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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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## **Appendices**

- Dudley MBC TSM Survey 2023 Report