

Committee(s): Enforcement, Environment and Housing Committee	Date: 7 March 2022
Subject: Tenant and Leasehold Survey 2021 (STAR)	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Tracey Lilley, Corporate Director (Housing and Community Safety)	Public
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Summary

A STAR (Survey of Tenants and Leaseholders) Perception Survey for Brentwood Council was carried out from September 2021 to October 2021. The survey was carried out by M.E.L. Research.

The survey's results identified the areas for the Council to consider. In addition, the Council received a number of verbatim remarks from those who responded.

The Housing Team have developed an action plan to that responds to the issues raised. Some of the actions identified are covered by existing delivery plans by the Council based on previous feedback, and a specific plan is in place for the new areas of action needed.

The Council will be updating residents in the forthcoming Annual Report on the feedback received and the action being taken, in a "you said, we did" style.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

R1. To note the results of the STAR survey and approve the Action Plan for 2022/23.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. The questionnaire used included the core questions from the latest HouseMark STAR framework, ensuring the collection of robust data on resident

experiences and perceptions. The core questions were supplemented with bespoke questions on topics such as an interest in future engagement opportunities.

2. The survey was sent to all general needs tenants, sheltered housing tenants and leaseholders and shared owners (i.e. 2,382 tenants and 433 leaseholders/shared owners).
3. Respondents were sent a postal survey including a cover letter and a free postage envelope. Residents could also complete the survey on-line.
4. In total the Council heard back from 661 tenants, comprising of 471 General Needs tenants and 190 Sheltered tenants and 109 surveys from Leaseholders. According to MEL Research this achieved a confidence level of +/-3.03% and therefore the results are a good basis to take forward actions.
5. There are however a few items to note when considering the results and in particular that impact upon their context.
6. The survey was sent to all of our tenants and leaseholders. In other organisations who are larger this is normally sent to a sample group. In considering the responses, it should be noted that the where a sample is not used the reasons for the person replying should be considered. For example, it may be because they are unhappy with the service and as a result this may impact on the results. MEL Research were not able to provide any data or benchmarking for this issue.
7. For the Council there is also the issue that when residents completed the survey they were thinking of the Council as a whole rather than just the Housing Service. Again this may impact the results and is evidenced in particular by the comments that were submitted, which referred to other services or issues impacting on the perception of the Council.
8. The Covid-19 pandemic also needs to be taken into context when viewing the results, firstly because service delivery had to change dramatically with some respondents not getting all the services they were receiving prior to 2020.
9. The report shows Brentwood in the lower quartile for most core areas but it should be noted that there has been a relatively small number of organisations that have completed a STAR survey recently due to the pandemic and concerns about the impact on the scores.
10. The full report is attached at Appendix A and a condensed presentation is attached at Appendix B.

11. An Action Plan to address some of the concerns is attached at Appendix C.
The Council has a number of actions in place from the reviews that have been completed, including: Housing Strategy Delivery Plan, comparison against the social housing White Paper and current regulatory standards. In addition there is a department improvement plan and plan with the repairs and maintenance contractor (Axis Europe PLC).
12. The results from the survey confirms that the actions that were already in place were the right ones, and the STAR survey action plan is focussed on the new areas that have been identified through the survey.

Reasons for Recommendation

13. In terms of improving overall perceptions, understanding service priorities and where to put focus into is important 80% of tenants say that the repairs and maintenance is a priority to them. This area was the hardest service to operate through the pandemic so it is understandable that this will have impacted overall satisfaction. The core repair service performance is good compared to other organisations and a key focus going forward will be the communication with residents and how non-standard repairs or properties are responded to.
14. Strengthening the tenant's voice is important because of the wider policy context for social landlords and with the implementation of the Social Housing White Paper expected later this year. Ensuring tenants feel that the Council is easy to deal with, and keeping tenants informed and giving ample opportunity to making views known will go a long way to improving perceptions of how valued they feel as a tenant. This will be a key challenge and is being addressed through an updated Resident Engagement Strategy.

Consultation

15. The results have been shared with the Tenant Talkback group and their suggestions have been taken into account in the STAR survey Action Plan and the Resident Engagement Strategy. In addition, the verbatim comments received from residents have also helped formulate the Action Plan.
16. A meeting was held with Housing Staff to share results on 14 January 2022 and to incorporate their thoughts into the existing actions plans and the STAR survey plan.
17. An info-graphic with main results will be shared on the website with residents in April 2022 and highlight results shared in the Annual Report to residents.

18. It is proposed that the Council implement the Action Plan in Year 1 (2022), consult with residents in Year 2 (2023) and carry out a new STAR survey in Year 3 (2024).

References to Corporate Plan

19. Drive continuous improvement of our housing services and continue a service improvement programme to ensure our services are delivered efficiently.

Implications

Financial Implications

Name/Title: Phoebe Barnes, Corporate Manager – Finance (Deputy S151)

Tel & Email; 01277 312500 / phoebe.barnes@brentwood.gov.uk

20. There are no direct budgetary implications arising from the report. The delivery plan of the strategy should and can be met from within existing budgets and resources.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Amanda Julian, Corporate Director (Law & Governance) &

Monitoring Officer

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21. There are no legal implications arising from the strategy and delivery plan, where legal issues arise the appropriate legal advice will be sought.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Corporate Director (Planning & Economy)

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22. The outcomes sought from the strategy will help to improve local engagement and services to residents. This will lead to an improved local environment and support local economic activity.

Background Papers

There are no background papers to this report.

Appendices to this report

- Appendix A: Full STAR results.
- Appendix B: Summary presentation of results.
- Appendix C: Year One Action Plan.