



AGENDA ITEM: **5(h)**

CABINET: 15 March 2016

Report of: Director Housing and Inclusion

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor J. Patterson

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SUBJECT: TENANT SCRUTINY REVIEW – CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of the outcomes of a tenant led review of customer feedback within landlord services and resultant actions.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Tenant Scrutiny Group (TSG) be thanked for conducting the service review into customer feedback.
- 2.2 That the contents of the service review and the subsequent comments/actions undertaken by way of delegated authority be noted.

3.0 TENANT SCRUTINY & THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 From 1 April 2012 under the Localism Act 2011, responsibility for social housing regulation passed from the Tenant Services Authority to the Homes and Community Agency and a new framework was introduced.
- 3.2 The regulatory framework was updated in April 2015 as is made up of three main categories;
- **Regulatory requirements** – what registered providers of Social Housing need to comply with, including a set of standards

- **Codes of practice** – designed to assist registered providers in understanding how compliance with the standards might be achieved
- **Regulatory guidance** – further explanatory information on the regulatory requirements and includes how the regulator will carry out its role of regulating the requirements

3.3 The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard deals with how registered providers should ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in;

- a) the formulation of their landlord's housing related policies and strategic priorities
- b) the making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- c) the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved
- d) the management of their homes, where applicable
- e) the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and
- f) agreeing local offers for service delivery.

3.4 In order to meet the requirements of the regulatory framework, in 2011 the Council established a number of tenant led thematic groups. The Service Review Service Improvement Group was responsible for the scrutiny of landlord services provided by the Council however, following a review of tenant involvement the TSG, took on this function and replaced all thematic groups in 2014.

3.5 All tenants involved in the reviews are volunteers and give up their own time to help the Council make improvements to services.

3.6 Previously tenants have reviewed the following landlord service functions which, have resulted in positive feedback and recommendations being made for further improvements;

- Caretaking service
- Garages and garage sites
- Energy efficiency

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The latest review undertaken by tenants was in the area of Customer Feedback. This review looked at how tenants of landlord services are able to provide feedback, including compliments and complaints.

4.2 The findings report, prepared by the TSG, can be found at appendix 1 and includes the methodology used for the review and eight suggested recommendations for implementation.

4.3 Table 1 below sets out the eight abridged recommendations from the TSG findings report together with my comments / actions taken under delegated authority:

No.	Description	Comments / Actions
1.	Improve feedback system for repairs by seeking feedback closer to the completion of the work.	Modern technology allows for this and this suggestion is welcomed and will be implemented.
2.	Tailor surveys according to tenants preferred method of communication including a slimlined, consistent approach	This will require some resource to set up but once established will help attract feedback
3.	Eliminate confusion for tenants by removing reference to Council from major works contractors' feedback systems and introduce Council feedback as a check	Points 3 & 4 are to some extent Interlinked and improved surveys will allow feedback to be used both by the Council and its contractors
4.	Develop a common system so that the experience for tenants is common whoever the contractor	
5.	Include repairs to communal areas in the feedback system	Accepted
6.	Remove statement from feedback surveys which indicate that a "no response" will be treated as positive feedback	Accepted
7.	Reporting of positive feedback to be encouraged by staff and circulated so successes can be celebrated	Guidelines have been issued to staff and are now available on the internet
8.	Consider quarterly draws to improve feedback rates	A pilot will be undertaken in 2016/17 to quantify the benefit of this approach

Table 1 – Abridged recommendations from TSG findings report with comments / actions from Director of Housing and Inclusion

- 4.4 In addition to the issues set out above, which relate specifically to housing services, tenants also raised concerns about the corporate complaints procedure. Tenants suggested that a shorter two stage process for formal complaints should be adopted. It should be noted that during the review by the TSG, the Council also conducted an internal audit review of the corporate complaints procedure. The audit review recommended streamlining the process by reducing the number of stages from three to two. As a result, the Council adopted a two stage process for formal complaints in July 2015.
- 4.5 In addition, tenants highlighted issues with the online system for registering complaints and that this was not "user friendly". They also noted that individual pages of the online form are not saved when they are completed and that any delay in completing the form beyond the current time-out limit can lead to the user having to start again from the beginning.
- 4.6 A copy of the report has been shared with the Borough Transformation Manager and Deputy Director of Housing and Inclusion who has agreed to investigate these issues and take action where appropriate. The online complaint form is being revised and the 20-minute time limit, which applies to all online forms, will be reviewed with BTLS.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Co-regulation of landlord services is key to the provision of good value for money services. Tenants leading reviews of service, provides a customer centric view which should be used to inform and improve service delivery.
- 5.2 Customer feedback should be encourage and made easy, so the Council understands how tenants receive services and learns from this. The tenant led review makes a number of recommendations for improvements.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 6.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder. The report has no significant links with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are some financial / resource implications arising from this report in respect of changing how feedback is captured, however this will be met using existing resources and any efficiencies as a result of the changes.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 This item is for information only and makes no formal recommendations. It therefore does not require a formal risk assessment and no changes have been made to risk registers.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Tenant Scrutiny Group – Review of Feedback in the Housing Services

Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 3 – Minute of the Landlord Services Committee (Cabinet Working Group) held on 9 March 2016 – to follow