

**REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 16 OCTOBER 2012**

**SUBJECT: CUSTOMER FEEDBACK – NEIGHBOUR DISPUTES –  
1 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with details of the responses received in the customer feedback processes for anti social behaviour for the period 1 April to 30 September 2012.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section H(3) the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to its housing management functions.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-**

- (i) **considers the levels of customer satisfaction presented in this report; and**
- (ii) **agrees the improvement actions identified.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 21 June 2012, (Paragraph 11 of the minute refers), the Housing Sub Committee noted a report giving details of customer satisfaction levels in relation to the Council's management of neighbour disputes. This covered the period of the calendar year from 1 January to 31 March 2012. It was also agreed to implement a number of improvement actions recommended in the report.
- 3.2 The Council's approach to managing neighbour disputes and anti social behaviour is set out in its Neighbour Disputes and Anti Social Behaviour policy. Accompanying procedures guide Officers on how to manage the range of disputes that arise. During 1 April to 30 September 2012 this amounted to 60 cases. These are sub divided into four categories:-

Category A: involving violence/extreme behaviour/drug dealing  
Category B: involving noise nuisance, threats or serious disturbance  
Category C: disputes between 2 neighbours  
Category D: ordinary breaches of tenancy conditions e.g. untidy garden.

**4. ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK FOR PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2012**

- 4.1 **APPENDIX I** provides an analysis of the responses received for cases that were closed between 1 April and 30 September 2012 and a comparison to the figures for the financial year 2011/12. As can be seen, a total of 60 cases were closed and questionnaires were sent to tenants, with a total of 22 returned. This is a return rate of 37% which is comparable with previous quarters. If this level of return continues over quarters 3 and 4, this would result in a marked increase in return rate in comparison to the previous year.

Some caution is required with some specific areas of the feedback due to the low numbers of questionnaires received.

- 4.2 During quarters 1 and 2, no questionnaires were sent to Category A complainants. Only 3 were sent to Category B complainants, reflecting that the majority of complaints do not involve the most extreme end of the spectrum of anti social behaviour. Of the 22 returned, 12 were Category C complaints and 10 were Category D complaints. 16 of the 22 cases (73%) were noise complaints.

#### **Initial contact**

- 4.3 13 complaints (59%) were made by telephone or in person. Email, interview, letter and via Councillor/MSP were other means of reporting. This is similar to the results from 2011/12 and illustrates the importance of tenants having a range of options when reporting neighbour disputes.
- 4.4 The level of satisfaction with the way in which initial complaints during quarters 1 and 2 were handled has stayed constant with 16 respondents (73%) indicating that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the way in which initial contact about their complaint was handled. This compares to a satisfaction figure for 2011/12 of 72%. 10 cases or (45%) of respondents indicated satisfaction with the information and advice provided compared to 60% of cases in the previous indicating that the Council could improve in this area if this trend continued throughout the remaining half of the year. 5 cases (23%) expressed levels of dissatisfaction.

#### **Complaint management**

- 4.5 8 respondents (36%) indicated that they were satisfied with the time taken for an Area Housing Officer to visit. This is a slight increase on previous year's figures where 32% were satisfied. 7 respondents (32%) were dissatisfied with this area of activity. 10 respondents (46%) were satisfied with the explanation of how the complaint would be managed, with dissatisfaction levels in 8 cases (36%). The previous year's figures showed 16% dissatisfaction, therefore there has been a noticeable increase in the number of cases dissatisfied with the explanation of how their case would be managed.
- 4.6 9 respondents (41%) were satisfied with the way in which they were informed of the progress of their complaint. This is slightly lower than the overall percentage of 53% for 2011/12. 6 respondents (27%) reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with this aspect of case management.
- 4.7 13 respondents (59%) indicated that the Council had made an improvement to their dispute since it was reported. This is consistent with the previous year's figures (60%). 5 cases (27%) felt that there had been no improvement or the problem had got worse, in comparison to 24% in the previous year.

### **5. IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS**

- 5.1 At its meeting on 21 August 2012, this Committee agreed a draft Neighbour Dispute and Anti Social Behaviour Policy for consultation with tenants

(paragraph 12 of the Minute refers). The feedback received from complainants is being used to inform the current review of the Neighbour Dispute and Antisocial Behaviour Procedures which in progress whilst consultation on the draft policy is being carried out. The review of procedures will address how improvements can be made in relation to timescales, keeping tenants informed of the progress of their complaint and providing information and advice at the initial stages of the complaint.

- 5.2 The policy review includes a number of revisions which include the earlier closure of cases. This will mean surveys will be sent out earlier. With less time having elapsed between the complaint and the survey being issued it is anticipated that this may generate a higher rate of returns and provide more feedback.
- 5.3 As part of the review, and to comply with new indicators set by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), the Council is currently considering setting target timescales for investigating and resolving complaints. This change will consider the practicalities of giving customers a decision on their complaint within a specific timescale which may also assist in improving the level and frequency of feedback to tenants within set times. Whilst not all complaints may be resolved to each complainants' satisfaction, tenants may welcome a clearer timescale in which they will get a decision or further feedback.
- 5.4 Following the current review of both the policy and procedures, any information published in leaflet form or online will be fully updated to provide tenants with full explanations and advice on the process from making the complaint to resolution.
- 5.5 Further reports on feedback received from tenants will be presented to this Committee in June 2013.

## **6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan**

Improving the quality of service provision is a priority in the Service Plan.

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

There are no policy or legal implications arising from this report.

**(c) Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**(d) Risk Implications**

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

**(f) Property**

There are no property implications arising from this report.

**(g) Equalities**

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

**(h) Consultations**

Consultation on this report has been carried out with the Head of Housing and Property, Area Housing Managers (Moray East and West) and Aileen Scott, Legal Services Manager (Property and Contracts). Consultees are in agreement and their comments have been reflected within this report.

**7. CONCLUSION**

**7.1 This report presents the analysis of customer feedback in relation to the management of anti social behaviour complaints in council housing and identifies improvement actions as a result.**

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Background Papers: Held by author  
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