

HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
13 SEPTEMBER 2021

STAR SURVEY

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide Members with the latest STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) Survey for 2020/21.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The STAR survey developed and promoted by HouseMark replaced the former STATUS survey and has become the standard for tenants and residents surveys across the housing sector. Much like the residents survey, it aims to establish how satisfied Council tenants are with a range of measures relating to their Council home, tenancy, communal services and neighbourhood. Unlike STATUS, it is not mandatory to run the STAR survey annually, but there is value in running this survey on a regular frequency to identify key areas for improvement as this also includes customers who may not have contacted the Council's housing services within the previous 12 months. It also enables us to compare against other housing providers via our Housemark membership.

2.2 The survey was conducted in March and April this year and surveyed 545 tenants by telephone. The report was provided in June. This work was conducted by our independent survey provider, Viewpoint Research.

2.3 The most appropriate questions were selected from the new STAR questionnaire template, including some mandatory core questions, providing a 20/21 benchmark for new questions and some comparative information against previous years.

2.4 The full STAR report is attached at Appendix 1, but some key highlights are provided within this cover report.

3.0 Key Highlights of the Report

3.1 The 5 key drivers of overall satisfaction were found to be;

- Dealing with repairs and maintenance
- Easy to deal with
- Overall quality of your home
- Listens to your views and acts upon them
- Gives you a say in how services are managed

3.2 85.7% of tenants think services have got better or stayed the same and 77.7% of tenants scored 8 or higher when asked if they would recommend Newark and Sherwood District Council as a landlord.

3.3 Repairs

3.3.1 80.2% of tenants were satisfied with repairs in general, which is almost 3% higher than the Housemark benchmark. This relates to the general view of the repairs service, rather than specifically just those who have received a repair in the last 12 months. 72.6% scored 8 or higher for recommending the service.

3.4 ASB

3.4.1 Whilst general satisfaction with ASB is much lower than other services, and a project is underway with involved tenants to review how the service can be improved, 79% of tenants who had used the service in the last 12 months said the member of staff was knowledgeable and 77.5% said they were easy to deal with. Satisfaction with knowledge of staff is up 10% on the previous survey result.

3.4.2 However, just 45% were satisfied with the final outcome of their case and 63.6% were satisfied with the handling. Outcomes are not always solely in our control, if for example they involve the Police or going to court. So it is much more practical for the review of the service to focus more areas within our control such as getting the handling of the case right for the tenant.

3.5 Lettings

3.5.1 Satisfaction with the overall lettings process was 92%, which is a great result considering the impact of Covid on lettings during 2020/21. In addition to this, 88% of tenants felt that staff were easy to deal with and there was 72% satisfaction with the condition of the property at the time of letting.

3.5.2 We are working on improving satisfaction with the condition of the property at letting via the voids pilot scheme. This scheme is currently running until the end of September 2021, and provides an enhanced core standard for letting, which will remain, and decoration preparation where required

3.6 Complaints and Queries

3.6.1 80% of tenants were satisfied with the way their call was handled and with the information and advice provided. However, satisfaction with complaints is much lower.

3.6.2 Just 9.4% of tenants surveyed had made a complaint in the previous 12 months, but only 31% were satisfied with the handling and outcome of the complaint. Satisfaction with the staff dealing with the complaint was 56% compared to 78% satisfaction in relation to dealing with a query.

3.6.3 Currently, a review of the customer service team is under way and changes in investment and the alignment of customer services will be delivered shortly which should lead to improvements in the complaints service.

3.7 Neighbourhood

3.7.1 90.1% of tenants said they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, which was up over 3% on the previous survey and 9% above the Housemark benchmark.

3.7.2 84.1% said the neighbourhood had improved or stayed the same and 88% were satisfied with keeping communal areas clean and safe. In relation to grounds maintenance and grass cutting, 82% were satisfied with this service, which is a good benchmark for future years, as the service came back in house on 1st April.

3.8 Home

3.8.1 84.6% of tenants felt Newark and Sherwood District Council takes tenants' health and safety concerns seriously, which is a good first benchmark. 95% were satisfied with gas servicing, 88% were satisfied with the heating and energy efficiency of their home and 92.3% of those receiving the careline service were satisfied.

3.9 Empowerment

3.9.1 81.8% of tenants feel that their views are listened to and acted upon, which is 2% higher than the previous survey and 14% higher than the Housemark benchmark. In addition, 86.6% were satisfied with the opportunity to make their views known and 89% said they were able to interact with the Council in the way they wanted. There will be some further engagement work with tenants which will hopefully deliver even more satisfaction in this area.

3.10 Value for Money

3.10.1 90.6% of tenants were satisfied their rent provides value for money, which is 4% up on the Housemark benchmark. Satisfaction that service charges provide value for money was 85.3%, which was up 8% on the previous survey and 11% on the Housemark benchmark.

3.10.2 Satisfaction with advice and support with managing their finances and paying rent and service charges scored 91%.

4.0 Summary of Findings

4.1 All of the areas that are benchmarked are above the STAR benchmark.

4.2 Nothing has declined with any statistical significance.

5.0 Digital Implications

5.1 There are none specifically arising from this report.

5.2 There are significant improvements that can be achieved across all services through improvements with Housing ICT and the Directorate are working with ICT, having created a high level plan of improvements to the system.

6.0 Financial Implications – FIN21-22/6087

6.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report. Where expenditure is required, it is anticipated this will be secured from the efficiency savings pot to improve services.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

7.1 This report supports two objectives in the Community Plan - Create more and better quality homes through our roles as landlord, developer and planning authority and Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and increase feelings of safety in our communities.

8.0 Comments of Director

8.1 No additional comments.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

9.0 **Members note the contents of this report and notes the;**

- 1. overall positive levels in satisfaction for housing services.**
- 2. attached full STAR report at Appendix 1.**

Reason for Recommendations

To take positive steps to improve the customer journey and customer experience with housing services and maintain the high levels of satisfaction and improve this where possible.

Background Papers

STAR report 2020/21 – Attached at Appendix 1.

For further information please contact Nicola Priest, Project Research Officer on 01636 655526.

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