

REPORT TO: HOUSING SUB COMMITTEE ON 22 MARCH 2012

**SUBJECT: CUSTOMER FEEDBACK – NEW TENANTS’ SURVEY RESULTS
QUARTERS 1 - 3 OF 2011/12**

BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report to the Housing Sub Committee provides details of the results of the New Tenants’ Survey for quarters 1 – 3 of 2011/12.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the management and maintenance of its housing stock.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Housing Sub Committee:-

- (i) welcomes the high levels of customer satisfaction detailed in this report;**
- (ii) considers the results of the survey; and**
- (iii) agrees the actions in response to the feedback provided.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 25 May 2005, the Community Services Committee approved the Housing Service Customer Feedback Policy (paragraph 11 of the Minute refers).
- 3.2 On 5 March 2010, the Housing Sub Committee agreed changes to the Customer Feedback Policy (paragraph 4 of the Minute refers). The requirement to obtain regular feedback from customers in the key service areas, including new lettings, was included in the revised policy.
- 3.4 The Housing Best Value Group (HBVG) monitors the results of the New Tenants Survey on a quarterly basis. The results are fed back to service managers for improvement action when required. HBVG monitors the implementation and outcomes of improvement actions. Where individual comments are included in surveys, these are passed on a weekly basis to the relevant service manager for follow-up action.

4. SURVEY RESULTS

- 4.1 **APPENDIX I** summarises the results obtained from the New Tenants’ Survey during Q1-Q3 of 2011/12. The response rate was 22% representing 72 out of the 321 survey forms issued. 87% of survey respondents said they found applying for housing ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’, an encouraging 89% of respondents found the lettings process ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ and a positive 72% were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the condition of their new home.

4.2 The survey enabled respondents to make comments or suggestions on how the Council could improve their home, their neighbourhood, or its services. Nearly all respondents took the opportunity to comment. The results of the feedback is summarised below:

4.3 **Section 1: Applying for Housing**

4.3.1 In general, the results are encouraging with 89% of survey respondents expressing satisfaction with the information provided by the Housing Service. Respondents found staff to be helpful and were pleased with arrangements for viewing the property offered.

Examples of comments made are:-

- I found it easy to apply for housing with Moray Council
- it would help if the form had less pages
- due to my circumstances, the staff I was involved with were very helpful
- forms were easy to follow
- all staff were very helpful
- lots to fill in to apply
- was given verbal and written information
- any questions or queries I had were answered there and then
- very helpful
- I was told different information by different people
- straightforward
- everyone has been brilliant
- yes, staff were very helpful with the questions I needed to ask

4.4 **Section 2: The Lettings Process**

4.4.1 A significant 97% of respondents advised they were satisfied or very satisfied with the way in which their tenancy agreement, the 'sign-up' process, was explained to them. This was seen to be in-depth and comprehensive.

Examples of comments made are:-

- the girls I saw were very nice to me and did all they could to help me understand everything they were telling me. They were caring and very pleasant to me and made me feel relaxed. Thank you
- everything was explained properly
- I found myself homeless and council staff were there from the beginning until I was given a permanent home with the support I needed
- It would be better for the ex-tenant not to be present for the viewing
- all the information I needed was given on the sign up interview. Very well done
- everything was explained perfectly to me
- because I had been given different information from different people, this was a very stressful time

- the Housing Officer let me view the property and explained the repairs required
- plenty of time was allowed to go and view the house and then to accept it
- got a house very quickly, thank you
- wasn't given enough time as we were not able to see the house before accepting the offer
- I was very satisfied with the time I was given to decide on my decision on the house

4.5 **Section 3: About the Property**

- 4.5.1 72% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the condition of their home when they moved in. This is in line with response rates achieved in previous quarters.

Examples of comments made are:-

- everything was fine
- still don't know how to set the heating timer
- I had to report a few repairs
- when I moved into my new home my daughter was delighted
- I am pleased with my flat
- very good value for money
- all good apart from heating information
- I would say rent is excellent. Private renting is far more expensive
- I have health problems, having a semi-detached bungalow is excellent
- I love my new home and can't see me wanting to move from here (unless it floods again)
- would like information on how to use the heating system
- a lot of problems in the house that has or had got repaired
- having been homeless and being given this tenancy I hope to remain here as long as possible
- yes the rent does give good value for money

- 4.5.2 A recurrent theme within feedback has been that some new tenants do not know how to operate their central heating systems. The issue with managing heating systems is a complex one as it also touches on the cost of heating as well as tariff charging agreements operated by utility companies.

- 4.5.3 In comparison to the same period last year, there has been a 1% increase in the number of respondents who said repairs to their new home were not finished on time. The Void Task Group continues to examine all areas of void activity. The group has already identified obstacles and solutions to improving repair performance. All void repair inspections are now carried out by the Asset Management Team rather than Area Housing Officers. It is anticipated that the technical expertise of this team will enable the extent of void repairs to properties to be diagnosed at first inspection. It is anticipated that this will introduce greater consistency to the process and improve relet performance due to earlier diagnosis of required repairs.

5. GENERAL FINDINGS

- 5.1 The results of quarters 1, 2 & 3 in 2011/12 New Tenants' Survey show that new Council tenants are highly satisfied with their new homes and the service provided by the Council. It is clear from the levels of satisfaction indicated that, apart from one recurring issue of tenants finding it difficult to operate their heating systems a notable 72% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the condition of their new home. An even higher 97% of respondents think that the rent they pay gives good value for money.

6. IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- 6.1 Due to the diversity and complexity of some central heating systems, the Housing Service offers every new tenant the option of having the controls for their heating system explained by technical staff from Building Services. Building Service staff also programme the system on request.
- 6.2 Further attention, however, is needed to updating leaflets and other methods to explain how the systems work. This area of activity will be agreed and developed in consultation with the Moray Tenants' Core Group and the Asset Management Team.
- 6.3 In an attempt to increase response rates of survey returns staff are currently researching alternative methods and different techniques to obtain feedback. These could include the use of web based surveys, postal, phone and door-to-door surveys. Details of this will be reported to a future Committee.

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan

- (i) Local Priority 4 – Housing/Homelessness
- (ii) The Service Improvement Plan priorities- improving housing quality and 2.4 improving housing service quality.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no legal or policy issues associated with this report.

(c) Financial Implications

There are no direct funding implications arising from this report.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no direct risk implications associated with this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications associated with this report.

(g) Equalities

There are no equalities issues associated with this report.

(h) Consultations

Consultation on this report has been carried out with the Head of Housing and Property and senior managers in the Housing and Property Service. Any comments received have been reflected in this report.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This report provides details of the results of customer feedback on new lettings during Quarters 1 - 3 of 2011/12. The results overall are very positive in most areas and provide useful feedback to drive further improvements in services to tenants.**

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Background Papers: With author.
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