

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date **28 September 2023**

Report of: **Director of Housing**

Subject: **Pilot Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey**

SUMMARY

This report provides Members with a summary of a pilot tenant perception survey conducted during July 2023. The survey is intended to help Fareham Housing prepare for the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard introduced earlier this year.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel considers the contents of this report and comment or raise any points for further clarification.

INTRODUCTION

1. In April 2023 the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard came into effect. The measures are a new addition to the consumer standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing (the Regulator) and are intended to enable enhanced scrutiny of social housing providers.
2. A key element of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) is the requirement for social housing providers to conduct annual tenant perception surveys. As Fareham Housing has never conducted a survey of this nature before, a pilot was run in July 2023 prior to the official survey, due to be run in early 2024.
3. This report details how the survey was run, its findings, and how it can help guide future improvements within Fareham Housing.

THE TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES STANDARD

4. The Regulator wishes to promote increased transparency and accountability within the social housing sector. From this year all social housing providers are required to annually report on a set of twenty-two Tenant Satisfaction Measures. This will enable tenants to see how well landlords are performing and help the regulator identify providers that may require improvement.
5. Ten of the TSM consist of data already collected by social landlords, such as, fire and gas safety checks and the number of properties that meet the Decent Homes Standard. The other twelve measures are tenant perception measures and must be collected via an annual tenant survey.
6. The tenant perception survey asks tenants to rate their satisfaction with various services provided by their landlord. For example, the time taken to complete a repair and satisfaction that their home is safe. The questions, their wording and the answer options are all prescribed by the Regulator to ensure data from different providers can be accurately compared.
7. Providers must conduct the first official tenant perception surveys within the 2023/24 reporting year. The results and methodology must then be sent to the Regulator and published. It is anticipated that results from all providers will be made available next Autumn.

PILOT SURVEY

8. Fareham Housing ran a pilot tenant perception survey in July 2023. The exercise was primarily intended to provide an insight into the views of Fareham Housing customers and inform the methodology of future survey and engagement exercises.
9. The pilot survey imitated an official tenant perception survey. All the mandated TSM questions were included alongside a selection of demographic questions. Customers were informed that the survey was completely anonymous and that it should not take more than 10 minutes to complete.
10. A selection of additional questions relating to customer engagement were also included within the survey. Feedback gained from these questions will inform Fareham Housing's new Tenant Engagement Strategy which will be presented to the Panel in due course.

11. A sample of 1305 Fareham Housing customers were contacted and prompted to complete the survey either by email, post, or telephone. Most customers were contacted via email to keep the costs of the exercise low.

12. A total of 221 survey responses were received, providing a 17% response rate.

Communication type	Customers contacted	Customer responses	Response rate
Email	920	153	17%
Letter	200	39	20%
Telephone	85 (132 calls)	29	22%
Total	1305	221	17%

Figure 1: Pilot survey response rate by communication type

13. When the official survey is run in 2024 residents from all Fareham Housing properties will be encouraged to take part. The guidance issued by the Regulator stipulates that efforts should be made to ensure that the survey is accessible to all tenants and that providers should consider ways to overcome barriers faced by some tenants that may make it difficult for them to participate.

14. The new housing management system, Civica, will help the department achieve this by identifying customers' communication needs and preferences. Large print, house calls or easy to read surveys could all be utilised to overcome various communication barriers.

TENANT SATISFACTION

15. The tenant perception survey asked respondents to rate their satisfaction against each TSM. The summary below shows the proportion of respondents that stated they were either very or fairly satisfied with each TSM. The summary provided below is similar to the data that will be passed to the Regulator in 2024 following the official survey.

Tenant Satisfaction Measure	Respondents Satisfied (%)	Respondents Dissatisfied (%)
Overall satisfaction	76.0	7.2
Overall satisfaction with repairs	79.4	7.1
Time taken to complete most recent repair	82.1	6.6
Provided with a well-maintained home	79.0	6.3
Communal areas clean and well maintained	64.4	11.5
Provided with a safe home	79.7	6.0
Landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhood	56.0	8.3
Approach to handling anti-social behaviour	40.8	9.6
Complaints handling	29.5	20.5
Listens and acts on tenants' views	58.5	13.4
Keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	60.4	10.1
Treats tenants fairly and with respect	76.0	6.0

16. Overall, the rates of satisfaction recorded in the pilot survey are promising. The satisfaction measures relating to the repairs service, property maintenance and home

safety scored particularly highly, with satisfaction rates around 80%.

17. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the satisfaction measure relating to complaints handling received the lowest rates of satisfaction. 44 respondents had made a complaint in the last 12 months and only 30% were satisfied with the approach to complaints handling.
18. The measure relating to the handling of anti-social behaviour also received notably low scores with only 41% reporting they were satisfied.
19. Measures relating to tenant engagement, while not the lowest, do also require improvement. Satisfaction that Fareham Housing makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods and that it listens and responds to tenants' views received scores of below 60%. Work has already begun to revitalise the department's engagement activities which should in turn see rates of satisfaction improve.
20. The pilot survey results provide a useful benchmark against which future performance can be measured. It is encouraging to see that high rates of customer satisfaction can be achieved. However, the high level of variation between the different satisfaction measures clearly identifies areas within the Housing service where improvements are required.

COMMENT QUESTIONS

21. In the pilot survey, alongside the mandatory TSM questions, some additional comments questions were included to gain more insight into customer views. While providers can include additional questions within official tenant perception surveys only answers to the mandatory questions are reported to the regulator.
22. It is encouraging to see how many comments included positive feedback about Fareham Housing services. Some of the feedback included: "*Great service, always happy to help*"; "*Absolutely brilliant*"; "*Nothing is a problem or too much trouble*"; and "*Cannot fault the Fareham Borough Council housing department. They have been so very supportive and understanding*".
23. Appendix A illustrates the most common topics raised across all survey responses.
24. It should be noted that while comments questions provide an interesting insight into individual customer experiences it is difficult to draw actionable conclusions from them for several reasons.
25. Firstly, the comments questions were underutilised with under half of respondents providing answers for each question.
26. Secondly, respondents often used the comments boxes to raise a particular complaint or issue making it hard to paint a picture of the whole service. For example, one respondent asked for an explanation for why her neighbour had a new fence installed and she had not, another had an issue with the noise insulation between her flat and the one above.
27. As the proportion of respondents that left comments was low, some of the trends within the answers are at odds with the satisfaction scores. For example, while repairs received the highest satisfaction scores, negative repairs feedback featured frequently in the comments.

28. Ultimately comments can be used to enrich feedback received within the survey and highlight issues that residents have particularly strong feelings about. However, due to the small sample size, they are not a perfect service evaluation tool.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

29. When providers conduct official tenant perception surveys the survey methodology must also be sent to the regulator for publication. The methodology must include evidence that a representative sample of customers have completed the survey. Therefore, demographic questions must be included alongside the satisfaction measures.

30. Demographic questions were included in the pilot survey to test if a representative sample could be easily achieved. The results can also help inform customer engagement going forward as increased efforts can be made to encourage underrepresented groups to participate.

31. Overall, the demographic makeup of pilot survey respondents was broadly comparable with the wider Fareham Housing population, with a slight overrepresentation of female and sheltered housing residents.

32. Fareham Housing does not currently hold records on tenant ethnicity. Data from the 2021 Census (comparing household tenure type and residents' ethnic group) was instead used to check the representativeness of the pilot survey sample.

33. A full summary of demographic question responses can be found in Appendix B.

34. Next year the survey will also capture the type of building the respondent lives in, e.g. house, flat or maisonette and the geographical area in which they live. This will ensure that the sample represents views across the Borough.

NEXT STEPS

35. The pilot survey has helped the Housing department identify ways in which it can prepare for future tenant perception surveys. It has also identified areas within the service where efforts should be focused to help achieve increased customer satisfaction going forward.

36. In the short-term preparations for the official survey must take priority. This will include reviewing guidance notes issued by the Regulator and reviewing tenant data held by the Housing department to ensure all customer communication requirements are fulfilled. The pilot also allowed Officers to better understand the success and limitations of different survey methods, having tested three formats (email, post and telephone).

37. The pilot survey identified the need for a greater understanding of customer demographics. Exploring ways in which customer data records could be improved will form part of preparation for future survey and engagement exercises.

38. In the longer term the department will begin implementing improvements to address concerns raised in the pilot survey. A new Resident Engagement Strategy, for example, will not only improve customer satisfaction in relation to keeping tenants informed but also raise awareness of other work carried out by the department. The Strategy will focus on how to build a better, more positive relationship with customers.

This will lay the foundations for more formal engagement activities which seek to give residents more say over decisions that affect them.

39. Ongoing internal service monitoring and reviews will also help to ensure the hard work of the Housing Department is reflected in the data and satisfaction scores that will be annually presented to the Regulator.

RISK ASSESSMENT

40. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

41. The pilot tenant perception survey proved to be a highly useful exercise. It will help the Housing department run a survey later in 2023/24 that fulfils the requirements set out by the Regulator.
42. The pilot survey also provides a benchmark for future satisfaction surveys and identifies areas for improvement within the service.
43. The department will endeavour to build upon the positive feedback it has received and gradually reduce levels of dissatisfaction as tenant perception surveys become part of the general monitoring of the Housing service.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Themes Raised by Pilot Survey Participants in Response to Open Comment Questions

Appendix B: Demographics Questions: Pilot Survey Results Compared to Tenant Population Data

Background Papers:

None

Reference Papers:

None

Enquiries:

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