

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 SEPTEMBER 2021

[MANAGEMENT BOARD

24 AUGUST 2021]

[EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

31 AUGUST 2021]

Title:

STAR RESULTS (Survey of Tenants and Residents)

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Anne-Marie Rosoman, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Community Safety and Emergency Planning

Head of Service: Hugh Wagstaff, Head of Housing Operations

Key decision: No

Access: Public

Note pursuant to Section 100B(5) of the Local Government Act 1972:

1. Purpose and summary

- 1.1 To review the tenants' satisfaction results, to consider and comment on how the team plan to share the findings and inform improvements for the housing service.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee:

- i. reviews this report and identifies any areas of further scrutiny,
- ii. requests an update report sharing the improvement action plan following the consultation and further review of results at the next Committee meeting, and/or
- ii. agrees any observations or comments it wishes to pass to the Executive .

3. Reason for the recommendation

To raise Councillors awareness of current satisfaction performance, support and scrutinise the results, communication and action plan.

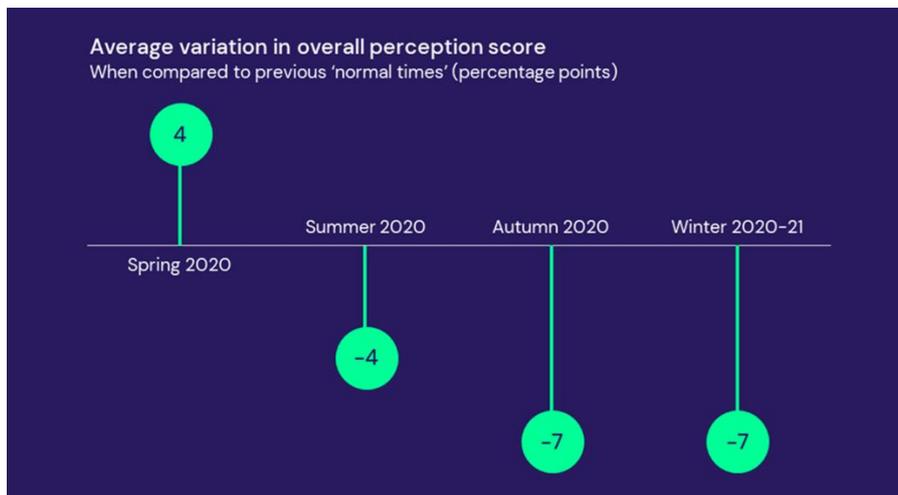
4. Background

- 4.1 STAR (Survey of Tenants and Resident) is a perception survey taken every two to three years to establish tenants' views of services and benchmark with other social housing providers. The Waverley 2019 survey was postponed due to the pandemic.
- 4.2 In spring 2020 a market research company was recruited to work with the Service Improvement Team to complete the survey. Tenants were invited to complete the survey online or over the phone during June. The questions sought views on a range of housing services and gave the opportunity for free text for further analysis. Please refer to Annexe One for copy of questions.
- 4.3 It was anticipated that satisfaction would be reduced due to challenges and changes in the responsive repairs contractor in early 2020 and the postponement of services due to pandemic lockdown. It is important to gain tenants views to learn lessons from the past and enable us to focus improvements on what matters to tenants. The survey provides tenants perspective on services to inform our improvement plans, the Asset Management Strategy, our action plan for the Charter for Social Housing Residents and provides a fresh base line.

The results

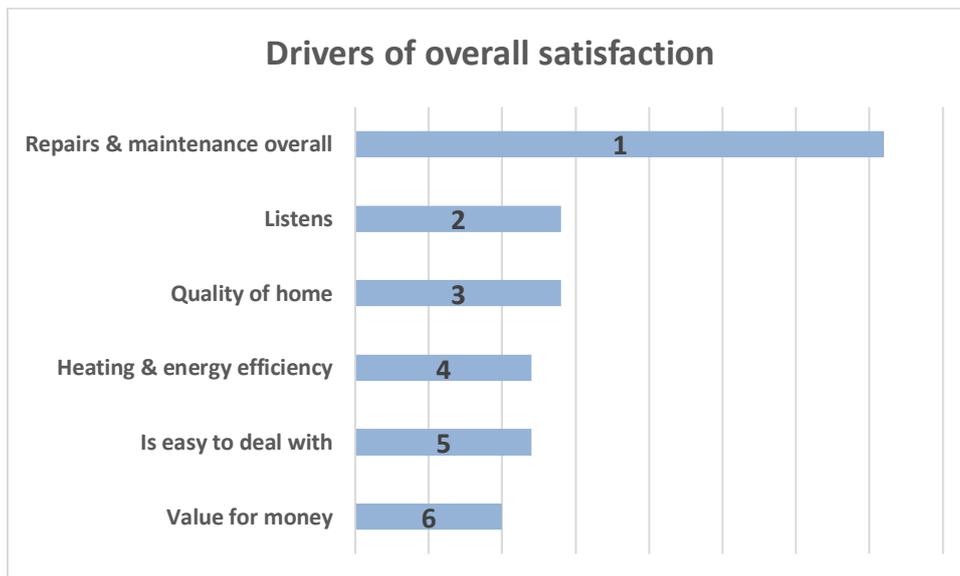
Overall

- 4.5 The mix of online and tenant surveys provided a good response with over 1,000 tenants views gained. The final results were weighted to be representative of the tenant population as a whole, including by age, area and property size and have a confidence rating of +/-2.7%. This comfortably exceeds the STAR stipulated target and response rate achieved in the Waverley 2017 survey.
- 4.6 Overall satisfaction with the housing services had unfortunately fallen by 7% since the last survey in 2017 (now at 76%), with 15% of the sample being actively dissatisfied. However, the picture is more complex than it seems because despite this fall, the proportion of respondents that gave the most positive rating (very satisfied) has conversely gone up from 37% to 40%, a pattern that continues across the survey.
- 4.7 Although some core ratings have significantly declined, primarily those related to repairs, others such as the extent to which Waverley listened to tenants' views and acted upon them (63%) had improved significantly, as has satisfaction with the quality of the home (81%) and to a lesser degree value for money rent (84%). Of the collected comments added by respondents 54% were positive about the housing service. Please refer to Annexe Two for Executive Summary of Results.
- 4.8 The fall in overall satisfaction is mirrored by other social housing providers during the last 18 months. At the beginning of the pandemic social landlords saw an upturn in perception, however this fell as the pandemic continued and services were reinstated. See below graph from HouseMark.



Drivers for satisfaction

4.9 The results clearly show that the key driver for satisfaction was the satisfaction with the responsive repairs service. Over half of tenants who were actively dissatisfied cited repairs as the reason, especially outstanding works. COVID lockdowns have impacted repairs satisfaction results for every landlord. For Waverley this was coupled with the unforeseen need to appoint an interim contractor just prior to the pandemic. Therefore, it is not unexpected that repairs have dominated the results.



Home improvements and energy efficiency

4.10 A key factor for the survey was to inform the asset management strategy. A new question asking how tenants would prioritise energy efficiency investment compared to other capital improvement works such as kitchen or bathroom renewals was included. On balance, tenants favoured other improvements with 46% preferring to invest in other key components of the home. However, a substantial minority (31%) preferred money to be spent on energy efficiency, with a further 23% valuing both equally. Therefore 54% of tenants are open to investment in energy efficiency initiatives.

Communication and Involvement

- 4.11 The second and fifth best predictors of satisfaction both relate to the customer relationship - how easy it is to deal with the housing service (78%), and whether tenants feel that they are being listened to (63%). This is an important baseline for improving our relationship with tenants and meeting the Charter for Social Housing Residents.
- 4.12 There was a significant increase (7%) in satisfaction, for “tenants are being listened to”, which means Waverley is now equal to the benchmark median. In addition, the proportion of tenants that were ‘very satisfied’ has increased by an even bigger 11% margin.

Communications plan

- 4.13 The results are a starting point to continue to build our relationship with tenants and improve services and satisfaction. A communication plan in response to the survey results has been drafted, as it vital to share the results as widely as possible with tenants, Councillors and the Waverley team.
- 4.14 The communication plan aims to ensure everyone understands how their service is seen by tenants and gain their feedback on: what improvement plans are already in place; what challenges they face to improve services and suggestions for further improvements.
- 4.15 Following the consultation events in September and October an improvement action plan will be developed to identify and track all actions to improve service delivery. Further analysis of the results will also be completed to identify themes and issues to inform future plans. Please refer to Annexe Three – overview communications plan.

Conclusion

- 4.16 The STAR results are reflective of the current circumstances and provide an excellent evidence base to prioritise and support improvements and share positive practice. The results and consultations will inform service planning, asset management strategy and ensure the service focuses on customer service especially for responsive repairs.

5. Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan

The report supports the Council’s Corporate commitment to promote “*Good quality housing for all income levels and age groups*” and aim to “be the best council landlord in the South East and to be acknowledged so by our tenants” .

6. Implications of decision

6.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)

Budget was allocated in 2020/21 to complete the research and brought forward to 2021/22 due to the pandemic. Short term improvements will be met through

existing budgets and any longer-term initiatives requiring funding will be included in the budget review process for 2022/23.

6.2 Risk management

STAR results identify the areas of dissatisfaction raised by tenants. Failure to listen to tenants and act on results would result in risks to reputation, noncompliance with regulatory standards and service delivery.

6.3 Legal

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Researcher ensured statistically proportionate representative of tenants by age, gender, location and BAME. Research methodology ensured inclusive access to give feedback online or by phone. The findings indicate that minority groups are significantly more satisfied than majority. Results indicate that under 35s, over 65s and BAME have a more positive view of our services.

6.5 Climate emergency declaration

The findings will inform the Asset Management Strategy and results indicate that 54% of tenants consider energy efficiency improvements at least as important as other home improvements supporting the Councils environmental and sustainability objectives.

7. Consultation and engagement

Research findings to be shared with Tenants Panel, wider tenant population, housing team and Waverley Managers Group.

8. Other options considered

Not applicable.

9. Governance journey

Management Board and Executive Briefing in August and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September. Comments from Housing Overview and Scrutiny to be reported to Executive in October.

Annexes:

Annexe 1 – STAR 202 Questionnaire

Annexe 2 – STAR Executive summary of results

Annexe 3 – STAR Communications Plan

Background Papers

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

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Agreed and signed off by:

Legal Services: 17 August 2021

Head of Finance: 18 August 2021

Strategic Director: 17 August 2021

Portfolio Holder: 18 August 2021