Report to Cabinet 27 June 2023

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lee Brazier, Portfolio Holder for Homes & Health

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Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Non key decision
Report Title	STAR Survey 2022/23
Purpose of Report	To present the STAR survey report; the STAR survey aims to establish how satisfied Council tenants are with a range of measures relating to their Council home, tenancy, communal services and neighbourhood.
Recommendations	a) That members note the overall positive levels in satisfaction for housing services. b) That members note the full STAR Report attached at Appendix 1. c) That members note this report has been presented to Senior Leadership Team, the Tenant Engagement Board and Policy, Performance and Improvement Committee. d) That members note there will be a survey in September 2023 following the introduction of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) that in part, potentially replace the current and ongoing arrangements for STAR.

1.0 Background

1.1 STAR has been a recognised mechanism for objectively assessing the Council's landlord services in a number of key areas for tenants for a number of years. In November 2020, the Government published the charter for social housing residents – which set out ways to improve things for people living in social housing. Within the seven strands, four fall under existing Consumer Standards set out by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH).

1.2 These standards set out guidance for Home, Tenancy, Neighbourhood and Community, Tenant Empowerment and Involvement and the newly introduced Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

1.3 For 2023 onwards, TSMs have been added to the Housemark suite of indicators to enable benchmarking between member housing providers.

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered and Reasons for Recommendation

2.1 The STAR survey developed and promoted by Housemark 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. It is not mandatory to run the STAR survey annually, but there has been 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 February and March this year and surveyed 545 tenants by telephone. The report was provided at the beginning of May. This work was conducted by our independent survey provider, Viewpoint Research.

2.3 Members of the Tenant Engagement Board were consulted on the proposed suite of questions to request whether they would like to see any changes. The survey questions are mostly the same as those used in 2021/22 to ensure that comparative data is available, except for this year's survey also features the 12 TSMs (where they were not already an existing STAR indicator) to allow the Council to benchmark before conducting the official TSM survey in September 2023.

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;

1. Easy to deal with (was 2)
2. Listens to your views and acts upon them (was 3)
3. Provides the service you expect
4. Provides a home that is well maintained
5. Dealing with repairs and maintenance (was 1)

The two drivers on the list for 21/22, but did not make the list this time are overall quality of home and provides a home that is safe and secure.

3.2 86.5% of tenants were satisfied with overall services (compared with 86.6% in 21/22), although an insignificant decline of 0.1% and it is 5.7% higher than the Housemark benchmark (compared with 3.6% in 21/22 as the benchmark has dropped).

3.3 Repairs

3.3.1 77% of tenants were satisfied with repairs in general (compared with 78.6% in 21/22), which is 2.2% 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.

3.3.2 61% of tenants surveyed had a repair carried out during 22/23 (compared with 62% in 21/22). Of those, 81.8% were satisfied with the service they received. This is 2.2% above the Housemark benchmark.

3.3.3 75.1% of customers said that the contractor showed ID (compared with 73.2% in 21/22). The report last year highlighted that some work was required here to improve this, and it is pleasing to see this is moving in a positive direction.

3.4 ASB

3.4.1 Generally, satisfaction with ASB is significantly lower than other services and there is a mix of improvement and decline in satisfaction across all measures when compared to 21/22. Easy to deal with and staff knowledge both showed improvements, whilst satisfaction with outcome has declined. The new TSM measure for satisfaction with approach to ASB handling is almost 10% below the Housemark benchmark, so this should be an area of focus going forward. It is worth noting when considering these results however that they are based on only 46 people, so this is a small sample.

3.4.2 The ASB process was revised with involved tenants to address issues with dissatisfaction and implemented in final quarter of 21/22 and has been monitored closely since. Managers are confident that officers are following the procedure and it is a very difficult area to improve satisfaction in. The fact the Housemark benchmark is 58% demonstrates this.

3.5 Lettings

3.5.1 Disappointingly, satisfaction with lettings showed a decline in all areas. Satisfaction with the overall lettings process was 87.1% (compared with 95.1% in 21/22). In addition to this, 83.9% of tenants felt that staff were easy to deal with (compared with 95% in 21/22) and there was 64.5% satisfaction with the condition of the property at the time of letting (compared with 82.9% in 21/22).

3.5.2 Given the investment into the empty homes standard and lettings process, this is surprising and it does not mirror the 22/23 transactional satisfaction with lettings of 94%. Again, as with ASB, it is worth noting that just 32 tenants who were surveyed had gone through the lettings process in 22/23, so this is a small sample.

3.6 Complaints and Queries

3.6.1 87.5% of tenants were satisfied with the way their call was handled (compared with 81.2% in 21/22) which is an increase of 6.3% and 76.6% were satisfied with the information and advice provided (compared with 78.5% in 21/22). Satisfaction in relation to being easy to deal with was 86.4% (compared with 85.6% in 21/22).

3.6.2 Complaints satisfaction remains low overall for 22/23. For context, it should be noted that just 10.8% (59) of tenants surveyed had made a complaint in the previous 12 months (compared with 9.9% in 21/22).

3.6.3 The new TSM measure for satisfaction with approach to complaint handling is 30.5% below the Housemark benchmark, so this should be an area of focus going forward. There was a 7.5% increase in being easy to deal with (50.9%) and 34% were satisfied with the outcome of the complaint (compared with 39.6% in 21/22). Complaints are closely monitored throughout the year across the service and as with ASB, this is a difficult area to improve performance in and is not helped by low sample sizes.

3.7 <u>Neighbourhood</u>

3.7.1 86.5% of tenants said they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live (compared with 91.5% in 21/22), which although a decline is 4.9% above the Housemark benchmark.

3.7.2 83.9% said the neighbourhood had improved or stayed the same (compared with 83.3% in 21/22) and 87.3% were satisfied with keeping communal areas clean and safe (compared with 86.1% in 21/22).

3.7.3 In relation to grounds maintenance and grass cutting, 82.1% were satisfied with this service (compared with 79.4% in 21/22), which is pleasing to see this moving in a positive direction after its second year of bringing the service in house.

3.8 <u>Home</u>

3.8.1 86.4% of tenants felt Newark and Sherwood District Council takes tenants' health and safety concerns seriously (compared with 86% in 21/22). 91.9% were satisfied with gas servicing (compared with 93.7% in 21/22), which is not statistically significant and pleasing that the introduction of a new contractor has not had a significant impact. 83.4% were satisfied with the heating and energy efficiency of their home (compared with 83.9% in 21/22).

3.8.2 95% of those receiving the careline service were satisfied (compared with 79.9% in 21/22). For context, satisfaction with careline for our transactional surveys for 21/22 was 97% so the drop for 21/22 STAR was not obviously explainable, so it is pleasing to see this has returned to where we would expect to see it for 22/23.

3.9 <u>Empowerment</u>

3.9.1 77.1% of tenants feel that their views are listened to and acted upon (compared with 77% in 21/22), which is static, but remains 12% higher than the Housemark benchmark. In addition, 83.8% were satisfied with the opportunity to make their views known (compared with 83.2% in 21/22), which remains 18% higher than the Housemark benchmark. 90.3% said they were able to interact with the Council in the way they wanted (compared with 88.2% in 21/22) which is a slight increase.

3.9.2 The only area of decline in this area was with the opportunities to participate in decision making (which was answered by 321 tenants) and was 72.9% (compared with 75.6% in 21/22). Although this is a small decrease it may indicate that our consultation processes may benefit from a review.

3.10 Value for Money

3.10.1 91.5% of tenants were satisfied their rent provides value for money (compared with 90.1% in 21/22), which is 7.9% up on the Housemark benchmark. Satisfaction that service charges provide value for money was 84.3% (compared with 78.8% in 21/22), which was up 16.7% on the Housemark benchmark.

3.10.2 Satisfaction with advice and support with managing their finances scored 88.9% compared with 89.3%, which is not significant.

4.0 Summary of Findings

4.1 Most of the areas that are benchmarked are above the Housemark benchmark, with the exception of ASB handling and Complaints handling. These are both areas of focus for the TSMs.

4.2 Overall satisfaction levels remain high, but ASB and complaints require monitoring.

5.0 Implications

5.1 In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, Officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime and Disorder and where appropriate they have referred to these implications and added suitable expert comments where appropriate.

5.2 Financial
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.

5.3 Digital and Cyber Security
There are significant improvements that can be achieved across all services through improvements with Housing ICT and the Directorate continue to work with ICT, having created a high-level plan of improvements to the system. A new housing management system was procured in the latter part of 22/23.

Background Papers and Published Documents
Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Appendix - STAR Report 2022/23