% dissatisfied. In addition, just 62% feel the Council keeps them informed about things that matter to them. Tenants want to feel involved and heard so, perhaps, more could be done to improve communications. It is also suggested that in the next survey a probing question is added to find out more about what the main issues are. Over a quarter of tenants said they had made a complaint to the Council in the last 12 months, although it is not clear how many are genuine following a failure of service. However, just 25% are satisfied with their handling, 60% being dissatisfied. Whilst this is an issue across the sector, the Council should make sure its processes are clear and effective.



## Repairs & maintenance

The way repairs and maintenance is delivered is key for any tenant and generally satisfaction with Dudley MBC's repairs service is good. However, the repairs service dominates the comments made by tenants about the service, together with related issues such as property condition and the need for home improvements. In particular, tenants want outstanding repairs completed and work to be done quicker. Whilst this is an issue across the sector with many landlords still catching up after the pandemic and having to focus on instances of damp and mould, the Council may be able to gain some quick wins but catching up on outstanding work and being clear to tenants about the expectations of service.



## Communal areas

The maintenance of the communal areas is only seen as satisfactory by 53% with 36% dissatisfied. The comments suggest a lot of this is to do with the ground maintenance service, some complaining that grass cutting, and general maintenance is not up to standard and has declined in the last year or so. A review of this service would be useful to identify areas which are currently not up to standard. This could be done by contacting tenants affected and ask about their experiences as they are the eyes on the ground.



This research project was carried out to conform with ISO20252:2019 and the MRS Code of Conduct.

For further information on this report please contact:

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**Housing and Safer Communities Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**Report of the Director of Housing and Communities**

**Customer Engagement and Involvement**

**Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is to share with Scrutiny Committee Members an update on DMBC’s approach to customer engagement and involvement. The report sets out progress to date, to provide Committee Members with the opportunity to ensure that plans are robust, meet customer needs, and support the delivery of high quality, value for money services.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that Select Committee Members:
  - Note the aspirations and commitments of the Social Housing White Paper and its impact upon DMBC.
  - Note the activity in progress to review and refresh DMBC’s approach to engaging with our tenants to improve customer experience and facilitate consumer regulation.

**Background**

3. In November 2020, the UK Government published “The Charter for Social Housing Residents: social housing white paper”. The White Paper set out new regulatory arrangements for social landlords including local authorities. The Regulator of Social Housing, which now regulates local authority housing provision, will be responsible for a more proactive consumer regulatory regime which will strengthen the formal standards against which the Council is regulated, requiring the Council to:
  - Be transparent about their performance and decision-making – so that tenants and the regulator can hold the Council to account.



- Put things right when they go wrong.
  - Listen to tenants through effective engagement.
4. The Charter has seven commitments to tenants against which the Council will be judged:
1. To be safe in your home.
  2. To know how your landlord is performing, including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
  3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
  4. To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
  5. To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.
  6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
  7. To be supported to take your first step to ownership, so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.
5. In order to deliver the commitments within the Charter the Council is putting in place appropriate services, standards and performance measures to ensure that we are delivering against the commitments set out within the Charter and that we can evidence the positive impact of this work.
- Ensuring we have robust systems in place to capture and report on performance information that allows our customers to hold us to account.
  - Reviewing and improving our customer engagement and involvement model to ensure we hear our customers voice in breadth and depth.

### **Customer Involvement and Engagement Strategy**

6. Our Customer Involvement and Engagement Strategy is under review, with the revised strategy being co-produced with involved customers, partners and Members. The strategy will provide a robust framework for listening and responding to feedback from our customers to continuously improve customer experience and satisfaction, and to ensure that we listen and respond to our customers' voice in breadth and depth.

7. The review of our current Customer Involvement Strategy will take into account the following:
  - Charter for Social Housing Residents
  - RoSH Consumer Standards
  - Tenant Satisfaction Measures
  - TPAS Engagement Standards
  - Current opportunities for customer involvement
  - Current quantitative and qualitative data on customer experience and involvement
8. All existing customer involvement groups are being reviewed to identify what we already have in place and any gaps, and refreshed Terms of Reference are being drafted for consultation.
9. Proposals are being developed to establish an overarching Customer Involvement Board to oversee delivery of the revised Strategy, to lead on the publication of the Customer Annual Report, and to scrutinise performance against the RoSH consumer standards, TSMs, Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and other customer related activity.

### **TPAS Smart Review**

10. TPAS are a not-for-profit organisation who promote, support and champion tenant involvement and empowerment in social housing across England, supporting over 300 Housing Associations, Local Authorities, resident groups and contractors covering over 3.5 million homes.
11. TPAS are currently undertaking a Smart Review of DMBCC's housing services which will help us to:
  - understand how we are performing against regulatory requirements;
  - understand how we are performing against the TPAS National Tenant Engagement standard themes;
  - ensure our engagement activities are based on sound strategic decisions;
  - understand what is working, what's not and where to improve.

The process includes a review of key documents and processes and listening to staff and tenants to capture and understand their direct experience of resident engagement.

12. The feedback from the review is due imminently and will provide a report that includes:
- a review of DMBC engagement against the TPAS standards;
  - recognition of good practice;
  - a practical and achievable action plan to deliver short, medium and longer term improvements;
  - clear analysis on where DMBC engagement is now and where it could go in the future.

Actions arising out of the review will be incorporated into the new Customer Engagement and Involvement Strategy.

### **Customer Communications**

13. The Participation Team are working with CAPA on the communications strategy with the first tenants' Communications Group meeting for the first time on 26<sup>th</sup> October. A Readers Panel has also been established set up and we are about to start issuing documents through the group.
14. The Participation Team are supporting the ongoing work on building safety and compliance to communicate with customers, share information and to ensure customers are informed, involved and listened to.

A "Safety Matters Event" was held with customers in September, to discuss how we can work together to ensure our tenants receive important information related to their homes and communal areas. The event included four themed focus groups to stimulate discussion on key topics:

- I'm not letting you in - No Access problems
- This can seriously affect your health - Damp and Mould
- Not in my communal areas – shared landings and foyers
- Let's shout about it - Good Communications

A "You Said, We Did" summary of the day is being prepared along with plans for a follow up meeting.

High Rise Safety Events have been undertaken at Butterfield, Clent and Claverley Courts so far this year and these will continue to be rolled out across our high rise blocks.

## **Finance**

15. There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

## **Law**

16. The actions set out within this report will help ensure the Council's compliance with Regulator of Social Housing's regulatory standards and the Housing Ombudsman Code.

## **Risk Management**

17. As with any change programme there is a risk that there will be insufficient resources to deliver the programme given the urgency of securing some of these changes. This risk will be managed by the Directorate Management Team which will review the resources and prioritisation of the programme.

## **Equality Impact**

18. There are no special considerations to be made with regard to equality and diversity directly associated with this report.
19. There are no specific implications of this report in relation to children and young people and they have not been consulted or involved in developing the proposals.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

20. There are no specific human resource issues directly associated with this report.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

21. There is no direct commercial impact.

## **Council Priorities**

22. Developing Housing services which meet the regulatory standards and the aspirations of the White Paper also support the delivery of all four priorities in the Dudley Council Plan 2022 - 25:
- Dudley the borough of opportunity
  - Dudley the safe and healthy borough

- Dudley the borough of ambition and enterprise
- Dudley borough as the destination of choice

K. Jones

## Director of Housing and Communities

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## Appendices

- None

**Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee**  
**Progress Tracker and Future Business**

<b>Subject (Date of Meeting)</b>	<b>Recommendation/action</b>	<b>Responsible Officer/Area</b>	<b>Status/Notes</b>
Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24 – 20 <sup>th</sup> July, 2024	<u>Agenda Item No. 6(2)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to provide Members of the Committee regular updates on progress on the stock condition survey.	Director of Housing and Communities	Ongoing – regular updates to be provided
	<u>Agenda Item No. 6(4)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to circulate the structure of the Safe and Sound Board to Members of the Committee.	Director of Housing and Communities	Structure to be circulated to all Members of the Committee
	<u>Agenda Item No. 6(5)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities, supported by the Democratic Services Officer, be requested to consider the possibility of providing Members the opportunity to allow more detailed scrutiny of the housing stock within the Borough.	Director of Housing and Communities/ Democratic Services Officer	Consideration at the agenda setting meeting on 25 <sup>th</sup> October, 2023 and agreed to included in the 2024/25 Annual Scrutiny Programme to allow for a more in-depth scrutiny of the item.

	<p><u>Agenda Item No. 6(6)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to incorporate a community safety element to each report programmed for the Committee for the municipal year.</p>	Director of Housing and Communities	Ongoing
Public Forum – 13 <sup>th</sup> September, 2023 – Questions raised by Mr R Parmley	<p><u>Minute No. 11</u> (a) What were the timescales involved in allocating Housing Officers to areas within the Borough. (b) Consideration of a review to take place on how Aerial Funding was allocated moving forward. It was considered that quorum numbers for meetings were currently too high which was affecting the voting requirements on how to use funding. (c) In referring to the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), the member of public, together with Councillor J Cowell queried the number of high and low rise blocks within the Dudley Borough that were affected and where those buildings were located.</p>	Director of Housing and Communities/The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety/Interim Strategic Lead for Customers	<p>Written responses provided to all questions raised by Mr R Parmley</p> <p>(c)Following the events which highlighted the potential existence of RAAC within public buildings including social housing properties / blocks where concrete construction methods were used the Housing Asset team have</p>



			<p>commenced a full review of our portfolio.</p> <p>The initial findings from the desktop assessment indicated that there are no records of RAAC being used during the construction of any of our High Rise Residential Buildings or our medium or low rise stock.</p> <p>The team have instructed that intrusive surveys be undertaken to validate the findings of the desktop assessments, these surveys will see intrusive works being undertaken in properties, this work commenced in August and will conclude at the end of December 2023 with an update and if necessary an action plan being developed and delivered in January 2024.</p>
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			At present the indications are that RAAC is not present in any of the residential buildings owned by DMBC.
Progress Tracker and Future Business	<u>Minute No. 12(2)</u> That the Chair and Vice-Chair be requested to review the timings of the Community Safety Partnership report to an earlier programmed meeting.	Chair/Vice Chair	Considered at the agenda setting meeting on 25 <sup>th</sup> October, 2023 and agreed that the item be brought forward to the 22 <sup>nd</sup> January, 2024 meeting. The Item on Review of Private Rented Sector to be deferred until 13 <sup>th</sup> March, 2023.
	<u>Minute No. 12(3)</u> That an update be provided to Members of the Committee at a future meeting on information in relation to private rented housing.	Director of Housing and Communities	Report to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee
	<u>Minute No. 12(4)</u> That an update be provided to Members of the Committee at a future meeting on the work associated with the Stock Condition Survey programme that Savills was currently undertaking on all Council housing stock.	Director of Housing and Communities	Report to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee

	<p><u>Minute No. 12(5)</u> That an update be provided to Members of the Committee at a future meeting on information in relation to the Right to Buy scheme.</p>	Director of Housing and Communities	Response provided to all Members of the Committee.
	<p><u>Minute No. 12(6)</u> That information be provided to all Members of the Committee on accurate statistics of RTB sales for the last five-year period to including the property types purchased.</p>	Director of Housing and Communities	Response provided to all Members of the Committee.
Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Housing and Communities Directorate – Quarter 1 (1 <sup>st</sup> April – 30 <sup>th</sup> June, 2023)	<p><u>Minute No. 13(1)</u> That the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety be requested to provide a written response to all Member of the Committee on the details associated with the timescales around void bungalow turnaround times.</p>	The Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety	The target turnaround time for bungalows is 20 days, however on some occasions this can extend to 35 days on occasions where the property has not had improvement works for a significant period either through tenant refusal or the property being well maintained by the tenant. Given the demographic of the clientele for bungalows additional works including full decoration and the replacement of a bath with a level access shower room

			ensures that the extra time ensures the new tenants have home which is suitable for many years to come with minimal disruption.
	<u>Minute No. 13(2)</u> That “Know Your Community Housing Officer” information, including pictures and contact details for each of the six areas be submitted to all Members of the Council.	Interim Strategic Lead for Customers	Know Your Community Housing Officer posters circulated to all Members of the Council on 27 <sup>th</sup> September, 2023
Impact of the 2023/24 Rent Increase for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Tenants	<u>Minute No. 14(2)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to provide Members of the Committee with information on the average cost of various property types across the Borough.	Director of Housing and Communities	Response provided to all Members of the Committee.
	<u>Minute No. 14(3)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to circulate to all Members of the Committee accurate figures of customers that were currently charged the underoccupancy rate.	Director of Housing and Communities	Response provided to all Members of the Committee.

	<p><u>Minute No. 14(4)</u> That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to circulate to all Members of the Committee the accurate figure that was “written off” as unrecoverable debt during the 202/2023 financial year.</p>	Director of Housing and Communities	Response provided to all Members of the Committee.
Update on Property Condition and Compliance	<p><u>Minute No. 15(2)</u> That Councillor D Stanley be requested to provide information associated to the complaint received by a constituent relating to the cancellation of a gas safety inspection at short notice to the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety for appropriate consideration and action.</p>	Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety	While there was unfortunately no specific information provided from Cllr Stanley to allow us to identify the property, PH Jones have confirmed that any appointments that have been delayed or cancelled at short notice over the past 3 months have been a result of over running appointments where additional / essential works were required.

**Future Business 2023/24**

<b><u>Date of Meeting</u></b>	<b><u>Work Programme</u></b>	<b><u>Responsible Officer/Area</u></b>	<b><u>Notes</u></b>
20 <sup>th</sup> November, 2023	Quarterly Housing Performance Report – Quarter 1 – 1 <sup>st</sup> April – 30 <sup>th</sup> June, 2023	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Tenant Satisfaction Measures	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Customer Involvement	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Action Tracker and Future Business	Karen Malpass	Report
22 <sup>nd</sup> January, 2024	Community Safety Partnership including Anti-Social Behaviour	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Neighbourhood Model	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Review of Housing Finance	Kathryn Jones/Ian Grosvenor	Report
	Quarterly Corporate Performance Report	Richard Cartwright	Report

	Action Tracker and Future Business	Karen Malpass	Report
13 <sup>th</sup> March, 2024	Annual Report 2023/24 and potential items of business for 2024/25	Karen Malpass	Report
	Review of Private Rented Sector	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Contractor Management	Kathryn Jones	Report
	Quarterly Corporate Performance Report	Richard Cartwright	Report
	Action Tracker and Future Business	Karen Malpass	Report