

**REPORT TO: HOUSING SUB COMMITTEE ON 21 JUNE 2012**

**SUBJECT: CUSTOMER FEEDBACK – NEW TENANTS’ SURVEY RESULTS FOR QUARTER 4 & ANNUAL 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 Quarter 4 and 2011/12 as a whole.
- 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.
- 3.3 Throughout the year, the Council asks all new tenants for feedback on their experience of moving home and satisfaction with their property.
- 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 Q4 of 2011/12. The response rate was 33% representing 36 out of the 109 survey forms issued. 86% of survey respondents said they found applying for housing ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ with an encouraging 94% saying they found the information ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ to understand. A positive 69% of respondents were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the condition of their new home.

4.2 **APPENDIX II** summarises the annual results for the whole period of the financial year 2011/12 and also provides a comparison against the 2010/11 results. The response rate was 24% representing 105 out of the 430 survey forms issued. This compares to a 34% response rate in 2010/11. 88% of survey respondents for the year said they found applying for housing 'easy' or 'very easy' with an encouraging 89% saying they found the information 'easy' or 'very easy' to understand. A positive 72% of respondents were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the condition of their new home.

4.3 Every survey form had a space for respondents to add in any 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 can be summarised as follows:

#### 4.4 **Section 1: Applying for Housing**

4.3.1 In general the results during quarter 4 and the year 2011/12 as a whole show encouraging high levels of satisfaction. During quarter 4, 94% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the information provided by the Housing Service with 92% finding staff to be very helpful.

Examples of the comments made are:

- I found the staff very polite and very helpful
- I asked a lot of questions. All were answered.
- Moray Council staff were excellent.
- All staff were very helpful.
- I wished to be housed where there would be some activity going on – delighted.
- The Housing Officer showed me the property and I was allowed to go back with a friend.

#### 4.5 **Section 2: The Lettings Process**

4.5.1 Again, the results during quarter 4 and the year 2011/12 as a whole are encouraging with the 'sign-up' process seen to be in depth and comprehensive. In quarter 4, 94% of respondents were satisfied with the way their tenancy agreement was explained. 100% of respondents advised their 'sign-up' interview gave them all the information about both the Council's rights and responsibilities as well as their own rights and responsibilities under the agreement.

Examples of the comments made are:

- Explained very well.
- Very well done.
- I have an excellent house and all was well explained.
- Was shown how to use heating system.

- Need a little more explaining of what you can and can't alter in your home, particularly outside

#### 4.6 **Section 3: About the Property**

- 4.6.1 During the year 99% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the condition of their home when they moved in. This figure was 69% during quarter 4. Whilst the results are generally positive in this section, some comments were received in regards to the decorative condition of the properties.

Examples of the comments made are:

- The property just required cosmetic work to one's individual taste.
- I am delighted with my new home. I am enjoying the warmth.
- After removing wallpaper, there were multiple cracks and plaster coming off the walls. This set me back moving in by a week as walls had to be reskimmed and had to dry before being decorated.

- 4.6.2 64% of respondents in quarter 4 and 70% of respondents annually were happy with the standard of internal decoration of their property. Of the 10 respondents in quarter 4 who reported that they were not happy with the decoration of the property, 7 of them (70%) received decoration vouchers. Of the 27 respondents annually, 25 of them (93%) received decoration vouchers which is an increase on the 2010/11 results.

- 4.6.3 Some respondents reported that they were not satisfied with the condition of the exterior of the property with 33% reporting rubbish being left outside the property, 31% reported the garden being untidy with 11% reporting gates, paths and fences being in a poor state of repair. This is mirrored in the annual response figures where 30% reported rubbish, 33% reported untidy gardens and 21% reported poor repair of gates, paths and fences.

- 4.6.4 A recurrent theme within feedback has been that some new tenants do not know how to operate their central heating systems. These results show that that 17% of respondents in Quarter 4 and 19% of respondents through the year stated they did not know how to operate their heating system which has increased from 12% in 2010/11. Further improvement work has been identified in this area and is being progressed. Trained members of staff are available to visit tenants in their homes, to demonstrate the systems. Improved information sheets are also being developed showing how the system operates.

### 5. **GENERAL FINDINGS**

- 5.1 The results the New Tenants' Survey show that on most counts Moray Council tenants are highly satisfied with their new homes and the service provided by the Council. 86% of respondents think that the rent they pay gives good value for money and 92% stated they were unlikely or very unlikely to move within the next 12 months.

- 5.2 Results overall have either increased or stayed the same in most categories during 2011/12 from the results in 2010/11. Satisfaction levels in a couple of areas have decreased marginally such as the outside condition and general tidiness of gardens, fences and paths when houses are let. One area which highlights a need for improvement is information tenants are given on how to use the heating systems.
- 5.3 Annually there have been specific increases in satisfaction levels compared to 2010/11 in the following areas: time taken to make a decision when offered a home; how the tenancy agreement is explained; how to pay rent; how to report emergency repairs; what to do if tenants can't pay rent and the standard of internal decoration of our properties. 87% of respondents think that the rent they pay gives good value for money and 82.5% stated they were unlikely or very unlikely to move within the next 12 months.

## **6. IMPROVEMENT AREAS**

- 6.1 Further ways will be explored to increase response rates of survey returns to obtain higher levels of feedback. These could include the use of alternative methods of surveying tenants. Details of this will be reported to a future Committee.
- 6.2 Further attention is needed to the process of informing tenants on the operating instructions of their heating systems. DLO and housing staff are continually looking at ways to enhance this process.
- 6.3 Improvement actions to enhance the general tidiness of gardens, condition of paths, fences and gates when properties are let to new tenants need to be considered.
- 6.4 Further investigation is required into the expectations of tenants with regards to the decoration of properties to improve this area of service. The Decoration Allowance Policy and Procedure is due for review this year which will assist in identifying improvements and how they can be implemented. A report on this will be presented 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.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 This report provides details of the results of customer feedback on new lettings during Quarter 4 and annually for 2011/12. The results overall are generally positive in most areas and provides useful feedback to improve our services to tenants.**

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Background Papers: With author.  
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