

## APPENDIX D

### WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

#### EXECUTIVE – 29 MAY 2012

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**Title:**

**PROPOSAL FOR A 2012 SURVEY OF TENANTS AND RESIDENTS (STAR)**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Keith Webster]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to propose a 2012 STAR Survey with the aim of producing a comprehensive and accurate picture of the satisfaction levels of Waverley's tenants. The data received can be benchmarked against comparable organisations to assess performance and value for money (via HouseMark).

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

This report relates to three of the Council's Corporate Priorities: **Value for money** (matching spending with satisfaction levels to maintain a customer focused approach), **Affordable housing** (ensuring our housing stock is well managed) and **Understanding our residents' needs** (asking our residents and tenants what their priorities are).

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

As part of the stipulated specification the contractor will be required to provide an accurate and representative sample based on demographic figures currently held by the Housing Service.

**Environment and Climate Change Implications:**

There are no climate change implications to this report.

**Resource/Value for Money Implications:**

Due to the proposed use of external contractors for the research, surveying, collating and presenting of results, HR implications will be limited to the time of the National Management Trainee in coordinating the project.

The survey results could have a significant impact on value for money implications. Tenants' satisfaction levels can be analysed and cross referenced against the Housing Service's functions to identify further investment or efficiency savings.

## **Legal Implications:**

The research contractor will be bound to meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act by sending a covering letter stating the purpose for which the data is being collected with each questionnaire and ensuring anonymity of respondents.

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## **Background**

1. In March 2012 the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) published a new regulatory framework for social housing providers.
2. Under the principles of co-regulation outlined in the regulatory framework, social housing providers have a duty to:
  - a. Be transparent with their tenants, service users and other stakeholders
  - b. To engage meaningfully with their tenants and offer them opportunities to shape the tailoring of services to reflect local priorities
  - c. Demonstrate that they understand the particular needs of their tenants
  - d. Provide Value for Money
3. The Council's Housing Service uses a range of satisfaction monitoring techniques in order to help service users shape the way we work. This is to meet the regulatory framework and demonstrate to our customers that we are an organisation that learns and uses their feedback to improve what we do.
4. Previously local authorities were required by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) under the previous regulatory framework to conduct a survey of tenant satisfaction (a STATUS survey) every three years.
5. The Council conducted its last STATUS survey in 2008/09. Prior to this there were STATUS surveys conducted in 2003/04 and 2006/07.
6. The results of these surveys were benchmarked against our peer group (consisting of stock retaining councils of similar size and location) to assess overall satisfaction, value for money and opportunities for participation.
7. The surveys also provided anonymous information on demographics, household size and other related tenant information. This information provides the Housing Service with an accurate 'customer' portrait of its tenants and residents.
8. The obligation under the regulatory framework for social housing providers to conduct STATUS surveys ended in 2009/10.

## **Introduction**

9. HouseMark initiated a Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) framework in Autumn 2011. This is a voluntary framework constructed in conjunction with the National Housing Federation (NHF), Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and the Tenants' and Residents' Organisations of England (TAROE).

10. HouseMark consulted 253 social landlords prior to launching STAR and 93% responded that they would be running a satisfaction survey that was compatible with the STAR framework.
11. The STAR framework enables Councils to meet the principles of co-regulation by providing residents and tenants with information on the Housing Service's performance against comparable organisations.
12. STAR offers a framework of non-optional core question modules alongside a range of optional question modules ('themes') that can be included or excluded depending on the circumstances of the surveying authority.
13. The STAR framework is compatible with the previous STATUS surveys so historical satisfaction data can be analysed for trends.
14. The STAR framework and satisfaction benchmarking is offered as part of the Council's membership to HouseMark.

### **Proposal**

15. Officers propose that a new satisfaction postal survey of Council tenants should be initiated.
  - a. It is proposed the new STAR framework should be utilised to this end to facilitate obtaining measurable performance information to be benchmarked against Waverley Borough Council's peer group.
  - b. It is proposed that the survey should be carried out in October 2012 and the survey period should run for one month.
  - c. Due to the resource implications for the Council it is proposed that the survey be undertaken by an independent research company. The survey specification will be forwarded for tender and bids assessed to ensure value for money, data protection and demonstrative experience.
  - d. The number of tenants surveyed is recommended to be around 1570. This reflects a survey of 1300 general needs tenants and 270 sheltered housing residents. This should achieve a minimum response rate of 625 and ensure a desired confidence level of 95% (+/- 4%).
  - e. The survey is recommended to be around eight pages in length with approximately 50 questions (similar to the 2008/09 STATUS survey). This should provide the Council with a comprehensive picture of tenant satisfaction levels, and the performance of the Housing Service's teams in meeting tenant expectations.
  - f. In addition to the question modules provided with the STAR framework an optional module based around the Council's recent change in waste disposal and recycling would be included. This module would not be able to be benchmarked.

- g. Please see Annexe 1 for a full list of questions proposed for the STAR 2011/12 survey.
- h. It is proposed that on completion of the survey, the selected contractor will provide two presentations of results. One to Council officers and one to Councillors and the Tenants' Panel.

### **Implications**

- 16. It is estimated, if the above proposals are implemented, that the cost (based on market estimates) would range from £4500 - £7000.
- 17. The implications of not carrying out a survey compatible with the STAR framework would mean the Council would not be able to submit satisfaction data to HouseMark for Core benchmarking.

### **Conclusion**

- 18. The proposal outlined above will assist the Council in maintaining its Corporate Priorities and ensure compliance with the principles of co-regulation outlined in the HCA Regulatory Framework.
- 19. The Council's Housing Service will be in a better position to ensure that services and investment are focused around maintaining and increasing high levels of satisfaction among tenants and residents.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Executive considers the draft proposals outlined above and approves the proposals for a 2012/13 STAR survey.

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### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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