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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>Housing and Community Services Committee</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 8</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup> November 2012</b>	<b>CATEGORY: DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>Director of Operations</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>Bob Ledger 5975 bob.ledger@south-derbys.gov.uk</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT: WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>STAR Survey ALL</b>	<b>REF: TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCSO1</b>

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## **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1 Members note the findings of the recent all tenant satisfaction STAR survey.
- 1.2 Members approve follow up actions arising out of the survey.

## **2. Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To outline to members the main findings of the STAR Survey which was concluded in August 2012.

## **3. Detail**

- 3.1 Following the removal of the regulatory biennial requirement to carry out the STATUS Survey in 2011, the Chartered Institute of Housing's performance organisation Housemark, of which we are members, developed the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) to measure satisfaction in a standardised way. Although similar to STATUS, the STAR survey was designed to be more flexible and some questions could be selected to suit the needs of the social housing provider.
- 3.2 Following Committee approval in March 2012 the consultation was undertaken using a questionnaire designed by SMSR Ltd in conjunction with our Officers.
- 3.3 The aim of the consultation was to assess tenants' satisfaction with South Derbyshire District Council Housing Services. More specifically the objectives of the consultation were:
  - To assess satisfaction with Housing Services, the home and the local area.
  - To gather opinion of estate services.
  - If a repair had been undertaken, to gather satisfaction with this repair.
  - To assess satisfaction with the advice and support provided by South Derbyshire District Council.
  - To gather opinion of supported housing.
  - To assess opinion of communication with Housing Services.
  - To understand views of future housing services such as fixed term tenancies and priority housing.

- 3.4 The STAR Survey provides valuable information on how tenants view the services we provide. We will use this information to ascertain what we are doing well and areas we may need to improve on.
- 3.5 The questionnaire was sent to all South Derbyshire District Council housing tenants on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Tenants were given two weeks to complete and return the questionnaire and tenants who did not respond were then sent a reminder survey. Responses were tracked and those who did not respond to either the initial mail out of the first reminder were sent a second reminder giving them a further two weeks to take part in the consultation. The consultation period ended on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 2012.
- 3.6 In total 1,958 completed questionnaires were received, giving an excellent response rate of 65%.
- 3.7 The vast majority of respondents were satisfied with the service provided by Housing Services (92%); including 56% that were very satisfied. Only 4% of respondents were dissatisfied to any extent with the service provided by Housing Services.
- 3.8 Overall there has been a 1% increase in satisfaction since the STATUS Survey in 2008.
- 3.9 The results of the STATUS Survey in 2008 placed Housing Services 4<sup>th</sup> highest in England (out of 181 local authorities) and 1<sup>st</sup> in the Midlands. This information was provided by a Government collated list of local authority landlords who submitted data. This no longer exists and the only comparison of STAR is via Housemark.
- 3.10 Housemark have over 500 social housing provider members and allows those providers to share performance and best practice information. We have benchmarked our STAR results against 145 other providers within the social housing sector nationwide.
- Housing Services were placed 'upper quartile' across all of the seven core (main service areas, repairs rents, allocations, etc) satisfaction questions.
  - With an overall tenant satisfaction rating of 92% for Housing Services, South Derbyshire District Council are the top performing retained local authority within the Midlands and 2<sup>nd</sup> highest within the UK.
  - With a tenant satisfaction rating of 90% for the provision of repairs and maintenance Housing Services are the top retained local authority landlord within the Midlands.
  - With a tenant satisfaction rating of 89.2% for the overall quality of tenant homes, Housing Services is the top retained local authority landlord within the Midlands.
  - With a tenant satisfaction rating of 91.4% for tenants who feel very or fairly satisfied that their rent provides value for money, Housing Services are the top retained local authority within the Midlands.
- 3.11 A summary of the key findings from the report were: Housing Services, nine out of ten respondents were satisfied to some extent with their neighbourhood as a place to live and the way in which Housing Services dealt with repairs and maintenance; satisfaction was also high with the quality of the home (89%) and the servicing of gas appliances (88%). Satisfaction with the neighbourhood has increased by 1% since

2008, however, tenants rated the quality of their home higher in 2008 (2% higher than in 2012).

- 3.12 Satisfaction was also high in terms of the friendliness and approachability of staff (92%) and 89% agreed that Housing Services provide an effective and efficient service.
- 3.13 Estate Services: almost nine tenths of respondents were satisfied with the overall appearance of the neighbourhood, and 77% of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with the grounds maintenance in their area. However clearly there is a marked difference in the degree of satisfaction here and further satisfaction and service monitoring has recently been put in place by the grounds team.
- 3.14 Repairs and Maintenance: respondents who had a repair carried out in the 12 months prior to taking part in the survey expressed high satisfaction towards all aspects of the repair. Satisfaction was particularly high when considering the attitude of the tradesmen (96%), dirt and mess being kept to a minimum (95%) and the speed in which the repairs were completed (94%) in addition, 95% said that their repair appointment had been met. Satisfaction with all aspects of this service were higher than those who rated as very/fairly good in 2008. The ratings in this area of work are extraordinarily high and are a testament to the service commitment of the whole repairs team and specifically the tradesmen themselves.
- 3.15 Advice and Support: around seven tenths of respondents were satisfied with the advice and support on claiming housing benefit and other welfare benefits (72%) and managing finance and paying rent and service charges (66%). Although these ratings were perhaps understandably lower than other areas there was less than 5% dissatisfaction for both elements.
- 3.16 Supported Housing: among those living in supported housing, more than nine tenths were either very or fairly satisfied with the safety and security of their home (92%) and how easy it was to access all areas of their home and scheme (92%). Satisfaction was also high with the facilities offered at their scheme (87%) and the Careline Team/ emergency call system (83%).
- 3.17 For Contact and Communication, the majority (86%) of respondents reported that their query had been dealt with within a reasonable time and 84% were satisfied with the speed and efficiency the staff were able to use when dealing with their query. Around four fifths (79%) of respondents were satisfied with the final outcome of their query; this is consistent with satisfaction expressed in the STATUS Survey 2008. Three quarter of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with the opportunities they were given to express their views and 82% felt the Council were good at keeping them informed.
- 3.18 A full copy of the results table and a summary of the STAR 2012 results have been provided to the Performance & Scrutiny Panel (the Panel is made up of 10 tenants who in conjunction with the Performance & Projects Officer review housing performance on a quarterly basis). The Panel have been asked to review the findings and provide recommendations for the areas of service which they feel need to be improved upon (based on the survey results). They have also been asked to prioritise the areas for improvement. The first Panel meeting was held on the 17<sup>th</sup> October and two further meetings are scheduled to take place in November. Results will be collated and presented to the Housing Management Team in January 2013 for consideration and action.

3.19 Some initial feedback on the STAR results has been received from the Chair of the Performance and Scrutiny Panel, Eric Lummis:

*'It was very notable that nearly all aspects of repairs and improvements are rated highly by tenants.*

*Overall, tenants appreciate a good level of satisfaction in general for SDDC housing services ..... the repairs and improvements team fly the flag and should be congratulated.'*

3.20 There are some areas of the survey where the results do indicate we need to review our service provision. In particular younger tenants have lower satisfaction levels generally and particularly around the quality of the home. As a service we already were planning a review of our fit to let standard (i.e. the condition in which properties are offered to prospective tenants) and this feedback means that the review will be carried out earlier and before the financial year end.

3.21 Although our satisfaction levels on outcome of enquiry hold up with the previous 2008 survey we need to examine in further detail where tenants are dissatisfied with the outcome of a service enquiry. This does not necessarily mean that the satisfaction rating in this area could be improved i.e. sometimes we have to tell residents we're not doing a requested repair or legal action will be taken for the recovery of rent. We do though need to do further examination to ensure we fully understand the feedback.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 None.

#### **5. Corporate and community implications**

5.1 Providing services that meet the needs and aspirations of customers is clearly a key aim of the Service and Council as a whole. Achieving this delivers on several Corporate Plan outcomes.