

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 28 November 2011	<b>MEETING NAME</b> Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Leasehold Satisfaction	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Housing Business Improvement Unit	

## PURPOSE

This report is to provide highlights from the Home Owner Survey that has been carried out by the Business Improvement Unit.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

## SUMMARY RESULTS FROM THE SURVEYS

1. The Council began a quarterly sample survey of 800 home owners in quarter three of 2010/11, this was subsequently increased to 1000 in quarter two of 2011/12. The survey was conducted to establish what home owners think about their home and how satisfied they are with the services provided by the council. The consultation took place over a four-week period using a postal questionnaire and random selection of leaseholders from across the borough.
2. Three £25 vouchers are offered as an incentive to return the questionnaire. Return rates over the three quarters have been between 9% and 11%. For 9% return on the quarterly survey there is at a 95% confidence level a +/- 11.2 margin of error.
3. This report summarises the results for the first four quarters that the survey has been conducted and gives a cumulative result for the last year of surveys. This is also compared to the Ipsos MORI survey of 2005/6

Performance Indicator	05/06 Ipsos MORI	10/11 Qtr 3	10/11 Qtr 4	11/12 Qtr 1	11/12 Qtr 2	Last 4 Qtrs	Qtrly trend	Last 4 Qtr to Ipsos
% satisfied with the overall services provided by the council (NI 160).	33%	46%	57%	47%	53%	51%	↑	↑
% satisfied that their annual service charge represents value for money.	19%	27%	25%	30%	32%	28%	↑	↑
% satisfied that the major works service charges represent good value for money.	17%	12%	5%	24%	6%	11%	↓	↓
% satisfied with the overall quality of the major repairs work carried out.	n/a	18%	21%	31%	27%	24%	↓	n/a
% satisfied with the way the council generally deals with communal repairs and maintenance.	27%	30%	32%	35%	48%	36%	↑	↑
% satisfied with the general upkeep of their block or estate.	54%*	51%	66%	56%	62%	59%	↑	↑

Performance Indicator	05/06 Ipsos MORI	10/11 Qtr 3	10/11 Qtr 4	11/12 Qtr 1	11/12 Qtr 2	Last 4 Qtrs	Qtrly trend	Last 4 Qtr to Ipsos
% who feel that the council is good at keeping them informed about things that affect them as a homeowner.	50%	52%	62%	50%	71%	59%	↑	↑
% who described their officer as very or fairly helpful.	47%	55%	59%	58%	70%	61%	↑	↑
% satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.	61%	82%	76%	92%	79%	82%	↓	↑
% satisfied with the play areas in their neighbourhood.	n/a	66%	68%	53%	58%	62%	↑	n/a

\*satisfaction with the way their estate is cleaned and maintained

4. The survey results show that satisfaction with the overall services provided to Homeowners has improved as well as their satisfaction with the value for money of service charges, although the satisfaction is still low. The recent surveys with overall satisfaction between 46% and 57% compare well to other landlords.
5. The overall satisfaction of home owners is lower than that of tenants, which for the same period was between 69% and 76%. Benchmarking for with London authorities and ALMOs shows that home owner satisfaction is generally much lower than tenant satisfaction with a median of 73.30% for tenants compared to 41.50% for home owners, where results are included.
6. The areas of poorest satisfaction are:
  - The value for money of the annual service charge, though this improved since this Ipsos Mori survey in 2005/6
  - The value for money of major works service charges, however this has already been identified as a priority for the service.
  - The way the council generally deals with communal repairs and maintenance. The Council is addressing these issues as part of its action plan to improve the repairs service. Satisfaction has improved since the 2005/6 Mori survey.
  - The overall quality of the repairs work carried out. The Council is addressing these issues through reviewing and strengthening of its contract management arrangements.
7. Other key observations from the survey results are:
  - **Outcome of enquiries.** Those who are very dissatisfied at the outcome of enquiries are a substantial group, at 26.3% of responses.
  - **Keeping householders informed.** While there is a large group of householders who do not feel that the council is good at keeping them informed, at 22%, the quarter 2 figures for this indicator are much improved on the annual figure.
  - **Opportunities for participation.** Home owners feel much less satisfied at opportunities for participation in decision making than tenants. There is a difference of 15.2 percentage points between tenants and householders who are satisfied at opportunities for participation. The largest group among homeowners was those who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with opportunities, at 46.4%.
  - **Crime and antisocial behaviour.** Overall, the vast majority of residents express satisfaction about their neighbourhood as a place to live, with an overall figure of 81.6% satisfied. There is a significant variation of 12.4 percentage points between communities, with Dulwich at 88.9% and 76.5% in Walworth.
  - **Annual Service Charge** For the year, around half (50.4%) of homeowners believe that the annual service charge does not represent good value for money. Just over a quarter believe that it does represent good value for money, at 27.9%. Comments from homeowners suggest that there is some work to be done on understanding the nature of service charges. The majority indicated that more detail was needed in order to fully understand the services being provided.

Many homeowners noted that the service charges invoices sent to them were often revised later, making budgeting difficult.

- **Major works service charge** Annually, almost three quarters of home owners said that they did not think the major works service charge represented value for money. This was 73.7% of the annual results. This compares to only 11.4% of home owners who thought that the service charge represented good value for money. The scheduling of works was identified as an issue of concern. Some residents claimed that there had been no work for over a decade, while others stated that the major works they had anticipated had been continuously cancelled.

## BACKGROUND AND OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

These are cumulative results from over the four quarters and the percentages are of those respondents that completed the particular question.

### Contact with the Council's housing services

8. The ways home owners last contacted the council were:

Telephoned	55%
Emailed	22%
Visited office	12%
Sent letter	8%
Online via council's website	4%

9. The reasons for home owners last contacting the council were:

Service charge information	20%
Communal repairs	18%
Other, please specify	12%
Major works	12%
Leak from other property	7%
Grounds maintenance	6%
Antisocial behaviour	5%
Estate lighting	4%
Cleaning	4%
Refuse collection	4%
Tenant and resident association, area housing forum, or homeowner council	2%
Recycling services	2%
Altering or improving your property	2%
Selling a property	1%
Buying a property	1%

(a variety of reasons including: checking meters, insurance claims and structural problems)

### Resident Involvement

10. The ways that respondents were currently involved was (percentage of total responses):

Home owner council	30%
Area forums	20%
Tenants and resident association	13%
Email consultation groups	10%
Estate inspections	7%
Web forums	7%
Resident working groups	5%
Home owner conference	5%
Tenant management organisations	3%

11. The ways that respondents would like to be involved was (percentage of total responses):

Email consultation groups	20%
Web forums	17%
Home owner council	15%
Estate inspections	11%
Resident working groups	9%
Home owner conference	9%
Tenants and resident association	8%
Tenant management organisations	6%
Area forums	5%

### Crime and antisocial behaviour

12. The percentage of respondent's saying this area was a very big or fairly big problem were (each area assessed separately):

Noisy neighbours	36%
Vandalism	34%
Disruptive children/teenagers	31%
Crime	28%
Drug use or drug dealing	27%
Sexual harassment	6%
Homophobic harassment	6%
Racial harassment	5%

### Block and estate services

13. The percentage of respondent's saying this was a very big or fairly big problem were (each area assessed separately):

Rubbish or litter	42%
Parking facilities	41%
Dogs fouling	40%
Maintenance of roads and paths	33%
Fly tipping	30%
Vandalism/Graffiti	21%
Noisy dogs	18%
Empty garages	11%

### Annual service charges

14. The percentage of respondents saying the following services for which they pay annual charges were poor or very poor value for money were (each area assessed separately):

Responsive repairs	40%
Security services	32%
Care and upkeep	32%
Entry phone	29%
Lifts	29%
Estate grounds maintenance	28%
Communal TV aerial	26%
Heating	22%
Lighting and electricity	19%
Building insurance	19%

## Major Works

15. The percentage of respondent's saying they were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the following areas for the last major works which took place in their block or estate were (each area assessed separately):

Cost of work	74%
Quality of work	54%
Clarity of information provided about the work	46%
Consultation with yourself	43%
Consultation with resident representatives	35%

## BENCHMARKING AND KEY RESULTS FROM OTHER AUTHORITIES

16. HouseMark Benchmarking

Comparing results given for London Local Authorities and ALMOs (2009-11) for overall satisfaction with home owner services. Only 7 authorities submitted results.

Upper	Median	Lower
46.83	41.50	36.50

Southwark (Mori 2005/5)	Southwark (last 4 Qtrs.)
33%	51%

17. Barnet Homes 2008 leasehold survey

31% satisfied with the overall services provided by Barnet Homes.  
18% Satisfaction with value for money of service charges  
16% satisfied that major works service provides value for money.

Barnet homes benchmarked with 5 London and South East ALMOs with the average satisfaction being 34% and concluded that an excellent service is only likely to achieve satisfaction of between 40% and 50% which is in itself is disappointing.

18. Sutton Housing Partnership leasehold 2010 survey

49% of respondents stated that they were satisfied with the overall service provided.

19. Tower Hamlet Homes leasehold survey 2010

44% Overall satisfaction with services provided  
24% Satisfaction with value for money of service charges  
54% Satisfaction with caretaking - Cleaning  
34% Satisfied views taken into account

## USING FEEDBACK

20. This report confirms the areas of concern that home owners have been expressing to officers and councillors regarding the services that they receive. We use satisfaction reports along with other feedback to tailor our services and prioritise our improvements in a variety of ways at many different levels within the Council. It is therefore not surprising that the Council plan promises to address many of the major concerns that home owners have been raising including:

- improving the housing repairs service and other aspects of customer care, which are key issues for tenants and homeowners. We want our tenants and homeowners to be

involved in the design and delivery of ongoing service improvement. Practical improvements include ensuring that service charges for homeowners are accurately estimated and billed, that major works are value for money and that charges for major works are fully explained to homeowners. We will also deliver all of the recommendations of the leaseholder audit action plan.

- providing more opportunities for residents to become involved in the delivery of housing services through a refreshed resident involvement strategy

A delivery schedule is in place for the housing service to ensure that the plans become a reality.

These plans include:

- Ensuring that major works represent value for money: through tighter specifications, reduced variation orders and stronger contract management. We will involve residents in a review of our contract management arrangements and capture the outcome in a local offer.
- Working across divisions to improve the quality of information on major works to homeowners
- Delivering all the actions from the home owner audit improvement plan
- Delivering the home owner service charge module
- Improving the quality of information delivered to homeowners
- Promoting the Right to Manage with Tenant and Resident Associations /Area Forums. Delivering self management to at least 2 of the 5 currently in development