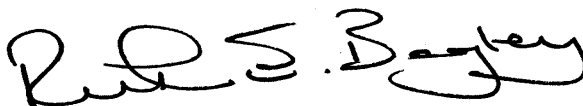


Date of issue: Tuesday, 29 October 2013

MEETING:	NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL (Councillors Minhas (Chair), Dar, Dhillon, Malik, M S Mann, Plenty, Shah, Sohal and Wright) <u>Non-Voting Co-Opted Members</u> Naomi Owens (Leaseholder Forum Representative), Terry Conroy (Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents) and Vivianne Royal (Customer Senate)
DATE AND TIME:	WEDNESDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER, 2013 AT 6.30 PM
VENUE:	MEETING ROOM 3, CHALVEY COMMUNITY CENTRE, THE GREEN, CHALVEY, SLOUGH, SL1 2SP
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	TERESA CLARK 01753 875018

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



RUTH BAGLEY
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I



<u>AGENDA</u> <u>ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
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Apologies

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

1. Declarations of Interest

All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Pecuniary or Non Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that Interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 3 paragraphs 3.25 – 3.27 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with paragraph 3.28 of the Code.

Members are asked to confirm that they do not have a declarable interest.

All Members making a declaration will be required to complete a Declaration of Interest at Meetings form detailing the nature of their interest.

- | | | |
|-----------|---|-------|
| 2. | Minutes of the last meeting held on 5 September 2013 | 1 - 4 |
|-----------|---|-------|

SCRUTINY ISSUES

3. Member Questions

An opportunity for Panel Members to ask questions of the relevant Director/Assistant Director, relating to pertinent, topical issues affecting their Directorate – maximum of 10 minutes allocated.

- | | | |
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| 4. | Call in: Management of Environmental Services Contract (Line Painting Element) | 5 - 8 |
| 5. | Star Survey Results | 9 - 62 |
| 6. | Older People's Housing Offer | 63 - 68 |
| 7. | Management of Houses of Multiple Occupancy | 69 - 96 |

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- | | | |
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| 8. | Forward Work Programme | 97 - 100 |
| 9. | Date of Next Meeting - 8 January 2014 | |



Press and Public

You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before the Committee considers any items in the Part II agenda. Special facilities may be made available for disabled or non-English speaking persons. Please contact the Democratic Services Officer shown above for further details.

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Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 5th September, 2013.

Present:- Councillors Dar (Chair), Dhillon, Malik, M S Mann, Plenty, Shah, Sohal, Conroy and Royal

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Minhas and Wright

PART 1

10. Election of Chair

In the absence of both the Chair and Vice Chair, the nomination of Councillor Dar as Chair of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for the duration of the meeting was proposed and seconded. There being no other nominations, it was:

Resolved – that Councillor Dar be elected as Chair of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for the duration of the meeting.

(Councillor Dar in the Chair)

11. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Malik declared a personal interest relating to Agenda Item 4 as a council tenant.

Councillor Shah declared a personal interest relating to Agenda Items 4 and 5 as a council tenant.

12. Minutes of the last meeting held on 19 June 2013

The minutes of the last meeting held on 19 June 2013 were approved as a correct record.

13. Member Questions

There were no members questions submitted.

14. Adoption of Housing Allocation Scheme 2013-2018

Hamid Khan, Head of Place Shaping, introduced the report setting out the proposed Housing Allocation Scheme 2013-18 and results of the recently completed consultation on the Scheme.

The new Scheme set out how social housing would be allocated to those who were eligible. The new Scheme would be fairer, simpler and more realistic, based on housing need not aspiration. With the demand for social housing in Slough far outstripping housing supply the council would be looking to allocate these scarce resources to those in greatest housing need, who had a track

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel - 05.09.13

record of being good tenants, and those who had contributed positively to their neighbourhoods.

The Panel was informed that a Queens Counsel (QC) had reviewed the proposed scheme and confirmed that it was fit for purpose and legally strong. The QC had also recommended that the initially proposed break up of Slough into three areas be removed so that Slough would be taken as one single area, and that the scheme should include a one offer policy with a 24 month suspension from the list if that one offer was rejected. And Equalities Impact Assessment had also been undertaken and had raised no concerns with the proposed scheme.

The Panel reviewed the results of the consultation and discussed the one offer policy which 61% of respondents had disagreed with. Members were particularly concerned at the apparent hardness of a 24 month suspension from the list if the one offer had been rejected. It was felt that this could be viewed as disproportionate, when the same suspension would be applied to someone found guilty of fraud.

Members noted that neighbouring boroughs, and most London boroughs had introduced similar one offer schemes, and that the scheme would provide flexibility to the system allowing the council to help those in the most need.

Resolved –

- 1) that in light of the current situation in Slough regarding the ratio of properties available to numbers on the Housing Register, the Panel endorsed the Allocations Policy as set out, with the inclusion of a one offer policy and 24 month suspension from the Register if this was refused;
- 2) that a list of refusal reasons that had been given over the previous 12-18 months would be circulated at the next meeting; and
- 3) that a report assessing the impact of the introduction of the new scheme would be provided to the Panel after six months.

15. Tenant Led Co-Regulation in Slough - Slough Customer Senate (SCS)

John Griffiths, Head of Housing Management, and Vivianne Royal, Chair of the Slough Customer Senate, introduced the report setting out the current arrangements for tenant scrutiny in Slough.

The process of setting up the current tenant scrutiny structure in Slough began in 2011, with the recruitment eight Senate representatives (out of 18 who expressed an interest). The Senate currently had seven members, with an ongoing process of attempting to recruit more. The Senate had completed two major reviews since January 2012: Repairs and Maintenance Review; and Caretakers Review; in addition to this, a review into Customer Complaints was now underway.

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel - 05.09.13

The primary difficulty had been recruitment, with initial interest often not leading to full applications or appointment to the Senate. This had a knock on impact as the membership of the Senate was unable to cope with the level of work required.

The Panel discussed the need for the Senate to remain independent from the Housing Service, and that it would need to develop so that it was driving its own agenda going forward. Communication and the recruitment process would be key to this, both of which needed to be more effective.

Resolved –

- 1) that Vivianne Royal and the Scrutiny Officer investigate how to improve communication between the Panel and Senate, particularly in relation to work programming; and
- 2) an update on progress made in recruitment to the Senate be programmed in to the Panel's work programme.

16. The Role of Caretakers in Supporting Neighbourhoods

John Griffiths, Head of Housing Management, introduced the report setting out how the Caretaker Service was being reviewed and restructured to better meet the needs of the community it serves going forward in a consistent way.

Particular elements being looked at were ensuring that the equipment used by the Caretakers was fit for purpose, with new vans being procured and improved technology e.g. mobile phones being issued. Caretakers were also being given training in anti-social behaviour and safeguarding to improve links with other services. It was hoped that a career grade would be introduced for Caretakers to provide a suitable career path, improve the stability of the workforce and assist with issues of recruitment. Housing Services would also be introducing an improved inspections regime to keep standards of service high.

The Panel discussed the need to ensure that the details of the service were adapt to improve provision e.g. ability of Caretakers to check lighting in areas when they only inspected during daylight hours.

Resolved – to receive the Star Survey next autumn and assess the proposed improvements to the Caretaker Service at that time.

17. Forward Work Programme

Resolved –

- 1) to add the Star Survey to its agenda on 6 November 2013; and
- 2) the agenda item on management and prevention of rent arrears/voids/damage to housing stock be moved to 8 January 2014.

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel - 05.09.13**18. Attendance Record 2013/14**

Resolved – to note the 2013/14 attendance record for the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel.

19. Date of Next Meeting

Resolved –

- 1) that an extraordinary meeting of the Panel would be held on 30 October 2013 to discuss the relationship between Slough and Heathrow; and
- 2) that the next regular meeting of the Panel would be held on 6 November 2013.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.05 pm)

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 6 November 2013

CONTACT OFFICER: Sarah Forsyth
(For all enquiries) (01753) 875657

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Councillor Satpal Parmar – Commissioner for Environment and Open Spaces

PART I
CONSIDERATION & COMMENT

CALL-IN: MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES CONTRACT (LINE PAINTING ELEMENT)

1 Purpose of Report

To provide the Panel with information related to Councillor Plenty's request for the Panel to look at the management of the line painting element of the Environmental Services contract.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

That the Panel consider the information provided in response to the call-in and form conclusions on the effectiveness of the management of the line painting element of the Environmental Services contract.

3 Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Priorities:

- Regeneration and Environment – the Environmental Services Contract is made up of two elements: integrated waste management (waste collection, recycling and disposal) and integrated street scene (street cleansing, highways maintenance and grounds maintenance). The contract aims to provide a 'one stop shop' by a single provider, demonstrating a commitment to partnership working, offering value for money and an improved service for residents.

5 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications of proposed action.

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal	None	None
Property	None	None
Human Rights	None	None
Health and Safety	None	None
Employment Issues	None	None
Equalities Issues	None	None
Community Support	None	None
Communications	None	None
Community Safety	None	None
Financial	None	None
Timetable for delivery	None	None
Project Capacity	None	None
Other	None	None

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications of proposed action.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of an EIA relating to the proposed action.

6 Details of Call-In

6.1 Councillor Plenty submitted the following call-in:

“I wish to call in the management and control of the yellow no parking line contract for scrutiny. Also to include disabled bay painting.

Experience of the last 18 months indicates that there is little or no control over the implementation of the contract, with a seemingly ‘It happens when and if it happens’ approach. As this has resulted in lines being painted some 3 months after residents were asked to keep the road clear, so there is clear evidence that the apparent lack of management/control of the outcomes from the contract result in a poor service to residents. Casework on the issue indicates staff dissatisfaction with the outcomes, with little or no ability to influence the contract outcomes, even when they are confirmed as unsatisfactory. Casework and Stage 1 complaints seem to have little or no effect on obtaining a satisfactory services, which leads me to believe that there may be inadequate control on contract outcomes.

Specific areas I would like covered are

- Typical timescale of ordering the service and it being provided.
- Procedures and processes currently used to monitor contract outcomes.
- The contractor we use sub contracts work. Are they providing adequate management of work they sub contract?
- What influence can we use, and do we use it?

- Are officers satisfied with the outcomes, especially the apparent lengthy delay between orders being submitted, and painting taking place?
- Proposals for improvement if appropriate.”

7 Officer Response

- 7.1 The operation of yellow line and road marking painting is dealt with in the Environmental Services Contract. The Environmental Services Contract is a 15 year contract with Amey (formally known as Accord/Enterprise) that has been in operation since 2002 and is managed strategically by Neil Aves (Assistant Director for Housing and Environment).
- 7.2 To manage the contract there are Strategic Quarterly Meetings that Councillor Satpal Parmar (Commissioner for Environment and Open Spaces), Neil Aves and Alex Deans (Head of Highways Engineering) attend in addition to representatives from waste and grounds. There are also Monthly Operation Meetings to deal with the programmed work and general performance of the contractor which Alex Deans leads on.
- 7.3 The contract is multi-cliented covering waste collection, disposal, recycling, grounds maintenance, street cleansing, transport scheme implementation and highways maintenance. The operation of road markings (yellow no parking line painting) in the contract is a transport operation.
- 7.4 On any given scheme or piece of work, the council officer will design the scheme and issue the works order to the contractor. The works order includes a time-limited window in which the works should be carried out. The council officer will monitor the work to ensure the work is being carried out in a timely and satisfactory standard. Once the works have been carried out satisfactorily, the work is signed off by the council officer formally for payment; the Council only pay for lines laid and not for cost of return visits (maximum 3). If the scheme is of a considerable size pre-start meetings take place, and a lead client project officer will manage the project which requires a project plan being submitted from the contractor.
- 7.5 With regard to the provision of road marking, including new or refreshing double yellow lines, these works are ordered by the council's Parking Team in the Transport Division. Due to the nature of these works the contractor sometimes has difficulty painting the yellow lines due to parked cars on the street. The Parking Team sometimes write to residents asking them not to park in a street and arrange for the council's contractors to paint the yellow lines within that window. Unfortunately not all residents adhere to these letters and the contractor is often unable to paint the lines as planned. When this happens the contractor will often take ad hoc visits in conjunction with other lining works locally to try to complete the outstanding works. The contractor is unable to issue an invoice for the lining works until the scheme or works identified on the works order are completed fully.
- 7.6 Having carried out further investigation since the Call In there are occasions when the contractor visits the site to complete outstanding lining works but this information is not being passed from the contractor back to the Parking Team. When residents call with frustrations about incomplete works, the Parking Team are not always aware of the efforts made by the contractors, nor do they have all the up to date information available. The result of this is that the council is unable to inform the public of the delays and changes that regularly occur. This issue came to light recently and there have been some improvements by the use of a spreadsheet including all ordered and

outstanding lining and signing works from the Parking Team. This has led to some improvements but we concede a concerted effort needs to be made on the part of the contractor to keep this spreadsheet constantly updated, ensuring any updates are passed to the Parking Team allowing greater control. This matter has been discussed with the contractors who are willing to proceed on this basis to improve service delivery relating to provision of lining across the borough providing a real-time picture of the works being carried out and the works still to be carried out.

8 **Conclusion**

- 8.1 Councillor Plenty's call-in raising questions about how the management of the line painting element of the Environmental Services contract is organised, and the Panel is provided with information to assist in an evaluation of the effectiveness of this.

9 **Background Papers**

None.

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 6 November 2013

CONTACT OFFICER: John Griffiths, Head of Housing Management
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875436

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Councillor James Swindlehurst – Commissioner for Neighbourhoods and Renewal

PART I

FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION

STAR SURVEY 2013

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The STAR survey is the standard survey used by social landlords to gauge residents' satisfaction with the services they provide. A standard set of core questions can be supplemented by selecting additional questions from a range of themes to allow data to be benchmarked against the performance of other, similar, social housing providers.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide the panel with a summary of resident feedback from the recently completed STAR survey.

2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

- 2.1 The panel is requested to note the report and make comment as necessary.

3. Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Priorities:

- Economy and Skills
- Health and Wellbeing
- Regeneration and Environment
- Housing
- Safer Communities

Good quality housing is essential to health and wellbeing. Working together with the community increases our understanding of local issues and concerns ensuring we are better placed to respond to local needs to create and maintain safe, attractive neighbourhoods and communities for residents to live in.

Civic responsibility and improving the image of the town – The Housing Service champions the needs of Slough’s diverse community; by offering a range of different ways to get involved in helping to shape services and communities we are demonstrating that taking an active part in their community can make a real difference, improving neighbourhoods, communities and the town as a whole.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

The cost of the recent STAR survey (£20,000) was covered by existing funds within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). It is anticipated that a sample survey will be repeated annually to test resident satisfaction in order to inform priorities and drive continuous improvement activities.

(b) **Risk Management**

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation(s)
Legal	None	None
Property	The STAR survey tests resident satisfaction with the quality of their home which offers the opportunity to test the condition of the council's housing stock.	None
Human Rights	None	None
Health and Safety	None	None
Employment Issues	None	None
Equalities Issues	None	None
Community Support	The survey offers tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to express their views. Feedback will be used to inform the development of improvement plans and establishing local priorities.	None
Communications	None	None
Community Safety	The survey offers residents the opportunity to comment on the quality of their neighbourhood. Feedback will be used to inform decisions and the development of improvement plans.	None
Financial	None	None
Timetable for Delivery	None	None
Project Capacity	None	None
Other	Surveys were coded so that all feedback could be analysed at Ward level. Reports were produced	None

	based on the current wards and the new wards from 2014. The data will be used to inform Ward profiles which, in turn, will inform decisions and the allocation of resources to address local issues and concerns.	
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(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act implications in relation to this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

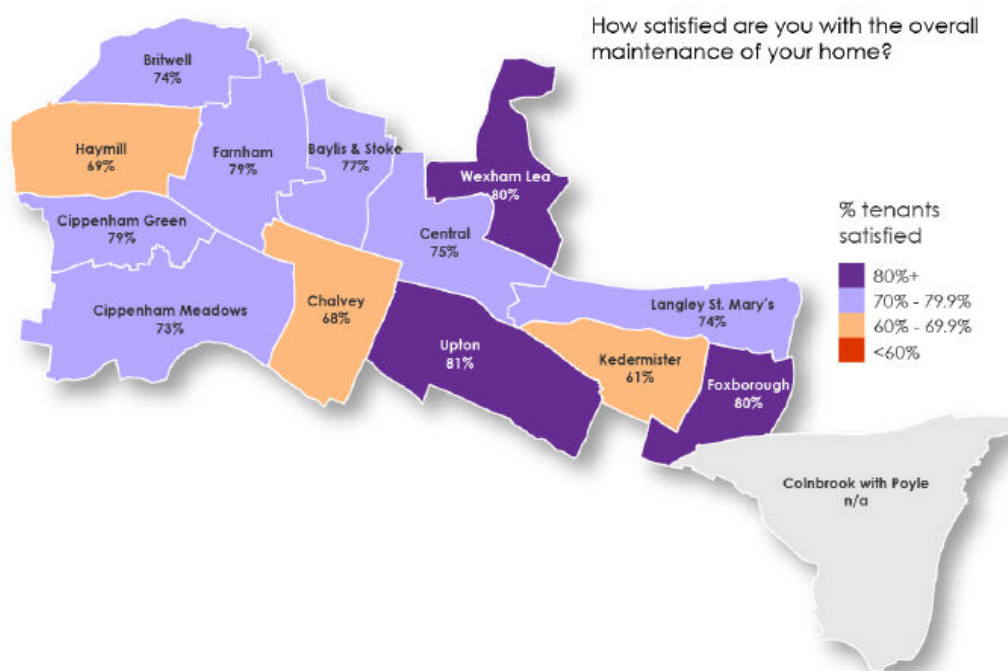
An Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix A.

5. **Supporting Information**

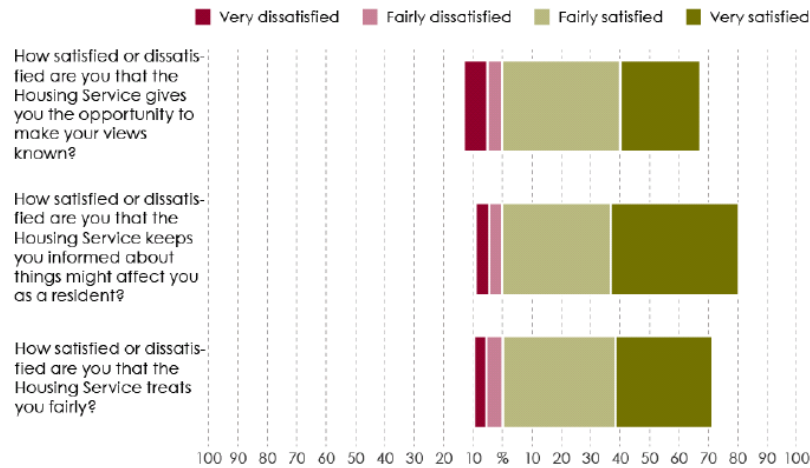
- 5.1 The regulatory requirement to test resident satisfaction on a three yearly cycle using the standard STATUS survey was scrapped by the Government in 2010. In response Housemark developed the STAR (Survey of Tenants And Residents) process to enable housing providers to continue to test resident satisfaction using standard questions that could then be benchmarked against other, similar, providers. Providers can choose from a range of themed questions to add to the set of core questions to be included in surveys.
- 5.2 The Housing Service carried out a resident satisfaction survey of all tenants and leaseholders between April and June 2013 using the STAR survey process. Following discussion by the management team, the Slough Customer Senate were invited to select the questions to be added to the core questions in the survey to support their scrutiny review programme.
- 5.3 Using the corporate tendering process, CR Market Research were selected to undertake the survey on the council's behalf and postal surveys were sent to all tenants and leaseholders on 12 April 2013. A further two reminders were posted on 9 May and 4 June which were then followed up with telephone surveys to ensure that a statistically significant return rate was achieved.
- 5.4 A total of 1,794 responses were received, representing a 26% return rate from tenants. The response gives 95% confidence (with a margin of +/- 2%) that the data represents a true reflection of tenants' views. Initially the feedback from Colnbrook & Poyle was discounted as only 5 responses were received from tenants living there however, in reality, this represents a 23% return rate from the 1 flat and 20 mobile home bases located there. A further report was therefore written to analyse feedback from this ward. The table below shows the percentage of responses by ward:

Ward	Tenants	% of tenants	Sample	% of sample
Baylis and Stoke	541	8.2%	146	8.3%
Britwell	1193	18.0%	239	13.7%
Central	226	3.4%	88	5.0%
Chalvey	409	6.2%	107	6.1%
Cippenham Green	322	4.9%	113	6.5%
Cippenham Meadows	431	6.5%	120	6.9%
Colnbrook with Poyle	14	0.2%	5	0.3%
Farnham	271	4.1%	103	5.9%
Foxborough	477	7.2%	111	6.3%
Haymill	720	10.9%	144	8.2%
Kedermister	957	14.4%	193	11.0%
Langley St. Mary's	238	3.6%	97	5.5%
Upton	219	3.3%	100	5.7%
Wexham Lea	616	9.3%	183	10.5%
	6,634		1,749	

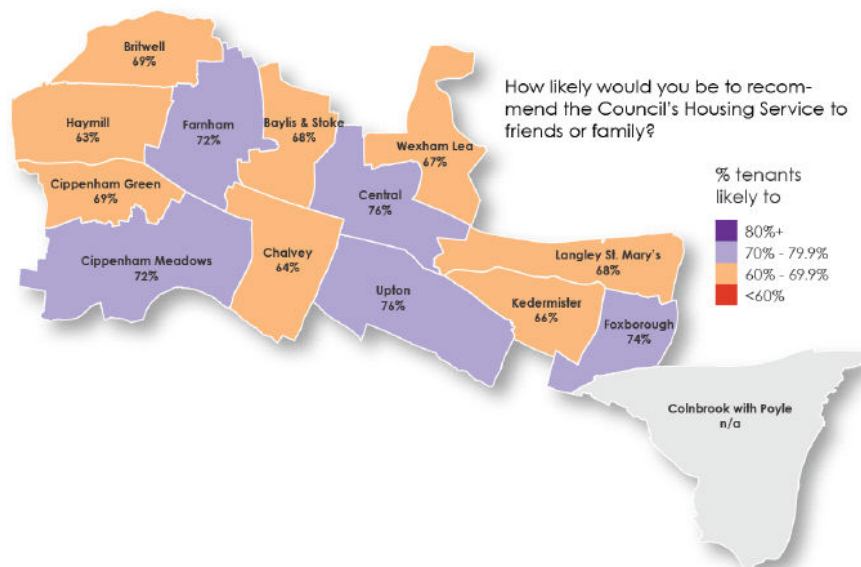
- 5.5 Disappointingly just 80 responses were received from leaseholders which does not constitute a representative view. However the feedback will be used to inform further research to understand leaseholder satisfaction with the service.
- 5.6 The feedback was analysed and separate reports written based on the current and new ward boundaries. The analysis did not reveal any geographic patterns or splits although overall residents living in Langley St Marys and Kedermister are generally less satisfied than residents living elsewhere in Slough. Further work will be done to understand the reasons for this.
- 5.7 The main findings of the survey were:
- 5.7.1 74% of tenants are satisfied with the maintenance of their home, 30% of which are very satisfied.



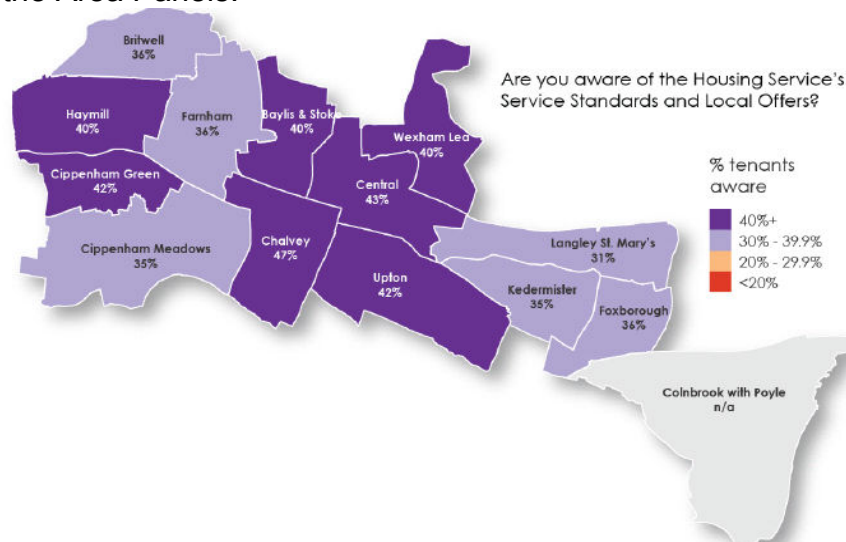
5.7.2 67% of residents are satisfied that the Housing Service gives tenants the opportunity to make their views known.



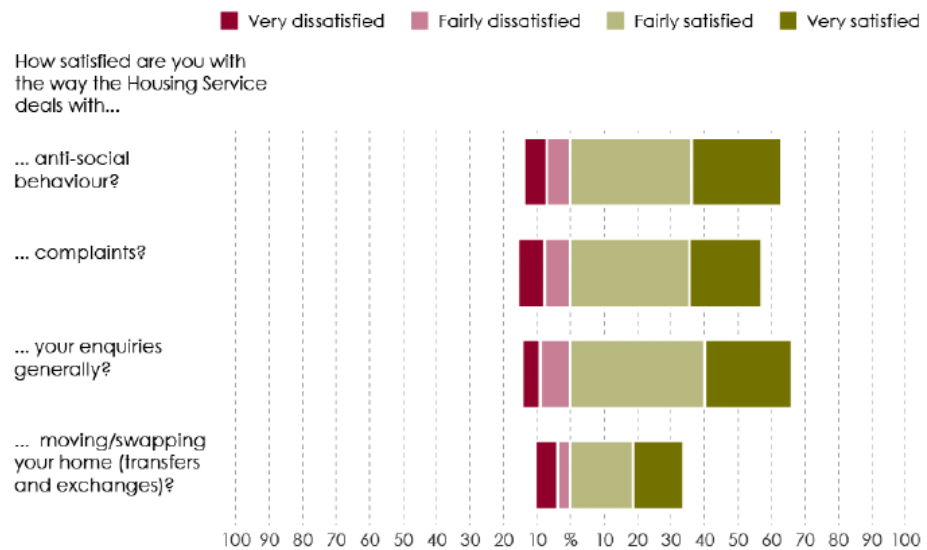
5.7.3 69% of residents said that they would be likely to recommend the service to others, 37% of which reported that they would be very likely to do so.



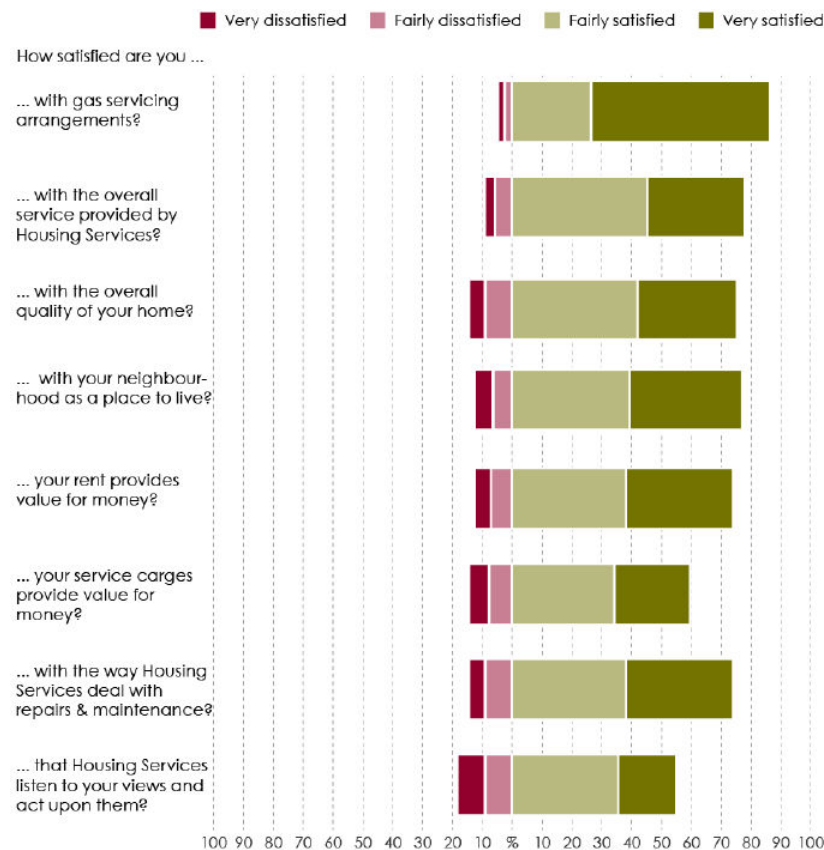
5.7.4 It was disappointing to note that only 39% of residents stated that they were aware of the Housing Service's service standards and local offers. Further work will be done to promote and monitor these, particularly with the Area Panels.



5.7.5 Whilst satisfaction with the way that complaints and enquiries are dealt with is generally high, it is clear from residents' feedback that further work needs to be done to improve satisfaction further in this area. The process to communicate and share learning from complaints will hopefully improve satisfaction in this area



5.7.6 There is also room for improvement on the indicators relating to residents' perceptions of the Housing Service listening to and acting on their views (55%) and whether service charges provided value for money (59%). A project looking specifically at service charges has been planned and is pending completion of the restructure of the service.

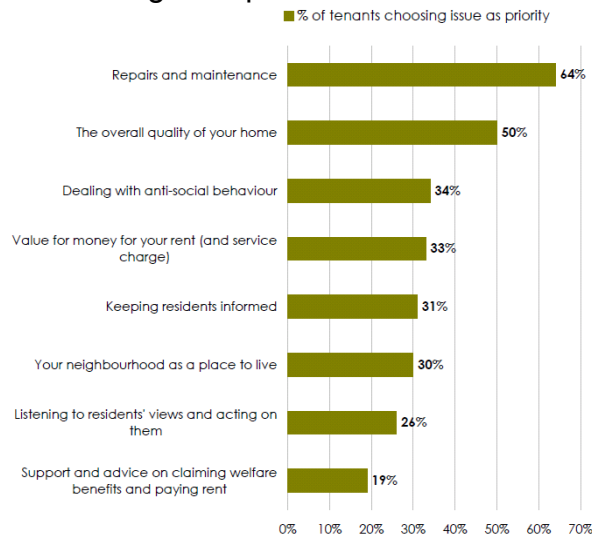


5.7.7 Further analysis reveals that there is a gap of 26 percentage points in residents' satisfaction with the overall quality of their home between residents living in Foxborough (86%) and Chalvey (60%). Opportunities to improve this will be explored with the Area Panel and the Senate.

5.7.7 When asked which areas the Housing Service should prioritise, residents indicated that the following should be the top priorities:

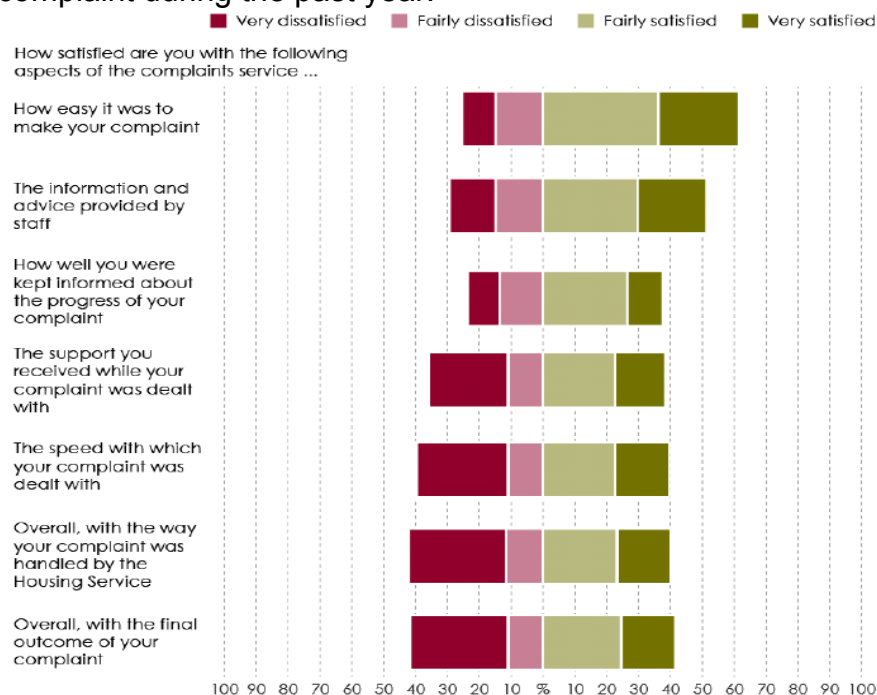
- Repairs and maintenance
- The overall quality of homes
- Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour

The full range of options to choose from can be seen below.

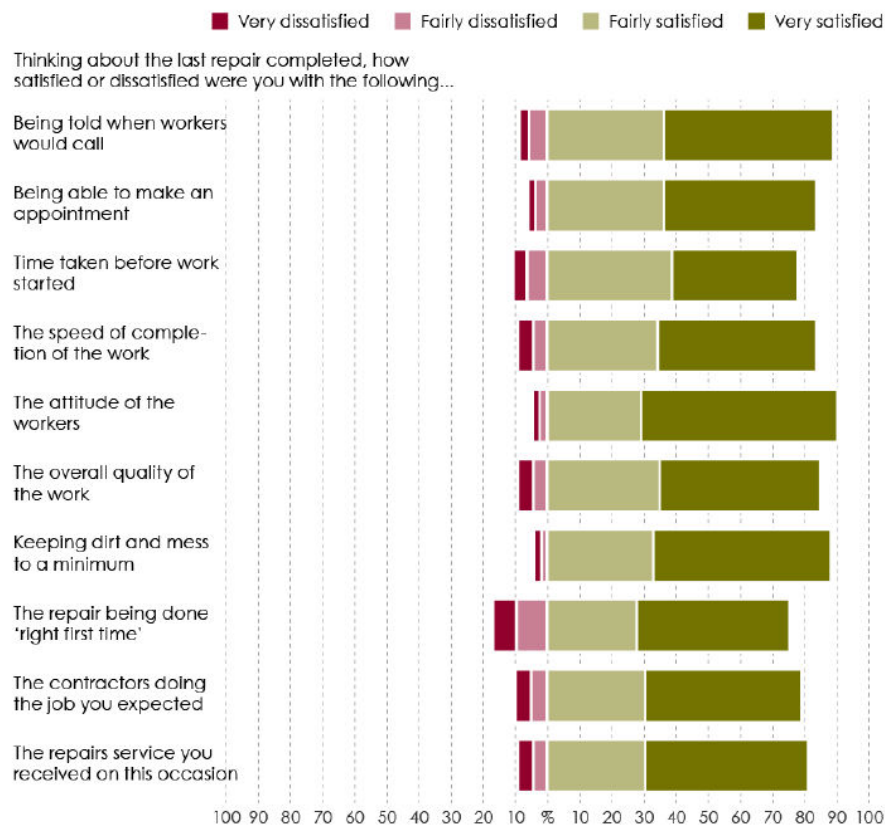


5.7.8 Overall 59% of respondents stated that they had contacted the Housing Service in the previous 12 months. Of these less than half found it easy to get hold of the right person, although two thirds found staff to be helpful.

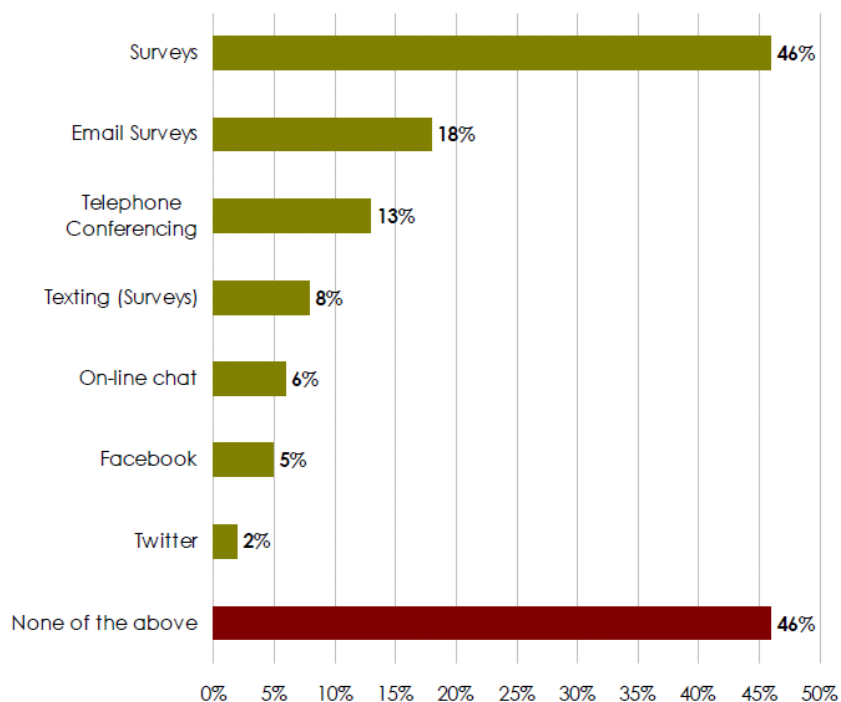
5.7.9 Just 52% of residents indicated that they are aware of the formal complaints procedure, although 15% stated that they had made a complaint during the past year.

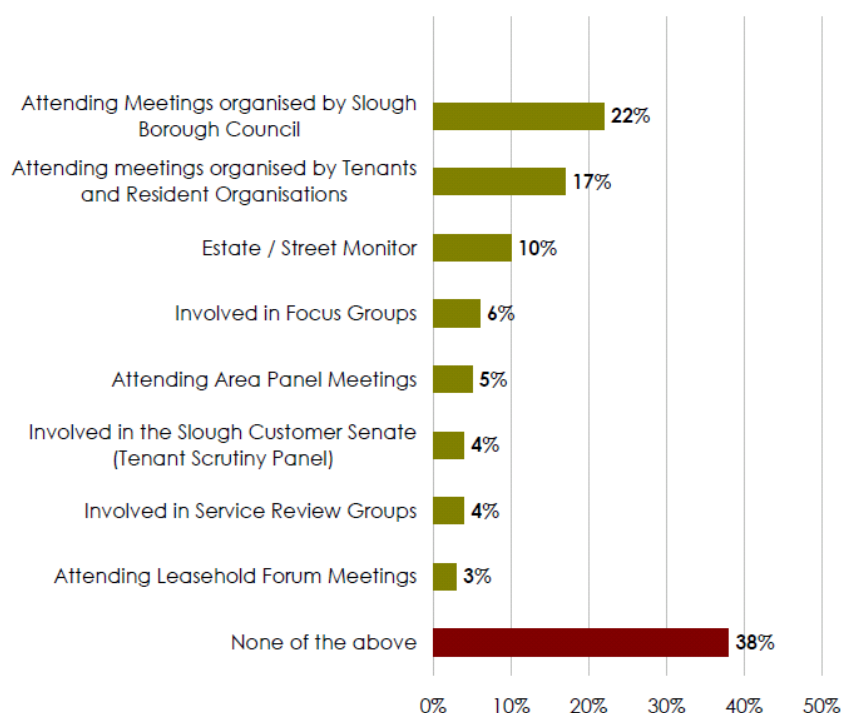


5.7.10 There are generally high levels of satisfaction with the repairs service delivered by Interserve across a range of measures.



5.7.11 When asked how residents would prefer to get involved in having a say about the Housing Service residents indicated that they would prefer to complete surveys above any other involvement method. Equally 46% of respondents indicated that they did not want to be involved at all. Interestingly, just 44% of respondents stated that they had access to the internet at home which would support access to some of these methods of involvement.





5.7.13 Respondents living in Colnbrook & Poyle indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with all aspects of the service and stated that listening to residents and acting on their views should be the main priority. Encouragingly all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the service is effective and efficient and staff treat residents fairly.

6. **Conclusion**

- 6.1 Together with the Performance Management Framework, the STAR survey feedback will be used to drive continuous improvement, establish priorities and monitor service delivery. Whilst the results are encouraging, they highlight a number of areas for improvement and opportunities to increase residents' satisfaction with the service.
- 6.2 A number of projects are underway to address the issues identified by the feedback, several of which will be addressed by the pending restructure and creation of a Neighbourhood Service supporting the delivery of tenure blind services to neighbourhoods. Detailed ward profiles have been developed to increase understanding of the issues impacting on neighbourhoods and communities and improvements will be further explored by working with the Senate and local Area Panels.
- 6.3 Research will be carried out to explore options for increasing digital inclusion to support the government's 'Digital by Default' campaign. Mobile working solutions will also enhance service delivery, enabling officers to deliver services to residents in their homes and neighbourhoods.
- 6.4 Further work must also be done to develop innovative and creative ways to involve residents in influencing decisions and scrutinising services. This area has traditionally proved to be challenging, however the value of engaging with and involving residents is significant in terms of developing and delivering high quality services that meet residents' needs and expectations.

- 6.5 It is proposed that a STAR survey is carried out each year on a sample of tenants and leaseholders to gauge the success (or otherwise) of initiatives to increase satisfaction.

7. **Conclusion**

- 7.1 The panel are asked to note the contents of the report and comment as necessary. A full copy of all STAR survey feedback is attached at Appendix A

8. **Appendix**

A - 2013 STAR Report



Insight through vision



2013 STAR Report
Report A: Tenants
(current ward boundaries)

Prepared by CR Market Research

July 2013

www.crmr.co.uk

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Introduction

This report presents an analysis of the 2013 STAR Survey undertaken by CR Market Research on behalf of Slough Borough Council.

We have collated the views of more than 1,700 residents on a range of issues to help the Council develop a better understanding of their tenants' views, perceptions and concerns.

The response rate gives us a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of +/- 2%. As such we can be confident that the findings from this report are a true reflection of tenant feelings at that time.

The key findings from our research are detailed in this report and will inform the organisation's decision making process by identifying priorities and expectations.

We believe the results from this latest research will provide Slough BC with further insight into the views of their tenants, and provide a valuable contribution to identification of priorities for the future.



Rose Collin
Sales & Marketing Director
CR Market Research

Key Findings

Our analysis describes a generally satisfied community of tenants. Levels of dissatisfaction are broadly low across most measures, although we draw attention to a couple of exceptions in the more detailed findings below. On the whole, tenants are much more likely to be satisfied with the services they receive from Slough Housing Services than dissatisfied and the service should be encouraged by the results of this survey. That said, there are always areas for further development and we have drawn attention to these throughout the report.

In terms of geography, the main discovery is that two specific wards – Kedermister and Langley St. Mary's – tend to have the least satisfied tenants. Beyond that key finding, there are no general geographic patterns such as north/south, east/west to report.

Some specific findings are listed below.

1. Three quarters of tenants (74%) are satisfied with the maintenance of their home, with 30% very satisfied.
2. Around two thirds (67%) are satisfied that the Housing Service gives tenants the opportunity to make their views known; this might be an area where performance can be improved, perhaps through enhanced promotion of what communications are available to tenants.
3. Nearly seven in ten (69%) said that they would be likely to recommend the service to others, with most of these (37%) reporting that they would be very likely to do so. Just 13% would be unlikely to recommend the Service.
4. Compared to most other measures, satisfaction levels are relatively lower for the way the Service deals with home transfers and exchanges. Just one in three tenants (33%) reported satisfaction on this specific indicator.
5. There is room for improvement on the indicator relating to perceptions of the Housing Service listening to and acting upon tenants' views (55%) and whether service charges provide value for money (59%).
6. At ward level, there is considerable variation in satisfaction with the 'overall quality of your home' measure, with a gap of 26 percentage points between Foxborough (86%) and Chalvey (60%).
7. A particularly low satisfaction score is seen in Langley St. Mary's; just 44% of tenants are satisfied that the Council listens to their views and acts on them.

8. Nearly two thirds of tenants feel that one of the top three priorities for the service should be repairs and maintenance of homes. Half feel the overall quality of homes should be a priority.
9. In terms of the brand and reputation of the Housing Service, 70% believe the Housing Service has friendly and approachable staff.
10. Overall, 59% of respondents stated that they had contacted the Housing Service in the last twelve months with a query other than to pay rent or service charges. Of these, just less than half of respondents found it easy to get hold of the right person. Two thirds found the staff helpful and a similar proportion felt their query was answered within a reasonable time.
11. Overall, 44% said that they have access to the internet at home. No wards reported a rate in excess of 60%, although two (Britwell and Langley St. Mary's) both had the majority of respondents stating that they do have access. The lowest rates were found in Upton (34%) and Foxborough (36%).
12. In terms of communicating with the service, there are three channels which are clearly more favoured than the others. The majority of respondents said that they were happy to use the telephone to communicate with the Housing Service, and in writing. This analysis highlights the value in retaining use of 'traditional' methods of communication, despite the growing interest in more modern technologies. Six in ten respondents (60%) said they were satisfied with the cost of contacting the service by telephone.
13. Just more than half of tenants (52%) are aware that the Housing Service has a formal complaints procedure. Fifteen percent of respondents said that they had made a complaint during the past year. Given the nature of the topic, it is not surprising that we see higher levels of dissatisfaction. For example, tenants are equally likely to be dissatisfied as satisfied with regard to overall outcomes, the way the complaint was handled and the speed with which the issue was dealt with.
14. It is important to set reasonable expectations in terms of what can be attained on the measures of complaints. Despite that, the service will be keen to see the number of satisfied customers outweigh those that are dissatisfied.
15. Nearly six in ten respondents (58%) said that they'd had repairs to their home in the last twelve months. There are generally high levels of satisfaction across measures relating to these repairs.
16. When asked whether and how they would like to get more involved in having a say about the way the service is provided, the only channel with any real support is surveys (presumably paper-based as email surveys are provided as a separate option). Just less than one half of respondents (46%)

said they would choose this method as a way of getting more involved. There is little interest in social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Project Background

Slough Borough Council Housing Service commissioned CR Market Research to conduct a postal and online based consultation exercise with a representative sample of their tenants during May, June and July 2013. The STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) Survey, launched by Housemark, is the replacement for the STATUS Surveys. They are designed to provide social housing landlords with the means of benchmarking satisfaction results with each other, and use a consistent set of questions to enable comparison.

The survey was based upon around twenty questions covering a range of themes such as satisfaction with the services provided by Housing Services, its responsiveness to problems and the standard of customer service provided when tenants make contact with the Council. Dependent upon answers in certain areas more questions were asked to go further into respondent's experiences and opinions. These concerned, for example, having contacted the Council, made a complaint or had a repair carried out.

Slough Housing Service has more than 6,600 tenant households. To ensure the survey is representative, CR Market Research has applied quotas for each Borough Ward area. These are presented in Figure 1. Wherever appropriate we have provided statistics broken down to this geographical level to enable the Housing service to assess variations across different areas. Report B provides the same analysis as this report, but using the new ward boundaries that will come into effect in May 2014.

Respondent Profile

As mentioned, we have strived to ensure the sample is as representative as possible across the Borough's wards. Figure 1 presents the respondent numbers in each ward.

Ward	Tenants	% of tenants	Sample	% of sample	Sample as % of ward
Baylis and Stoke	541	8.2%	146	8.3%	27.0%
Britwell	1193	18.0%	239	13.7%	20.0%
Central	226	3.4%	88	5.0%	38.9%
Chalvey	409	6.2%	107	6.1%	26.2%
Cippenham Green	322	4.9%	113	6.5%	35.1%
Cippenham Meadows	431	6.5%	120	6.9%	27.8%
Colnbrook with Poyle	14	0.2%	5	0.3%	35.7%
Farnham	271	4.1%	103	5.9%	38.0%
Foxborough	477	7.2%	111	6.3%	23.3%
Haymill	720	10.9%	144	8.2%	20.0%
Kedermister	957	14.4%	193	11.0%	20.2%
Langley St. Mary's	238	3.6%	97	5.5%	40.8%
Upton	219	3.3%	100	5.7%	45.7%
Wexham Lea	616	9.3%	183	10.5%	29.7%
	6,634		1,749		

Figure 1

Figure 2 presents the percentage of tenants surveyed in each ward.

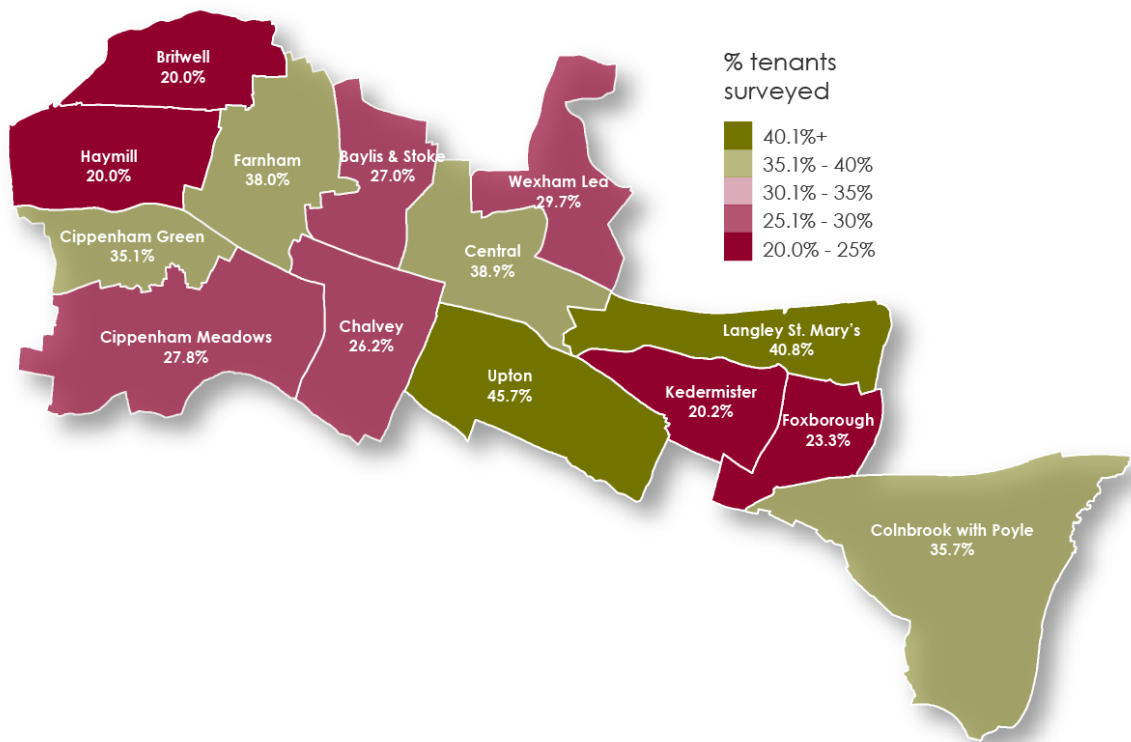


Figure 2

Due to the very small number of tenants in Colnbrook with Poyle Ward, and subsequently the number of respondents (5), it is not possible to publish reliable statistics for this one particular ward. Please refer to the appendix for a resume of finding for this ward. For all other parts of the borough, we have provided ward-level statistics wherever appropriate.

We can also profile respondents in terms of sex, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and religion (figures based on main tenant unless stated).

Age & Sex	Male		Female		Not recorded		Overall	
18 - 29	17	1%	46	3%	1	<1%	64	4%
30 - 49	133	8%	245	14%	1	<1%	379	22%
50 - 69	334	19%	284	16%	3	<1%	621	36%
70+	264	15%	296	17%	9	1%	569	33%
Not recorded	9	1%	24	1%	83	5%	116	7%
Overall	757	43%	895	51%	97	6%	1,749	100%

Figure 3a

It is also of interest to compare the age profile of respondents in each ward with the age profile of tenants and the overall resident population (as recorded in the 2011 Census).

Ward	18 - 29			30 - 49			50 - 69			70+		
	Sample	Tenants	Census	Sample	Tenants	Census	Sample	Tenants	Census	Sample	Tenants	Census
Baylis and Stoke	4%	10%	29%	26%	24%	42%	38%	29%	21%	32%	36%	8%
Britwell	4%	18%	21%	31%	38%	44%	42%	30%	23%	23%	14%	12%
Central	4%	9%	31%	14%	27%	41%	33%	38%	20%	49%	26%	7%
Chalvey	3%	15%	32%	31%	34%	45%	37%	31%	16%	28%	21%	7%
Cippenham Green	3%	5%	21%	12%	11%	43%	44%	42%	26%	41%	41%	10%
Cippenham Meadows	8%	6%	25%	27%	31%	50%	45%	40%	20%	21%	23%	5%
Colnbrook with Poyle	20%	30%	24%	20%	10%	47%	60%	45%	22%	0%	15%	6%
Farnham	3%	12%	26%	28%	36%	43%	28%	27%	23%	42%	26%	9%
Foxborough	1%	8%	21%	16%	22%	45%	47%	39%	23%	36%	32%	11%
Haymill	3%	19%	23%	23%	35%	44%	32%	23%	24%	42%	23%	9%
Kedermister	6%	17%	22%	32%	38%	42%	36%	27%	24%	26%	18%	11%
Langley St. Mary's	5%	15%	22%	21%	26%	41%	32%	32%	26%	42%	27%	11%
Upton	1%	4%	24%	2%	9%	43%	47%	42%	23%	50%	45%	10%
Wexham Lea	4%	9%	26%	21%	15%	40%	32%	29%	22%	44%	47%	12%
Borough	4%	14%	25%	23%	29%	44%	38%	31%	22%	35%	26%	9%

Figure 3b

Notes:

% of Sample relates to percentage of those respondents that provided their age

% of Tenants relates to percentage of tenants aged 18+

% of Census relates to percentage of residents aged 18+ as at 2011 Census

Colnbrook with Poyle sample percentages based on just five respondents

Ethnicity	Number	%
White British	1,050	60%
White Irish	41	2%
White Other	66	4%
Asian or Asian British	261	15%
Black or Black British	126	7%
Mixed	29	2%
Other	18	1%
Not recorded	158	9%

Figure 4

Religion	Number	%
Christian	976	56%
Muslim	225	13%
Sikh	41	2%
Hindu	25	1%
Buddhist	11	<1%
Jewish	7	<1%
Other	33	1%
No religion	214	12%
Not recorded	217	12%

Figure 5

Limiting Long Term Illness	Number	%
Yes – limited a lot	446	26%
Yes – limited a little	339	19%
No	814	47%
Not recorded	150	9%

Figure 6

Sexuality	Number	%
Heterosexual/Straight	1,074	61%
Bisexual	12	<1%
Gay/Lesbian	9	<1%
Not recorded	654	37%

Figure 7

Analysis

Maintenance

To begin with, respondents were asked how satisfied they are with the overall maintenance of their home. Available options ranged between 'very satisfied' to 'very dissatisfied'.

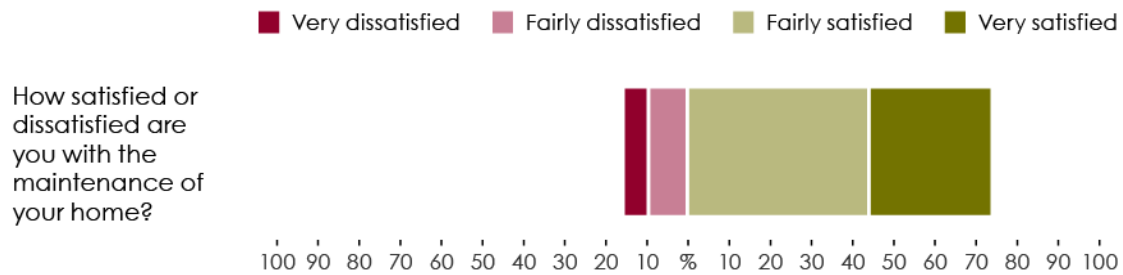


Figure 8

Overall, 74% of tenants are satisfied with the maintenance of their home, with 30% very satisfied. Just 15% were dissatisfied.

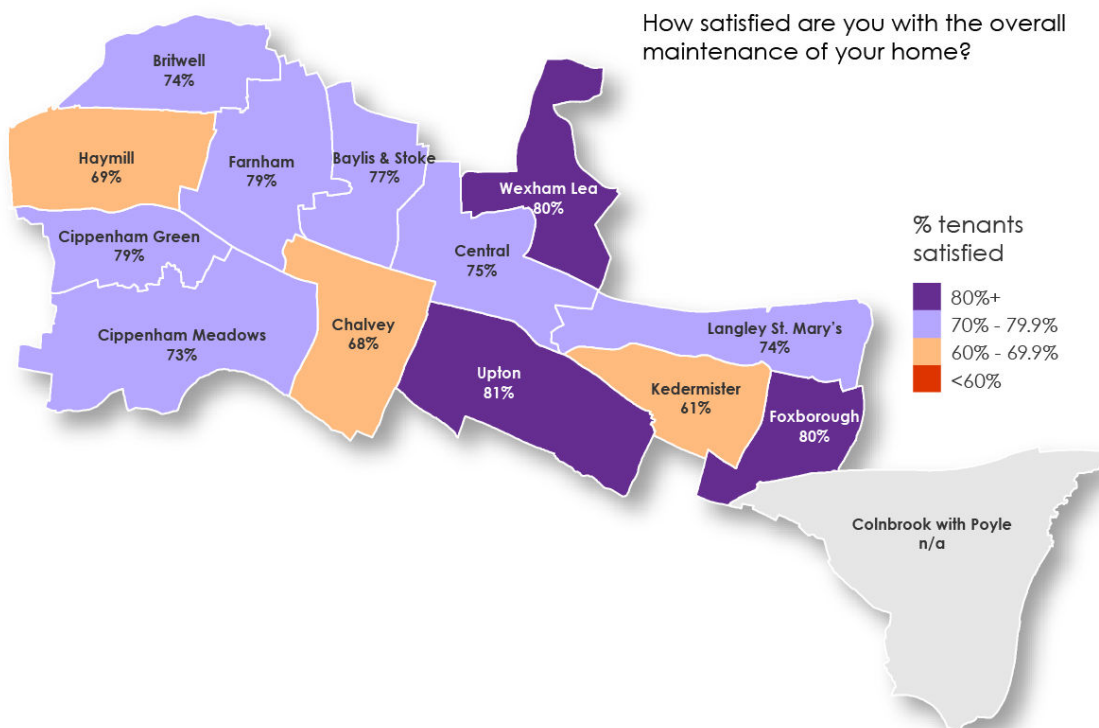


Figure 9

At ward level, we see that satisfaction figures ranged from 61% to 81%, with the highest levels recorded in Upton and the lowest in Kedermister.

Engagement

There then followed a series of questions relating to communications and engagement with tenants. Again, respondents were asked to express their level of satisfaction across a number of specific questions.

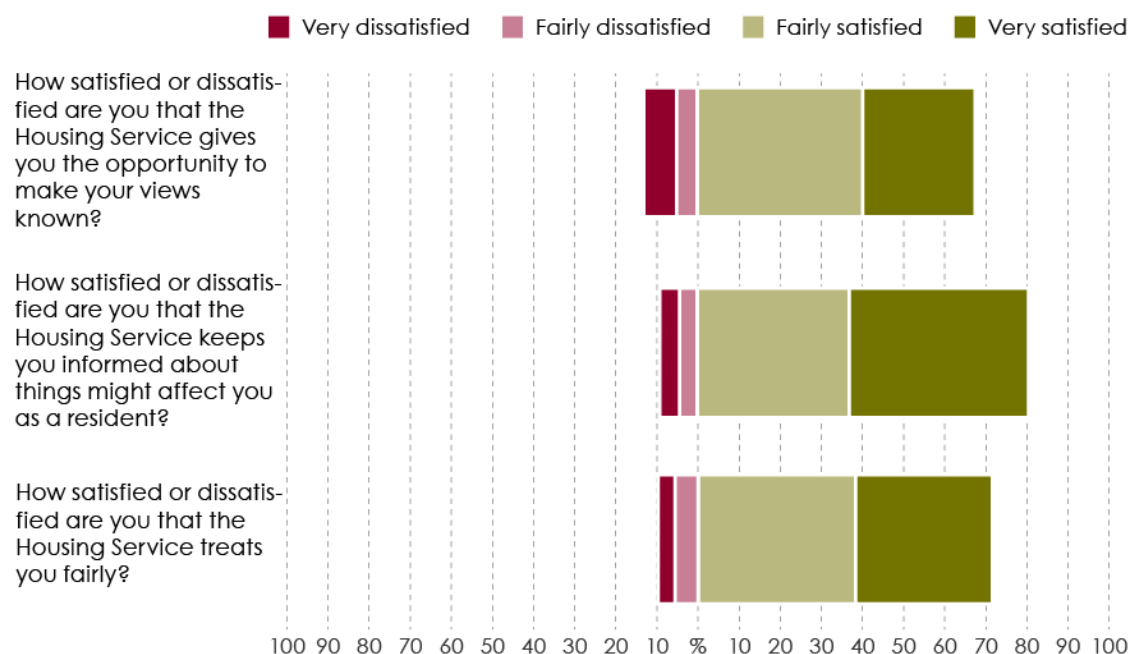


Figure 10

The analysis identifies that satisfaction levels are broadly high across all three measures.

Around two thirds (67%) are satisfied that the Housing Service gives tenants the opportunity to make their views known. Around one in eight (13%) are dissatisfied.

Four in every five respondents (80%) were satisfied that the Housing Service keeps them informed about things that might affect them as a resident, with the majority of these (43%) very satisfied. Just 9% were dissatisfied.

Just more than seven in ten respondents (71%) were satisfied that the Housing Service treats them fairly, while just 10% were dissatisfied.

These are encouraging results at the borough-wide level. Figure 11 presents more detailed satisfaction levels at ward level.

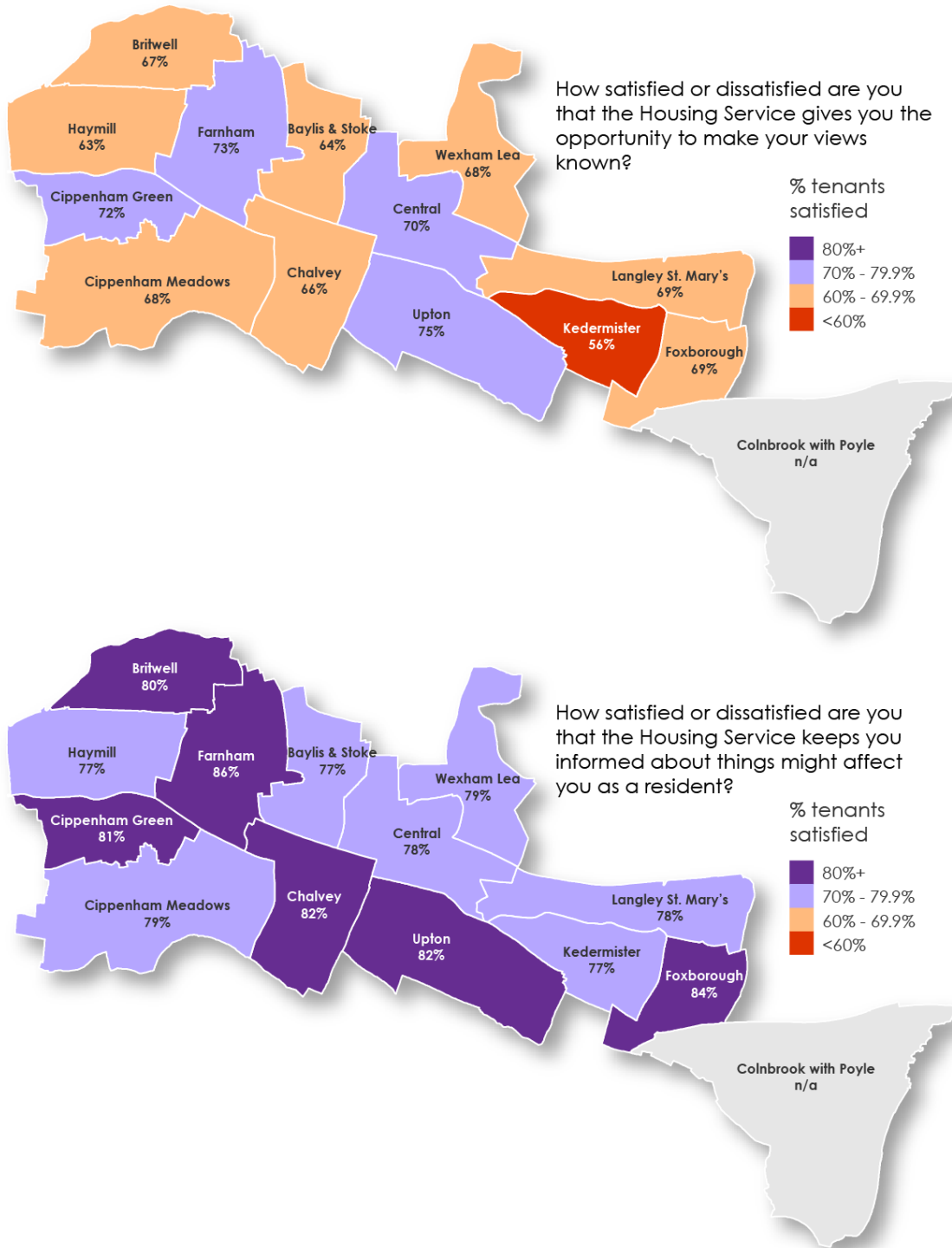


Figure 11a

While there are not huge variations in satisfaction levels on these measures, we do see that there is a nearly twenty percentage points gap between Kedermister and neighbouring Upton in terms of satisfaction with opportunities for tenants to share their views with the Housing Service.

In relation to keeping tenants informed, figures are even more consistent, ranging between 77% (multiple wards) and 86% in Farnham.

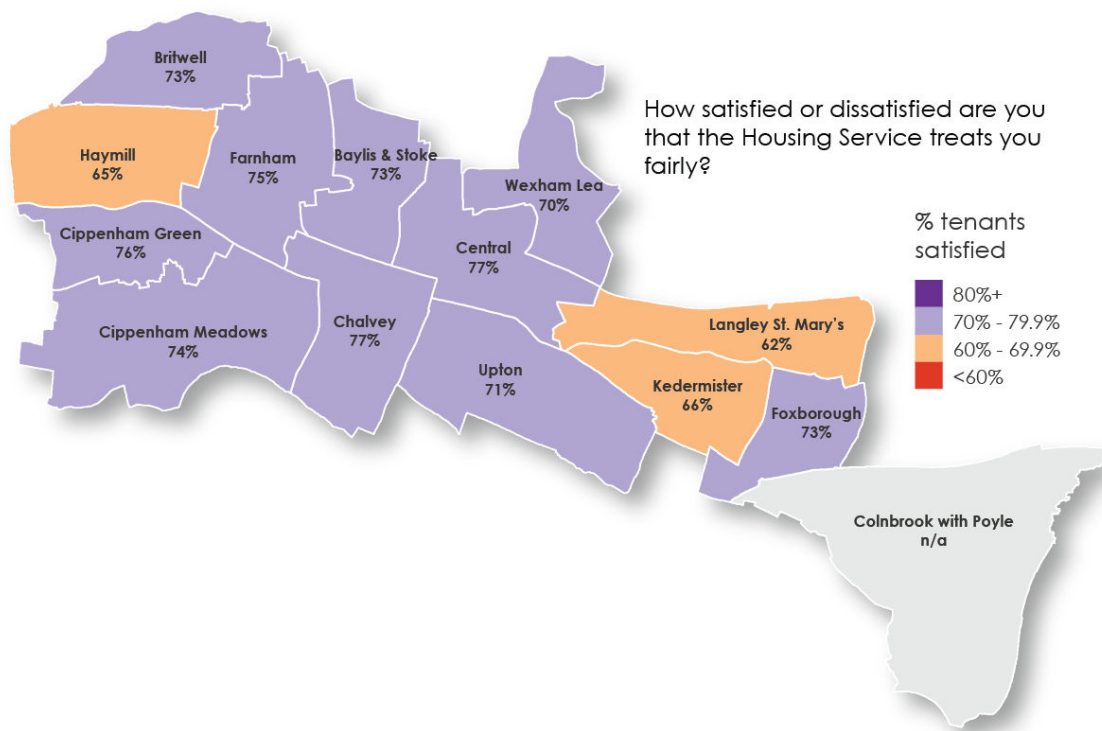


Figure 11b

No wards exceeded 80% satisfaction in terms of perceptions of being treated fairly. The lowest level was in Langley St. Mary's at 62%, with the highest satisfaction rating in Chalvey (77%).

One trend that does appear to be emerging is for tenants in Kedermister to report among the lowest satisfaction ratings on a consistent basis.

Recommending the Housing Service

Next, respondents were asked whether they would be likely to recommend Slough Housing Services to other people.

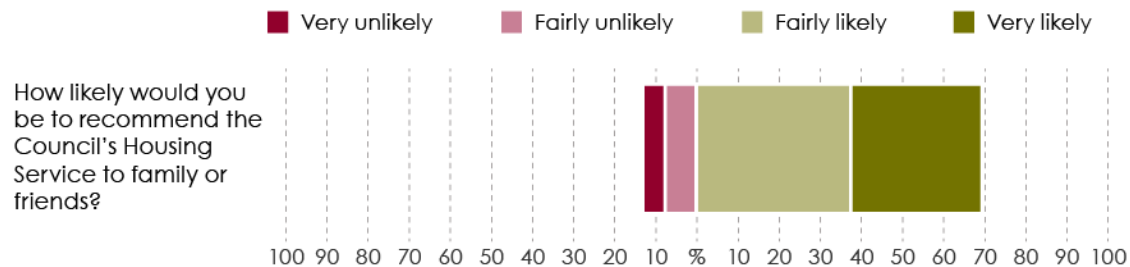


Figure 12

Overall, nearly seven in ten (69%) said that they would be likely to recommend the service to others, with most of these (37%) reporting that they would be very likely to do so. Just 13% would be unlikely to recommend the service.

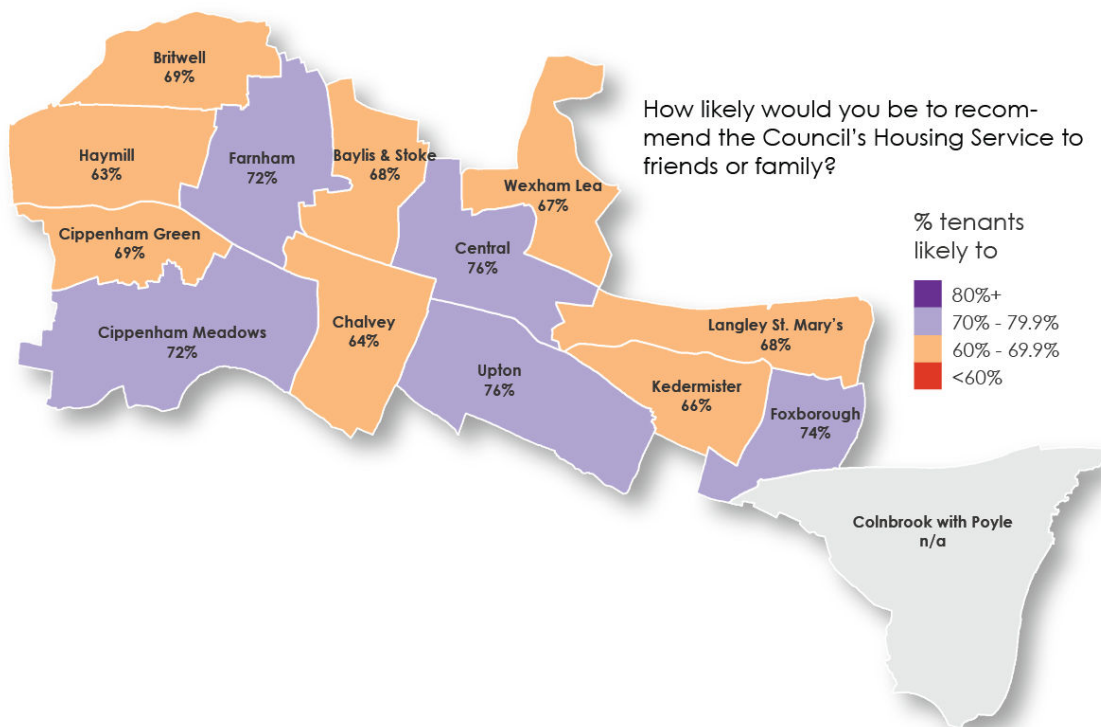


Figure 13

At ward level, figures are broadly clustered within the 65-75% range. The tenants most likely to recommend the Housing Service are found in Central and Foxborough wards; those least likely are in Haymill and Chalvey wards.

Finally in this section, we asked tenants whether they were aware of the Housing Service's Service Standards and Local Offers.

Overall, 39% of respondents said that they were aware. Figure 14 illustrates that awareness was broadly consistent across the borough.

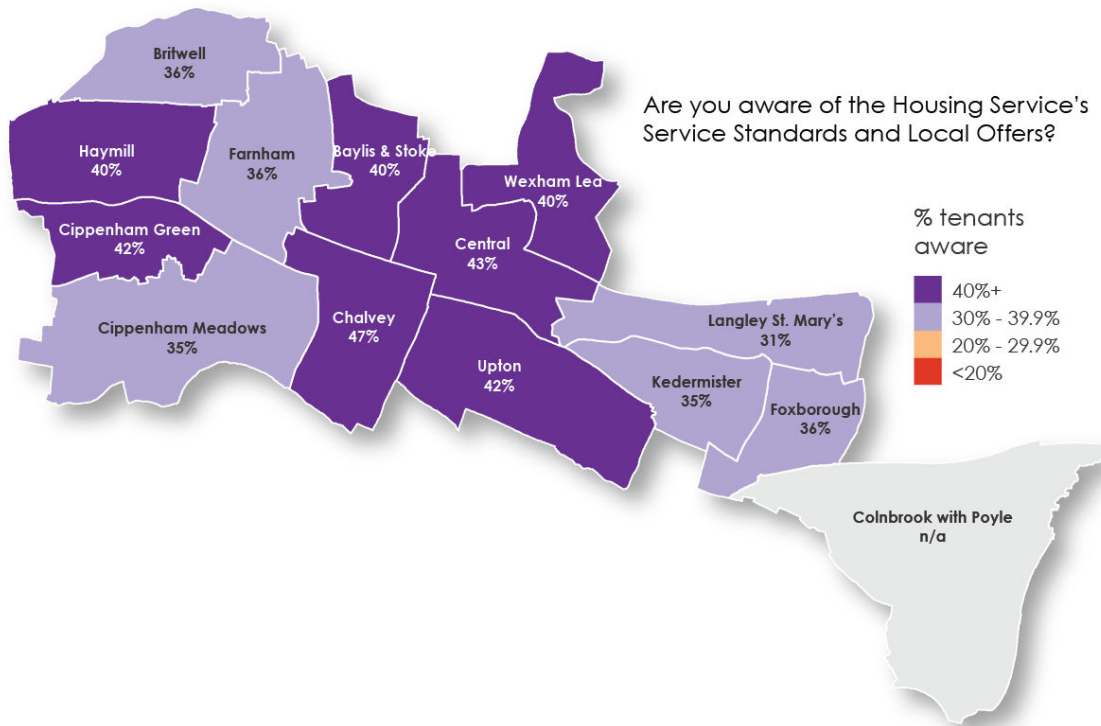


Figure 14

Dealing with Issues

The next section of the survey asked tenants for their satisfaction levels with regards to the way the Housing Service responds to specific issues.

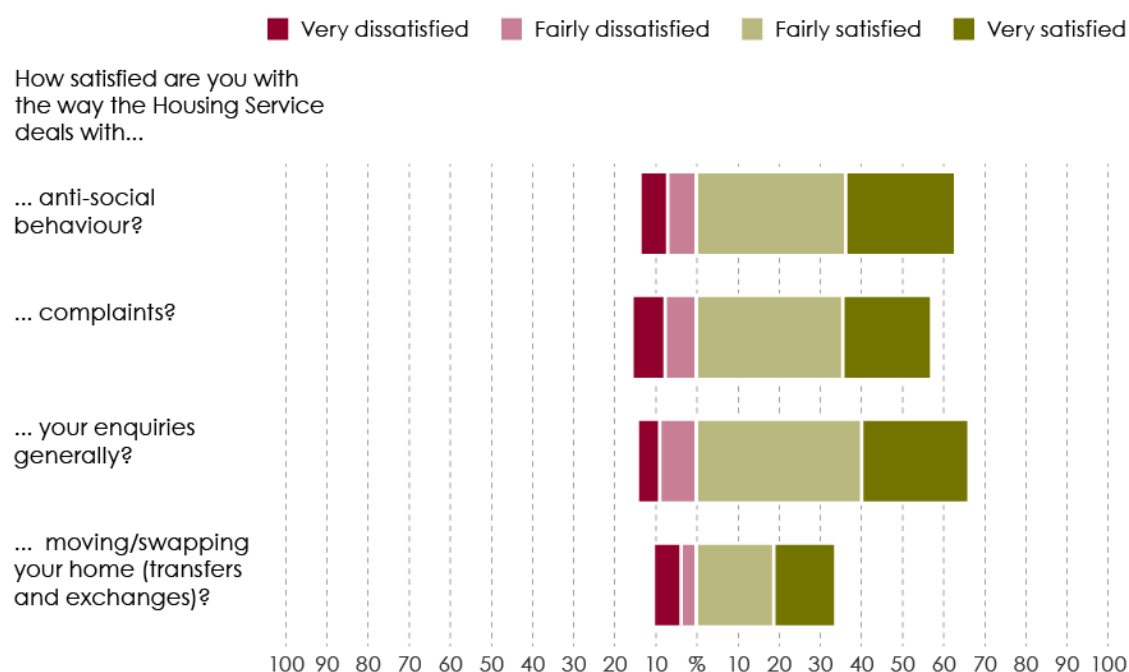


Figure 15

The main point emerging from this analysis is that satisfaction levels are relatively lower for the way the Service deals with home transfers and exchanges. Just one in three tenants (33%) reported satisfaction on this specific indicator, and only 15% were very satisfied. A relatively higher proportion of respondents said 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' for this question, so it may be the case that a relatively higher proportion of tenants have not had direct experience of this specific issue; the data does not allow us to know that.

There is little value in producing maps for all of these measures as views were broadly consistent. For example, all wards reported less than 40% satisfaction in terms of moving and swapping homes. However it is worth noting that satisfaction levels were lowest in Haymill Ward for three of the four measures.

% tenants satisfied with the way the Housing Service deals with...	Haymill Ward	Borough Average
... anti-social behaviour	53%	62%
... complaints	47%	56%
... general enquiries	57%	66%
... moving of swapping home	33%	33%

Satisfaction with Specific Issues

Tenants were then asked for their satisfaction levels in relation to a broad mix of specific themes and issues.

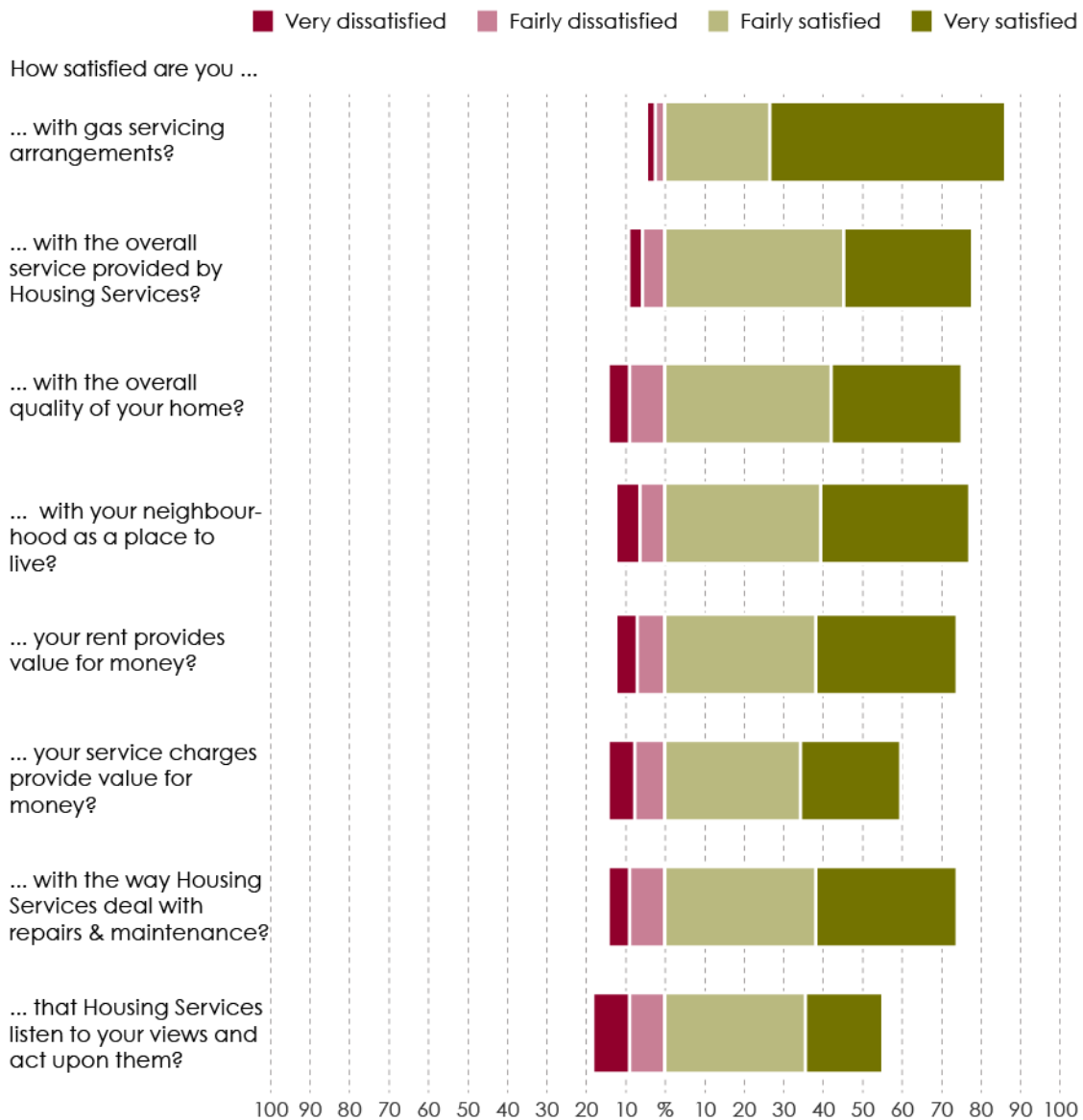


Figure 16

Satisfaction exceeds 70% for six of these eight issues, and is highest for satisfaction with gas servicing arrangements (86%).

The lowest levels of satisfaction relate to perceptions of the Housing Service listening to and acting upon tenants' views (55%) and whether service charges provide value for money (59%).

Rather than produce eight individual maps for these measures, Figure 17 provides a 'heat map' analysis to highlight particularly high or low levels of satisfaction at ward level.

80%+ 70% - 79.9% 60% - 69.9% <60%

	... with gas servicing arrangements	... with the service provided by Slough Borough Council	... with the overall quality of your home	... with your neighbourhood as a place to live	... with your rent as value for money	... with your service charges as value for money	... with how the Council deals with repairs and maintenance	... that the Council listens to your views and acts on them
Baylis and Stoke	89%	77%	74%	82%	77%	67%	76%	51%
Britwell	89%	79%	74%	71%	69%	56%	72%	52%
Central	83%	77%	76%	74%	72%	67%	78%	60%
Chalvey	81%	74%	60%	62%	72%	67%	70%	59%
Cippenham Green	92%	81%	80%	84%	79%	60%	81%	59%
Cippenham Meadows	83%	73%	74%	73%	71%	54%	69%	55%
Farnham	93%	79%	77%	79%	78%	63%	80%	60%
Foxborough	86%	84%	86%	76%	73%	56%	77%	59%
Haymill	88%	74%	74%	83%	69%	50%	71%	58%
Kedermister	84%	72%	68%	78%	62%	53%	64%	48%
Langley St. Mary's	75%	74%	75%	76%	74%	57%	67%	44%
Upton	79%	80%	76%	82%	77%	63%	73%	55%
Wexham Lea	87%	79%	80%	84%	79%	65%	74%	56%
Borough	86%	77%	75%	77%	73%	59%	73%	55%

Figure 17 (Colnbrook with Poyle excluded from analysis due to sample size)

Figure 17 demonstrates that there are some notable variations in satisfaction levels across the borough's wards on specific issues. A number of observations are listed below.

- The greatest variation in satisfaction is seen with the 'overall quality of your home' measure, with a gap of 26 percentage points between Foxborough (86%) and Chalvey (60%).
- The least variation is seen in the measure 'satisfaction with the services provided by Slough Housing Services'. Here, satisfaction ranged from 72% (Kedermister) up to 84% (Foxborough).
- Kedermister has the lowest average level of satisfaction across the eight measures combined, and only scores above the borough average on one measure (satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live).
- Farnham and Wexham Lea both have the highest average satisfaction across these measures, at 76%. Average satisfaction is 75% in Foxborough.
- The lowest individual satisfaction score is seen in Langley St. Mary's, where just 44% of tenants are satisfied that the Council listens to their views and acts on them.

Priorities

Respondents were presented with a range of options for what the Housing Service could choose as priorities and were asked to pick their three personal choices. Figure 18 illustrates how preferences were distributed across the respective options.

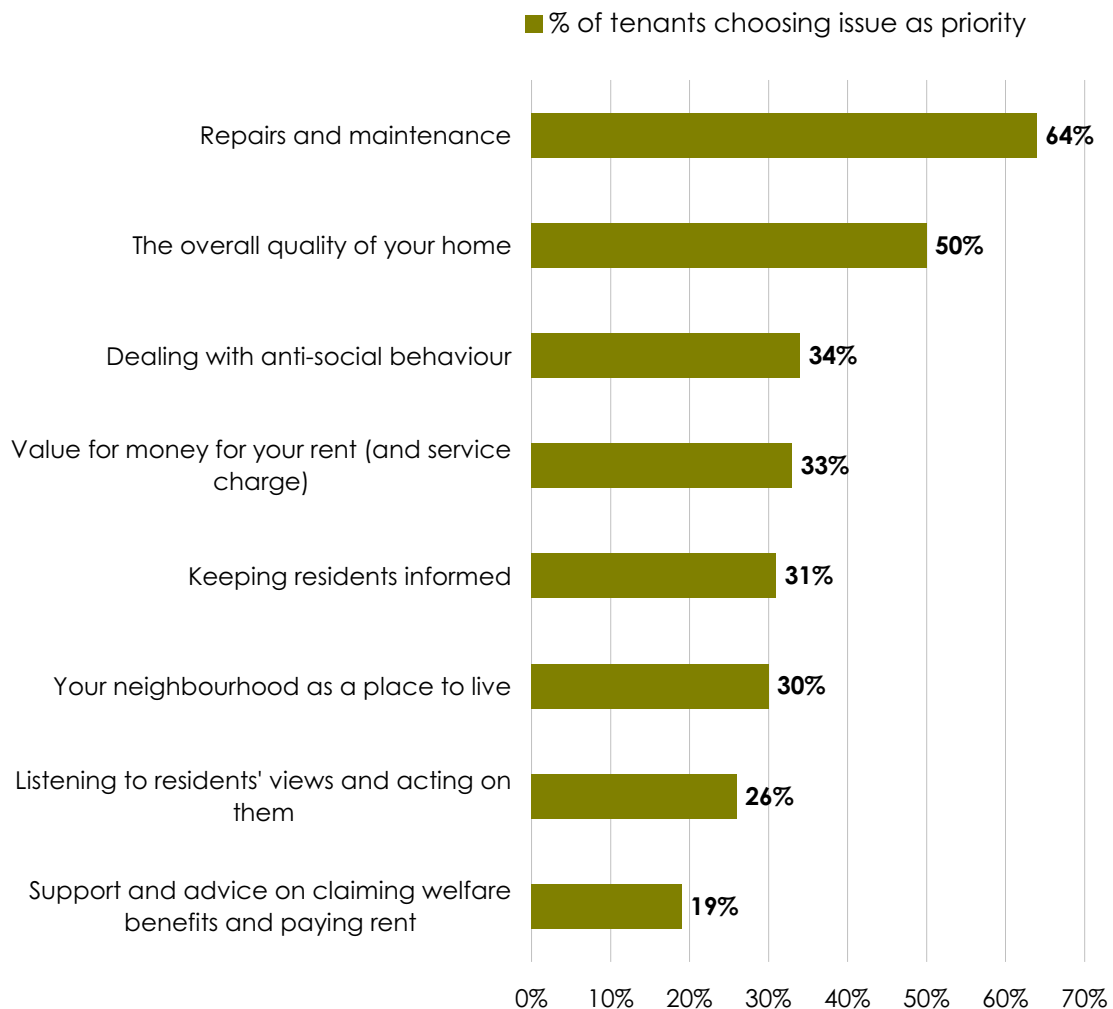


Figure 18

Nearly two thirds of tenants feel that one of the top three priorities should be repairs and maintenance of homes. Half feel the overall quality of homes should be a priority.

There is less support for the provision of advice on claiming benefits to be a priority, nor listening to tenants' views and acting upon them.

In a similar way to before, we have used a heat map to analyse these issues at a ward level. Figures present the percentage of tenants in each ward that chose an issue as one of their top three priorities. As a guide, if all options were chosen equally, each one would have a figure of 38%. We see that 'repairs and maintenance' features as the key priority in every single ward. Conversely, support relating to advice on benefits is not a priority for most residents in all wards.



	Keeping residents informed	The overall quality of your home	Listening to residents views and acting on them	Repairs and maintenance	Dealing with anti-social behaviour	Your neighbourhood as a place to live	Value for money for your rent (and service charge)	Support and advice on claiming welfare benefits and paying rent
Baylis and Stoke	32%	48%	31%	66%	35%	24%	27%	27%
Britwell	26%	50%	22%	61%	38%	32%	34%	20%
Central	39%	50%	27%	61%	32%	33%	26%	24%
Chalvey	34%	46%	23%	58%	50%	33%	22%	9%
Cippenham Green	35%	56%	28%	69%	30%	34%	39%	23%
Cippenham Meadows	30%	53%	28%	68%	34%	29%	33%	13%
Farnham	36%	56%	23%	69%	33%	23%	37%	14%
Foxborough	22%	50%	23%	62%	29%	31%	34%	18%
Haymill	31%	55%	24%	64%	31%	36%	26%	20%
Kedermister	23%	46%	27%	63%	37%	31%	44%	21%
Langley St. Mary's	31%	49%	32%	61%	33%	21%	47%	12%
Upton	34%	51%	24%	55%	27%	30%	32%	16%
Wexham Lea	36%	48%	24%	73%	29%	32%	29%	20%
Borough	31%	50%	26%	64%	34%	30%	33%	19%

Figure 19 (Colnbrook with Poyle excluded from analysis due to sample size)

Quality Standards

The next set of questions can be loosely grouped under the heading of 'quality standards'. Residents are asked whether they agree with a series of statements relating to the level of service they receive from Slough Housing Services.

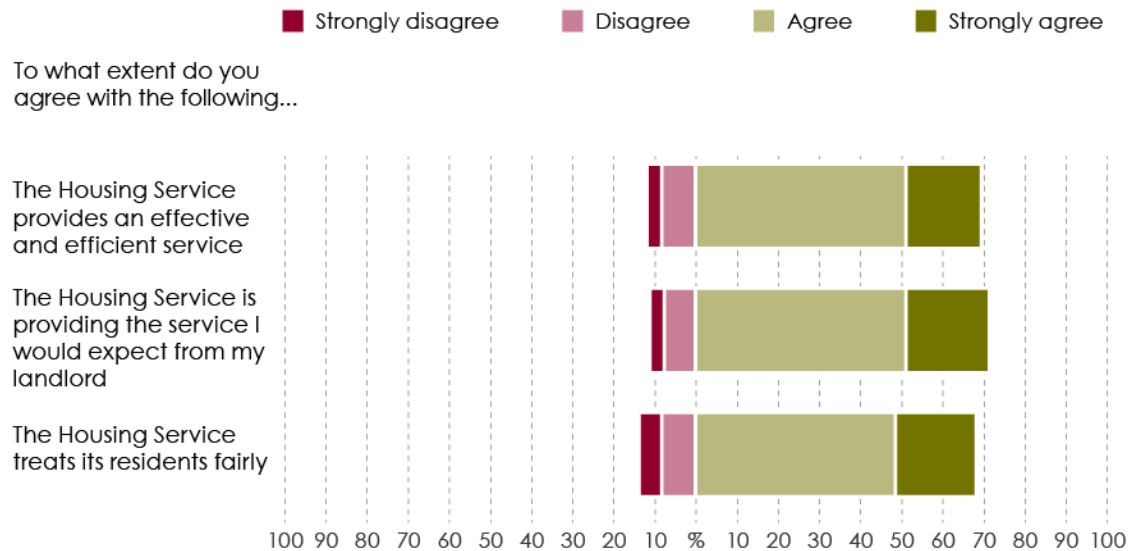


Figure 20

We see that the results are encouraging, with around 70% of respondents agreeing with the various quality statements. The highest level of disagreement relates to treating residents fairly, and even here the figure is only 12%.

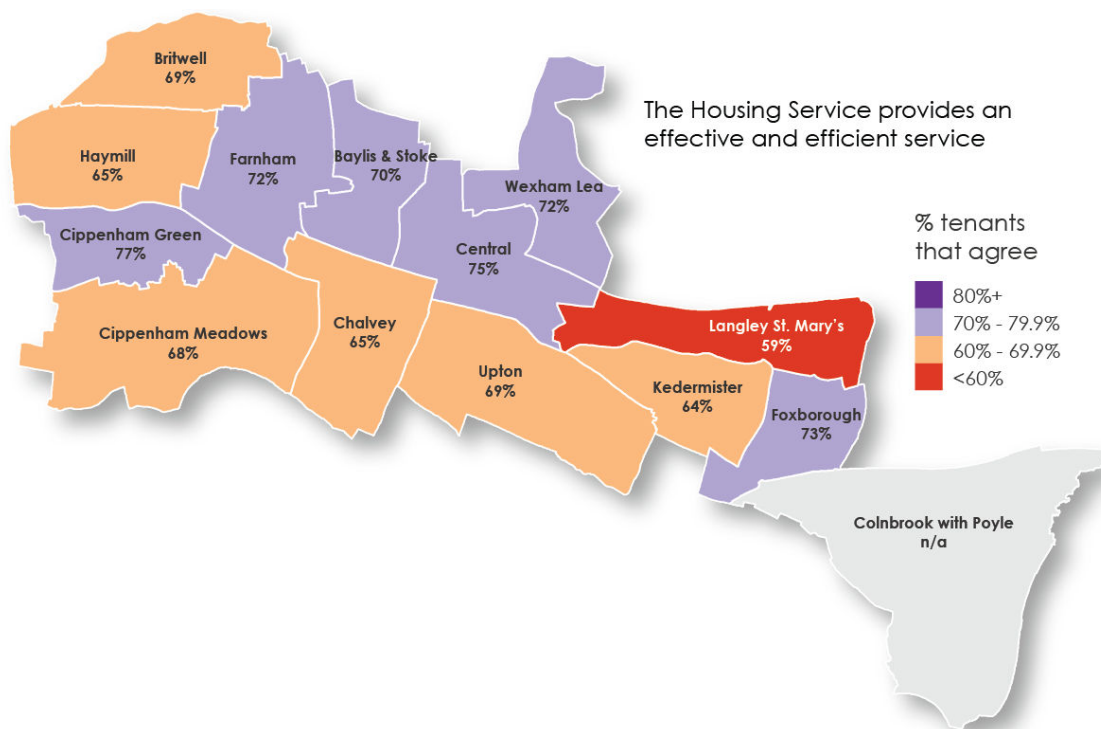


Figure 21a

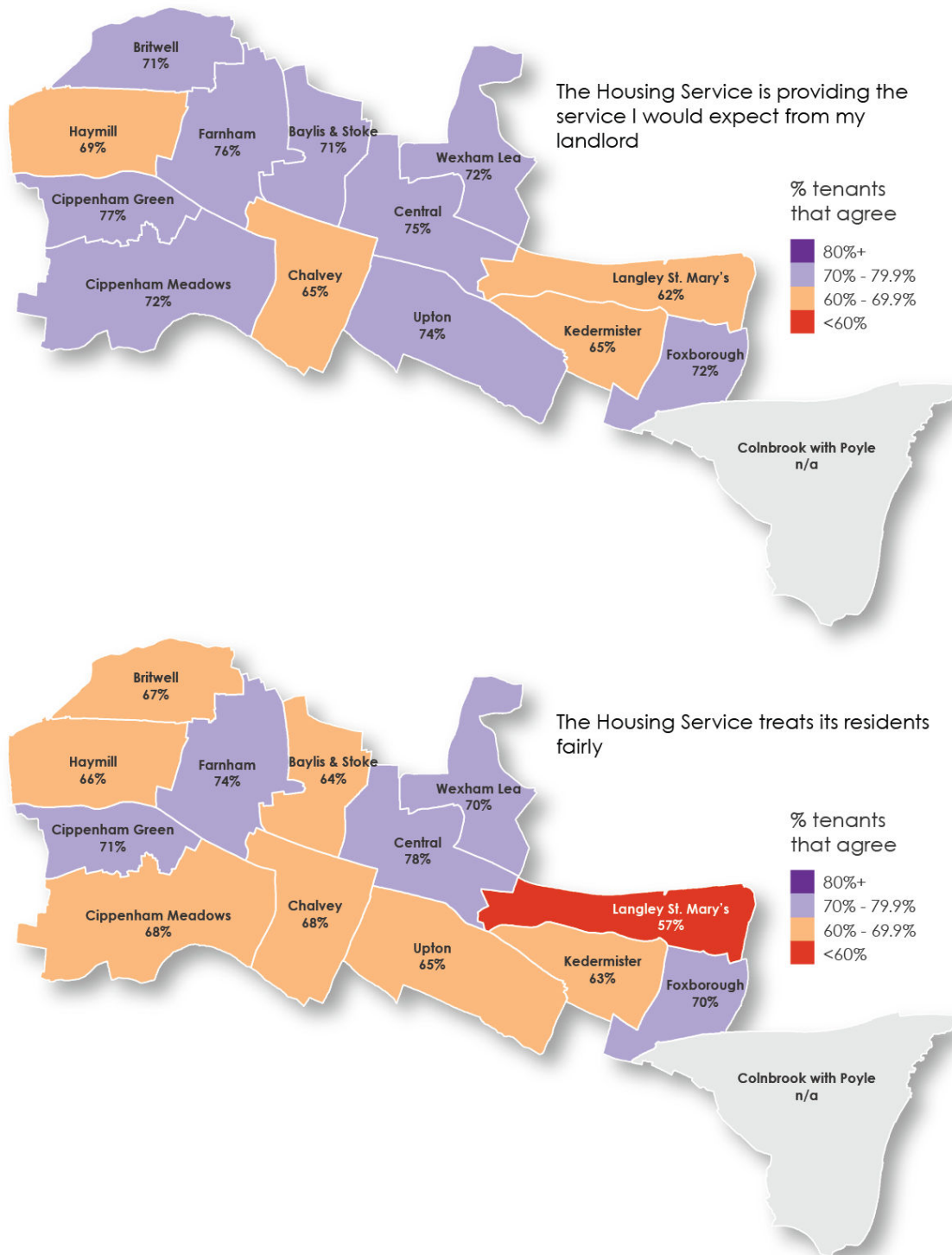


Figure 21b

It is notable that Langley St. Mary's ward features as the lowest scoring part of the borough in all three measures in this section.

Also, we see that no individual wards manage in excess of 80% agreement on any of the indicators. There is improvement to be made in all parts of the borough.

Reputation and Trust

Tenants were asked a set of questions relating to the 'brand' associated with the Housing Service, and specifically whether they agreed with a number of statements.

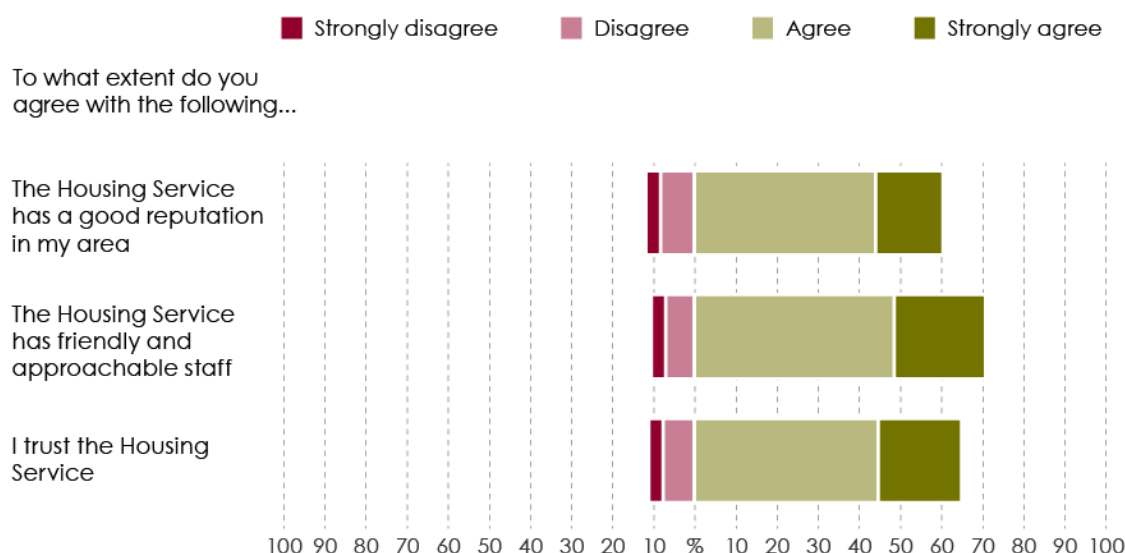


Figure 22

Again, views are generally on the positive side, with at least 60% of tenants responding favourably on these issues. In particular, we see that 70% of respondents believe the Housing Service has friendly and approachable staff. Levels of disagreement are low across all three measures.

There are relatively few notable variations at ward level on these indicators. Langley St. Mary's appears again as a potential area of concern. This is the only ward where the percentage that said the Housing Service has a good reputation in their local area fell below 50% (it was 46%). In contrast, Farnham and Upton both achieved 69% on this measure.

Kedermister attained a relatively low 61% agreement on the measure relating to the friendliness of Housing Service staff; the lowest by seven percentage points. Kedermister was also the only ward to achieve less than 60% on the final measure, relating to trusting the Housing Service. This ward appears consistently across many of the indicators as a lower performing area.

Contacting the Housing Service

This next section of the survey asked a series of questions relating to tenants' experiences when contacting the Housing Service. Some of the questions relate to a subset of respondents, based on their previous answers, and the sample sizes are provided where appropriate.

Overall, 59% of respondents stated that they had contacted the Housing Service in the last twelve months with a query other than to pay rent or service charges. Ward level rates ranged between 50% (Upton) and 63% (Wexham Lea). These respondents (1,024) were then asked questions relating to their experiences.

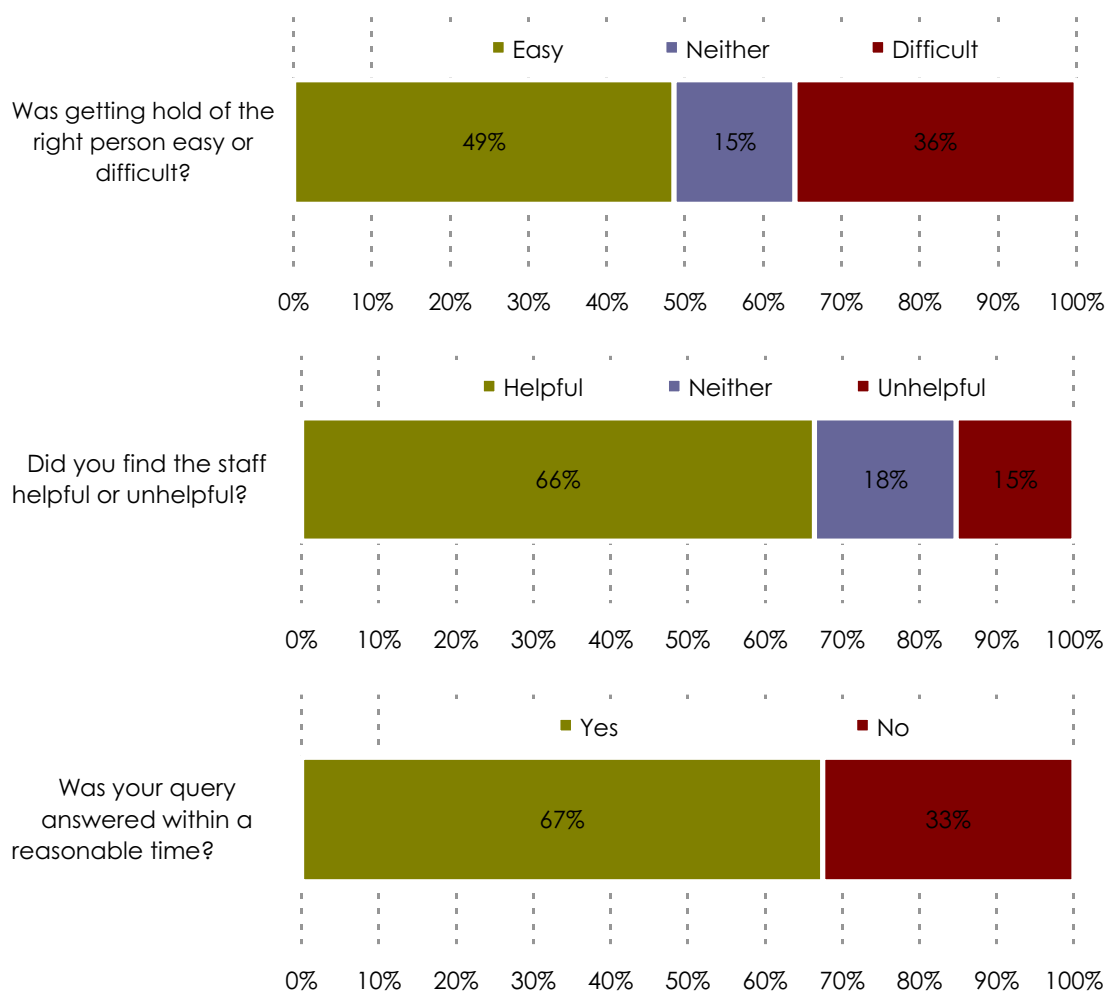


Figure 23

Just less than half of respondents found it easy to get hold of the right person. Two thirds found the staff helpful and a similar proportion felt their query was answered within a reasonable time.

All 1,749 respondents were then asked customer experience questions relating to contact they had made with the Housing Service for any reason during the past twelve months. Of these, 174 did not provide an answer, presumably because in most cases they had not made contact with the service. Therefore, the following analysis relates to a subset of 1,575 tenants.

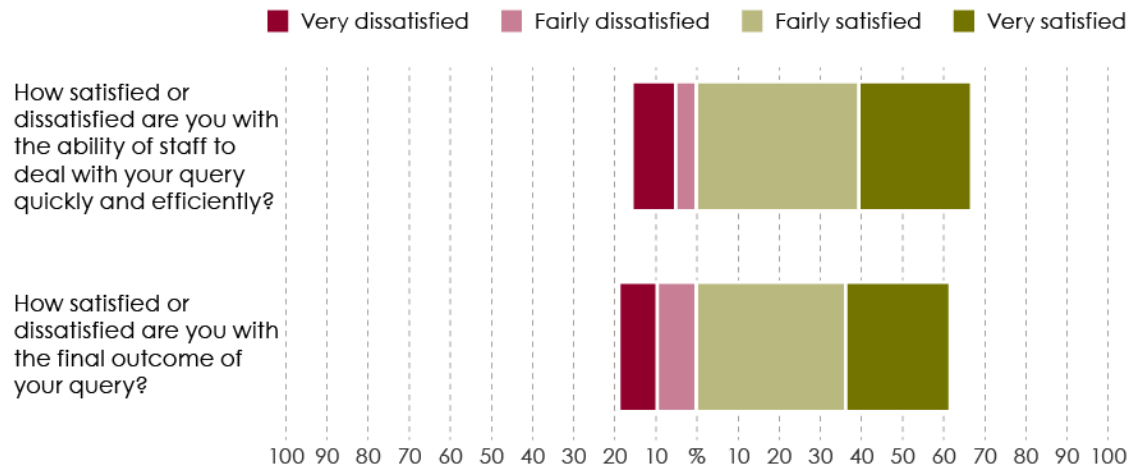


Figure 24

Across all tenants, the analysis illustrates that two in three were satisfied with the ability of staff to deal with their enquiry quickly and efficiently. Most of these, 39%, were fairly satisfied.

A slightly smaller proportion, 61%, was satisfied with the final outcome of their query. We also see that nearly one in five (18%) were dissatisfied with the outcome of their query.

Tenants were then asked whether they had access to the internet at home. Overall, 44% said that they did (although a further 6% did not answer the question).

Figure 25 presents the comparable figures at ward level.

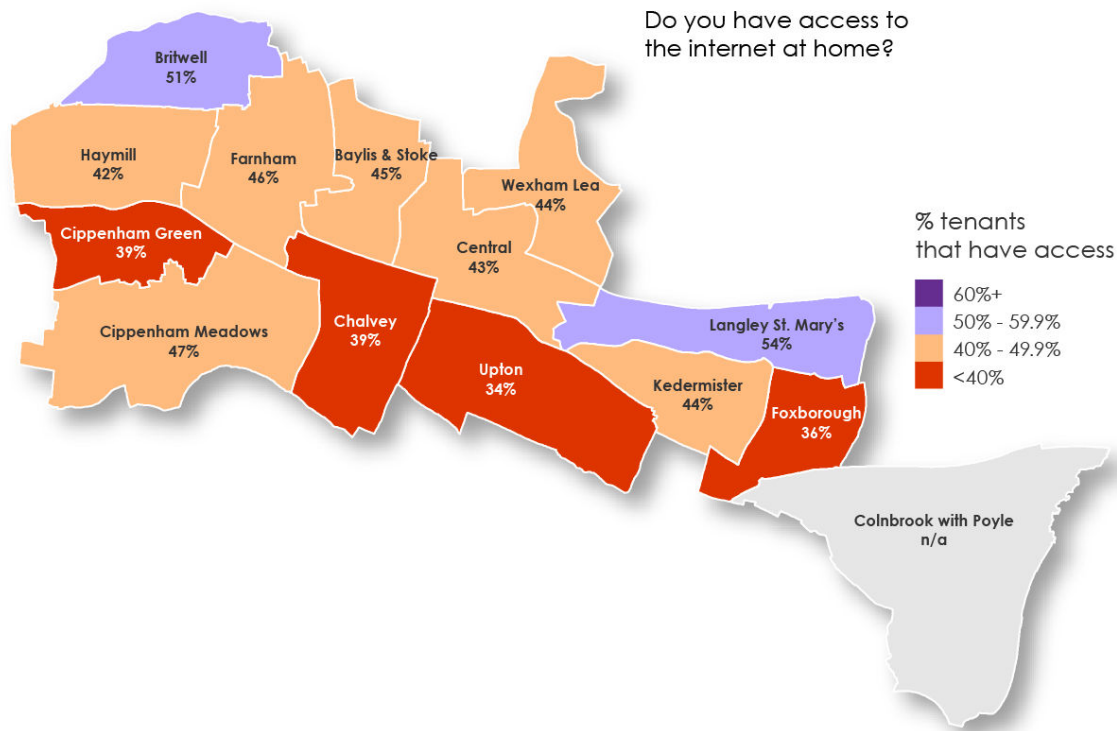


Figure 25

No wards reported an internet access rate in excess of 60%, although two (Britwell and Langley St. Mary's) both had the majority of respondents stating that they do have access.

The lowest rates were found in Upton (34%) and Foxborough (36%).

Channel Preferences

Slough Housing Service was interested in understanding which communication channels were more or less favoured by tenants, both in terms of receiving information and getting in touch with the service. Respondents were asked to choose which channels from they would be receptive towards from a list.

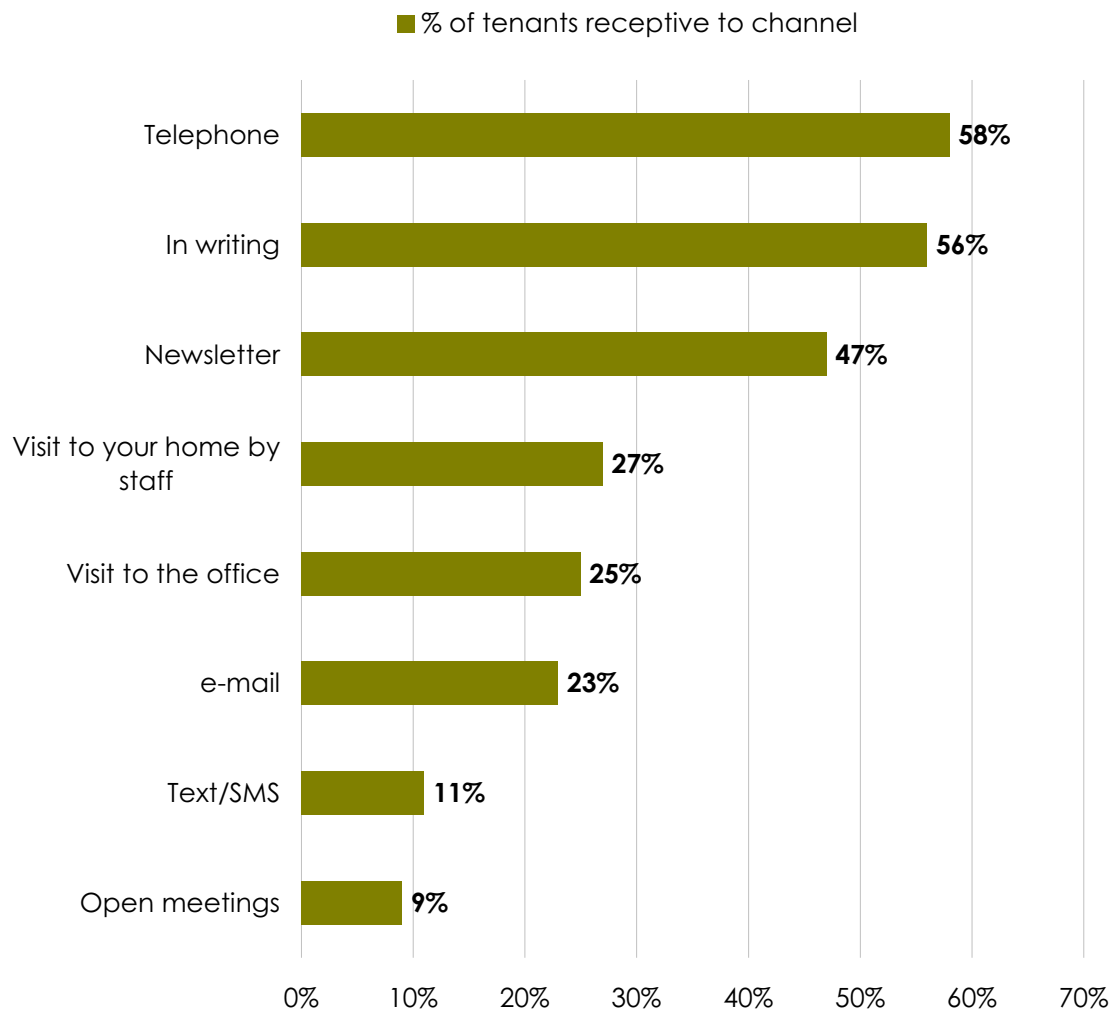


Figure 26

There are three channels which are clearly more favoured than the others. The majority of respondents said that they were happy to use the telephone to communicate with the Housing Service, and in writing. This analysis highlights the value in retaining use of 'traditional' methods of communication, despite the growing interest in more modern technologies. Six in ten respondents (60%) said they were satisfied with the cost of contacting the service by telephone.

Nearly half were receptive to the use of newsletters to receive information from the service. Other channels were less popular.

Advice and Support

One of the ways the Housing Service offers support to tenants is through the provision of advice on issues such as welfare benefits and financial management. Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with this aspect of the service.

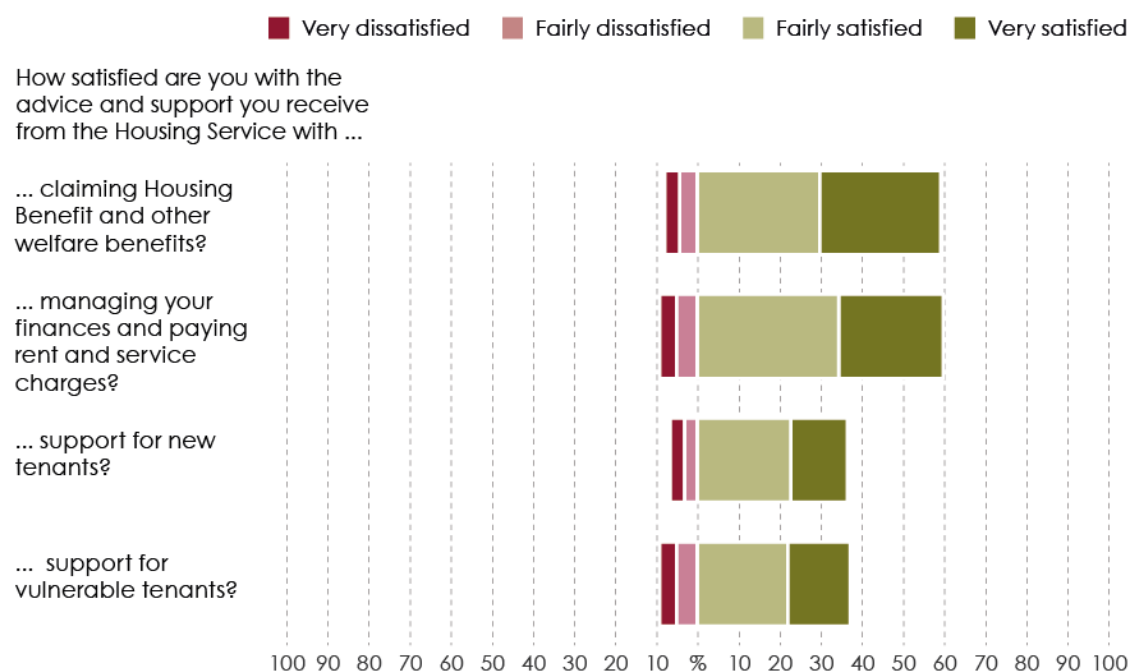


Figure 27

Around six in every ten tenants are satisfied with the provision of support around benefits advice and managing personal finances. Satisfaction is less strong in terms of the way the Housing Service provides support to new or vulnerable tenants, with both below 40%. Although specific dissatisfaction is still low in these aspects, these might be areas for further development.

There is little variation among the wards on these issues. Exceptions include:

- Kedermister and Langley St. Mary's are the only two wards where satisfaction with advice on benefit claims falls below 50%.
- Just 49% of tenants in Kedermister are satisfied with the provision of support on managing finances; this is a full seven percentage points lower than any other ward and significantly lower than the 70% reported in Farnham.
- Only two wards reached 40% satisfaction in terms of support for new tenants (Baylis & Stoke, 40%, and Cippenham Green, 42%). No individual ward dropped below 30% satisfaction on this measure.
- Kedermister and Langley St. Mary's are again the two wards with notably lower satisfaction levels with support to vulnerable tenants. Both are below 30%, whereas satisfaction in Cippenham Green is considerably higher at 46%.

Complaints

Just more than half of tenants (52%) are aware that the Housing Service has a formal complaints procedure. Fifteen percent of respondents said that they had made a complaint to the service during the past twelve months, and these next questions relate to the experiences of those 269 tenants. This reduced sample size means we are unable to produce robust ward-level analysis on these questions.

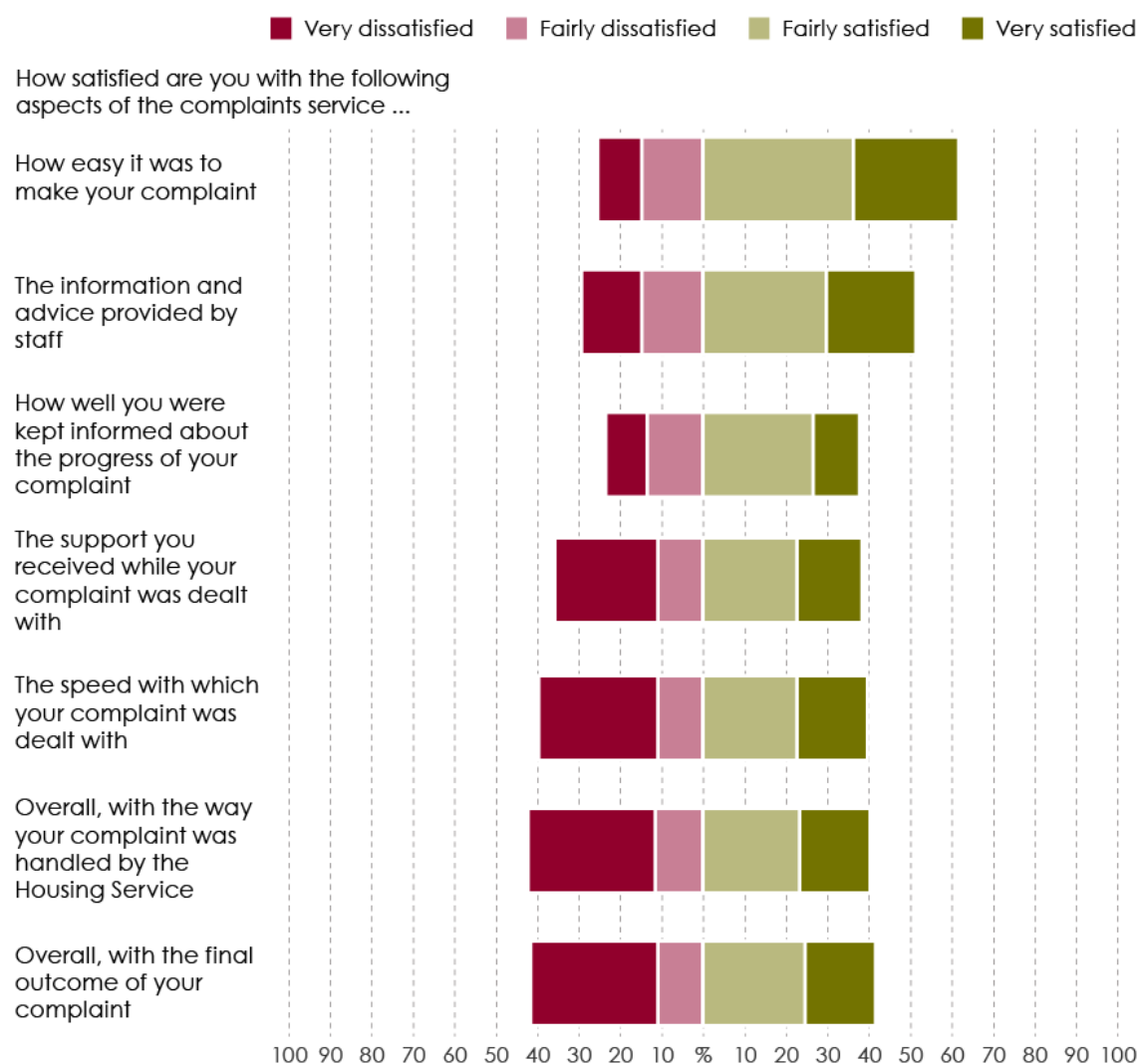


Figure 28

Given the nature of the topic, it is not surprising that we see higher levels of dissatisfaction for these questions. For example, there is a similar percentage of dissatisfied as satisfied tenants (c40%) with regard to overall outcomes, the way the complaint was handled and the speed with which the issue was dealt with.

It is important to set reasonable expectations in terms of what levels of satisfaction can be attained on these measures. Despite that, the service will be keen to see the number of satisfied customers outweigh those that are dissatisfied.

Around two in three tenants would be willing to make a complaint in the future.

Repairs

The next section considers tenants' experiences in relation to repairs and maintenance on their home. Nearly six in ten respondents (58%) said that they'd had repairs to their home in the last twelve months, and the next set of figures relate to those 1,019 tenants.

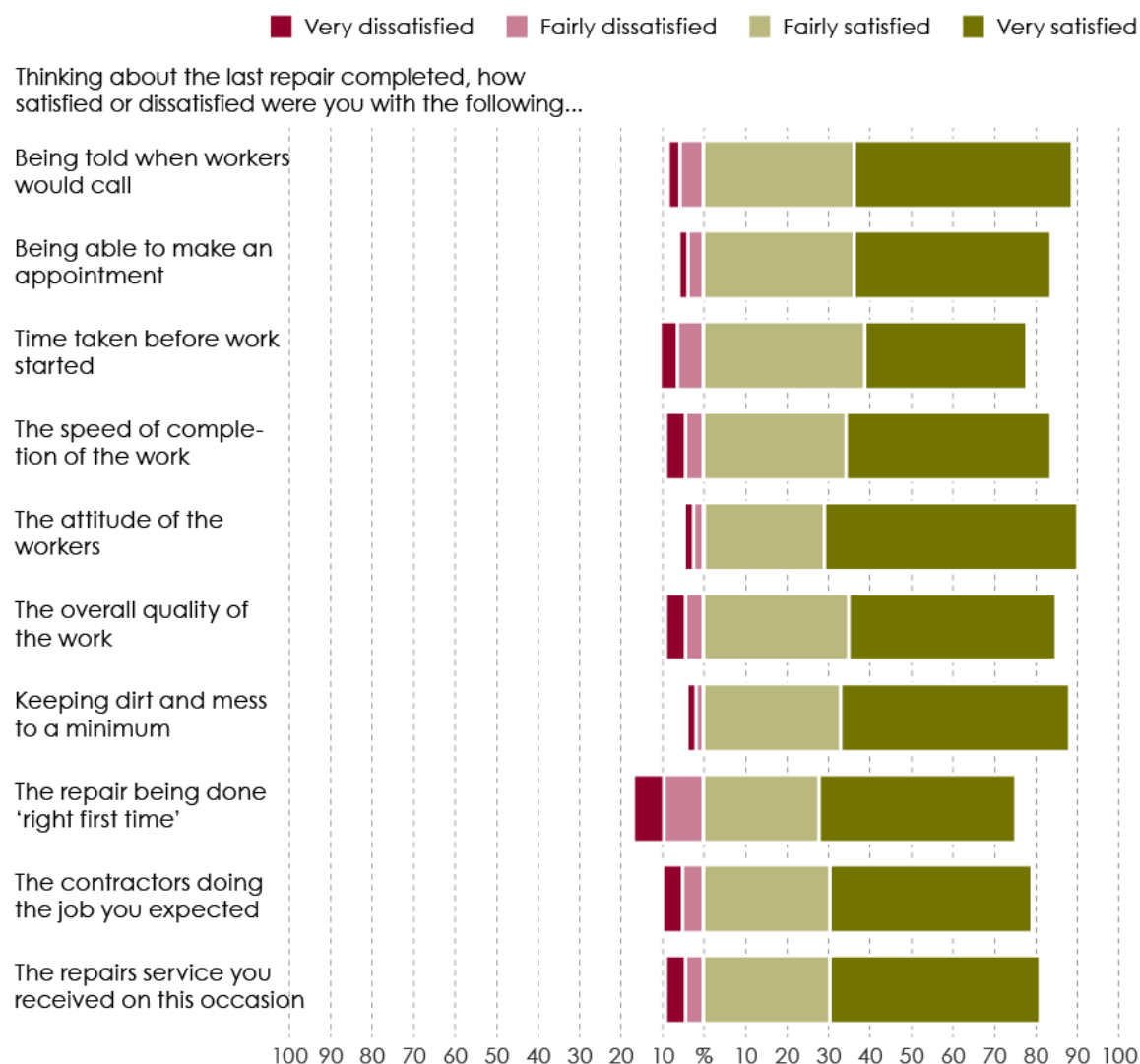


Figure 29

There are generally high levels of satisfaction across these measures, with all having in excess of 70% satisfied tenants. The highest level of dissatisfaction relates to the repair being done the 'right first time', with 17% dissatisfaction.

Figure 30 provides ward level analysis for those measures where there was the greatest variation among wards, to highlight any specific differences in tenant perception across the borough.

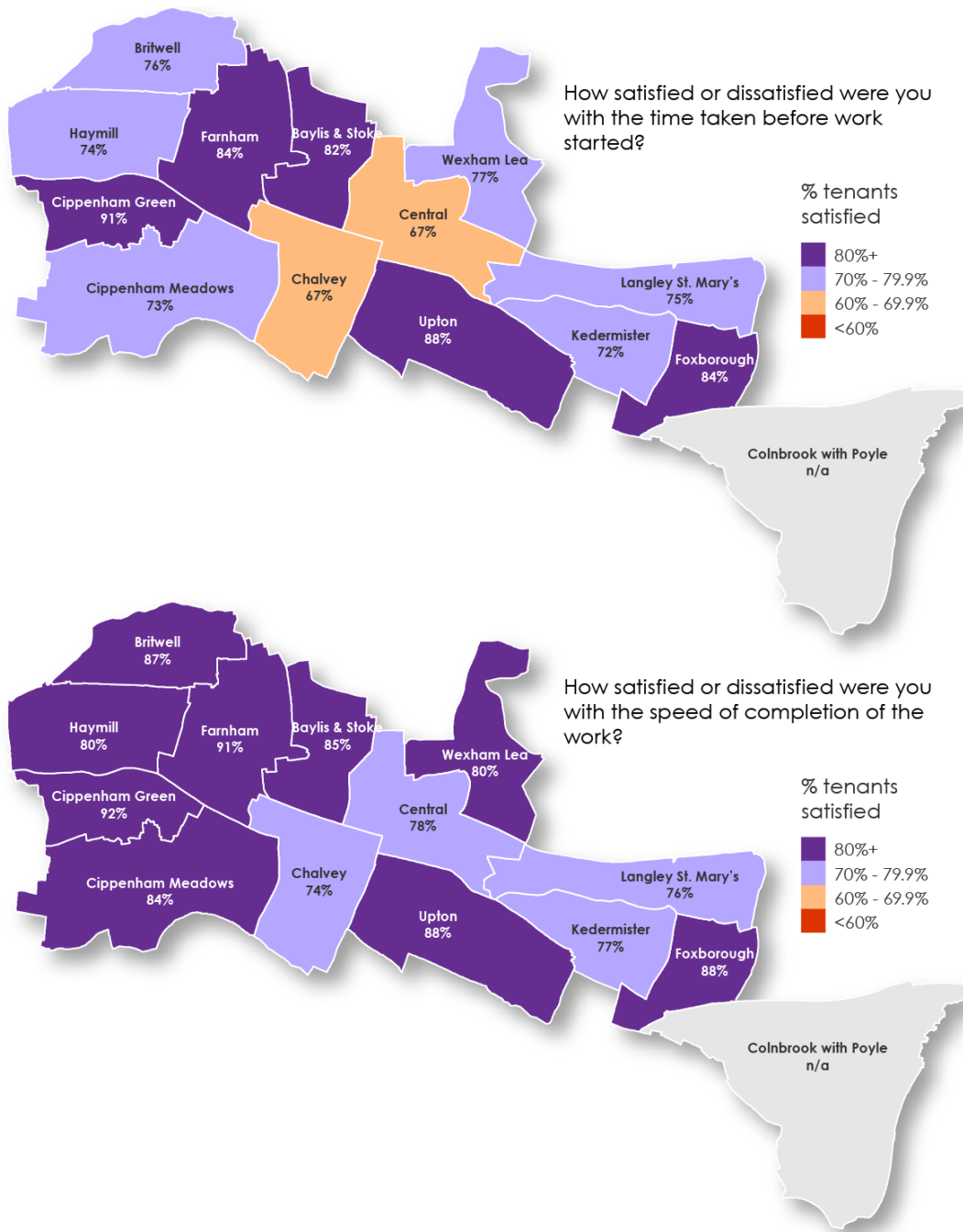


Figure 30

Although the scale of variation was still relatively small, the two issues where satisfaction did range both relate to the speed with which repairs are undertaken. Satisfaction with the time taken before work is started ranged from 67% up to 91%. Similarly, satisfaction with the speed of work being completed ranged between 74% and 92%.

Respondents reported that the contractor showed proof of identity on 91% of occasions. We also see that appointments were kept on 96% of occasions.

Returning to all 1,749 respondents, 83% of tenants would like to opportunity to choose the date and time of any agreed repair work in the future.

Personalising Interactions

When asked whether they were satisfied with the last communication they had with the Housing Service, the data illustrates that just more than two thirds (69%) were satisfied.

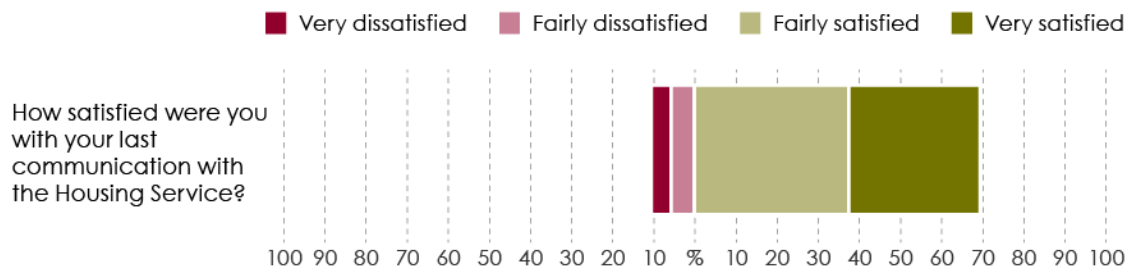


Figure 31

There are some notable variations across the borough on this indicator. Just 57% of respondents from Cippenham Meadows were satisfied, and 58% in Langley St. Mary's, compared with 79% in Britwell ward.

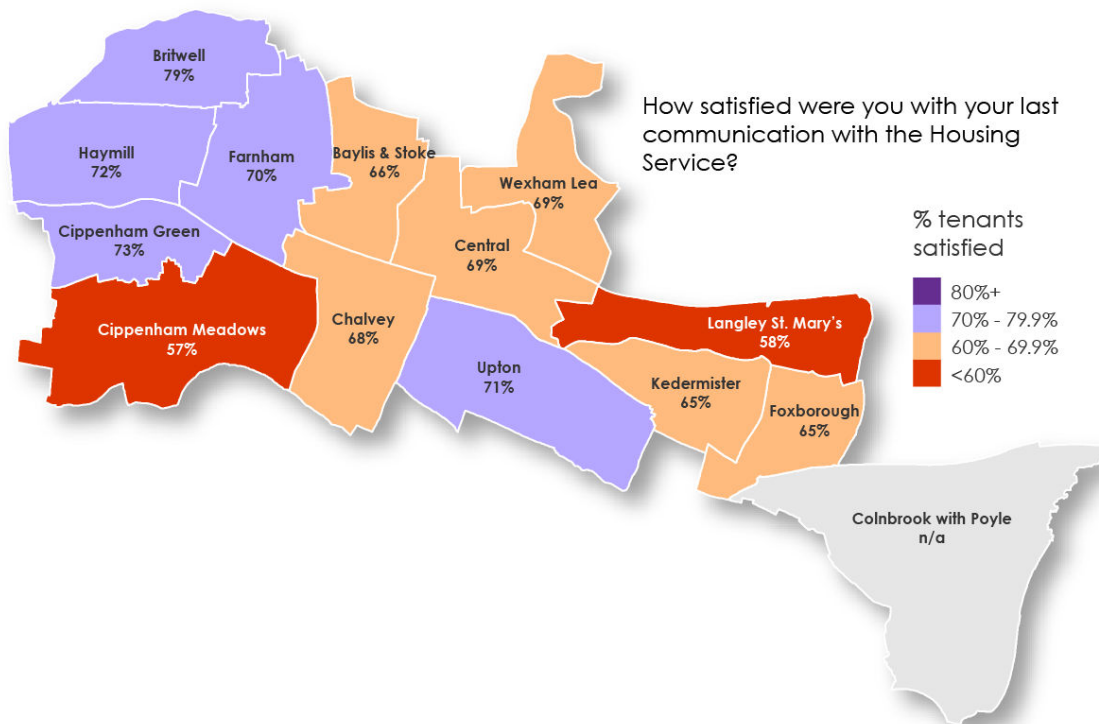


Figure 32

Nearly two thirds of tenants (66%) feel that they are the focus of the service's attention when they make contact. This might be an area for improvement; levels drop below 60% in a number of wards.

Just more than one in three respondents (34%) felt that they would know who to contact if they needed additional services to help them continue to live independently (such as a floating support service or an alarm system).

Less than half (49%) feel that, since the removal of supported housing, they now receive adequate support from the present service. Figures do not range significantly at ward level, with only two reaching 60% (Cippenham Green and Farnham wards).

Getting Involved

The final questions asked respondents for information on if and how they would like to get more involved in having a say about the housing services provided by Slough Council. The section is divided into two parts, whether tenants are willing to contribute in a less intensive way ('armchair involvement') and whether they are keen to be more actively involved.

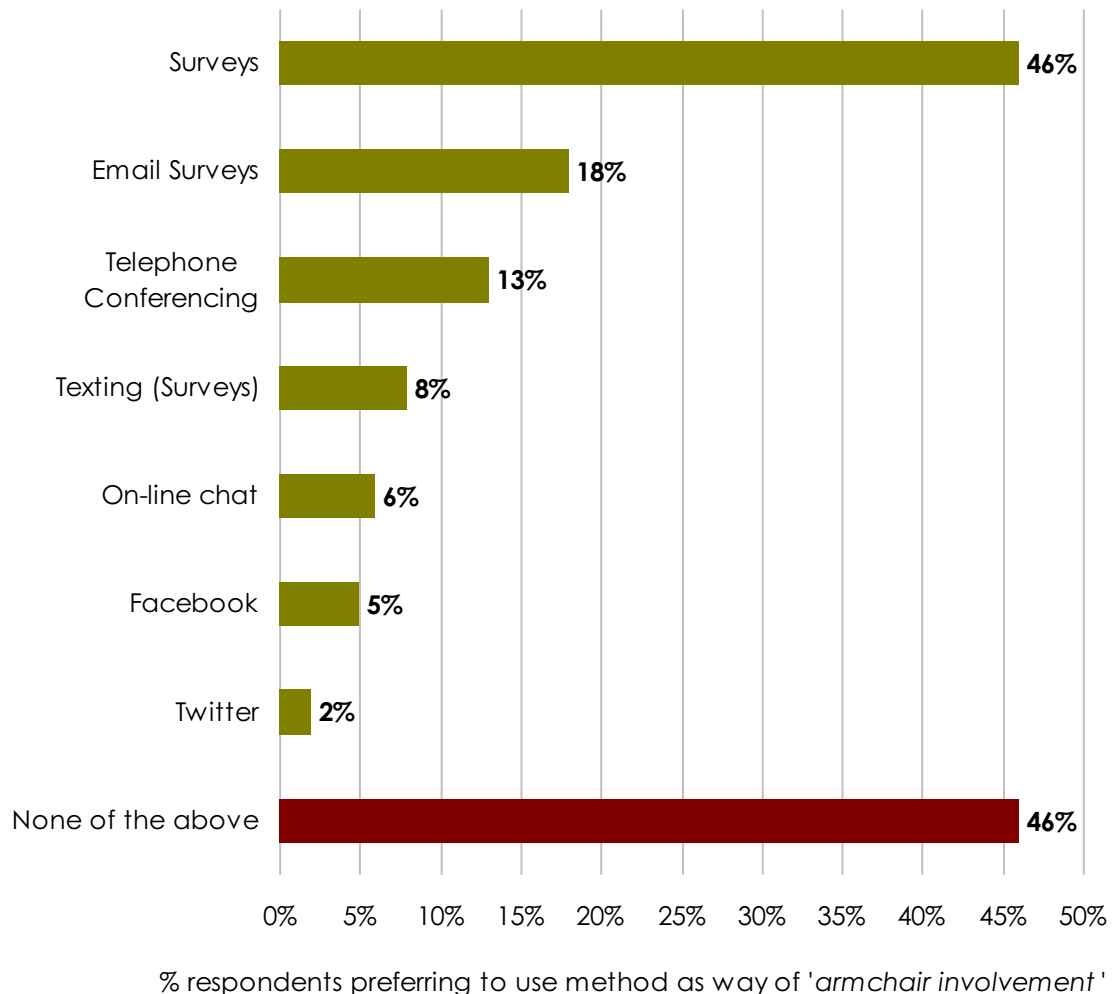


Figure 33

The only channel with any real support is surveys (presumably paper-based as email surveys are provided as a separate option). Just less than one half of respondents (46%) said they would choose this method as a way of getting more involved. It is interesting that an identical proportion said that they would choose any of the options provided.

There appears to be relatively little interest in social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Figure 34 considers interest in the more active forms of involvement.

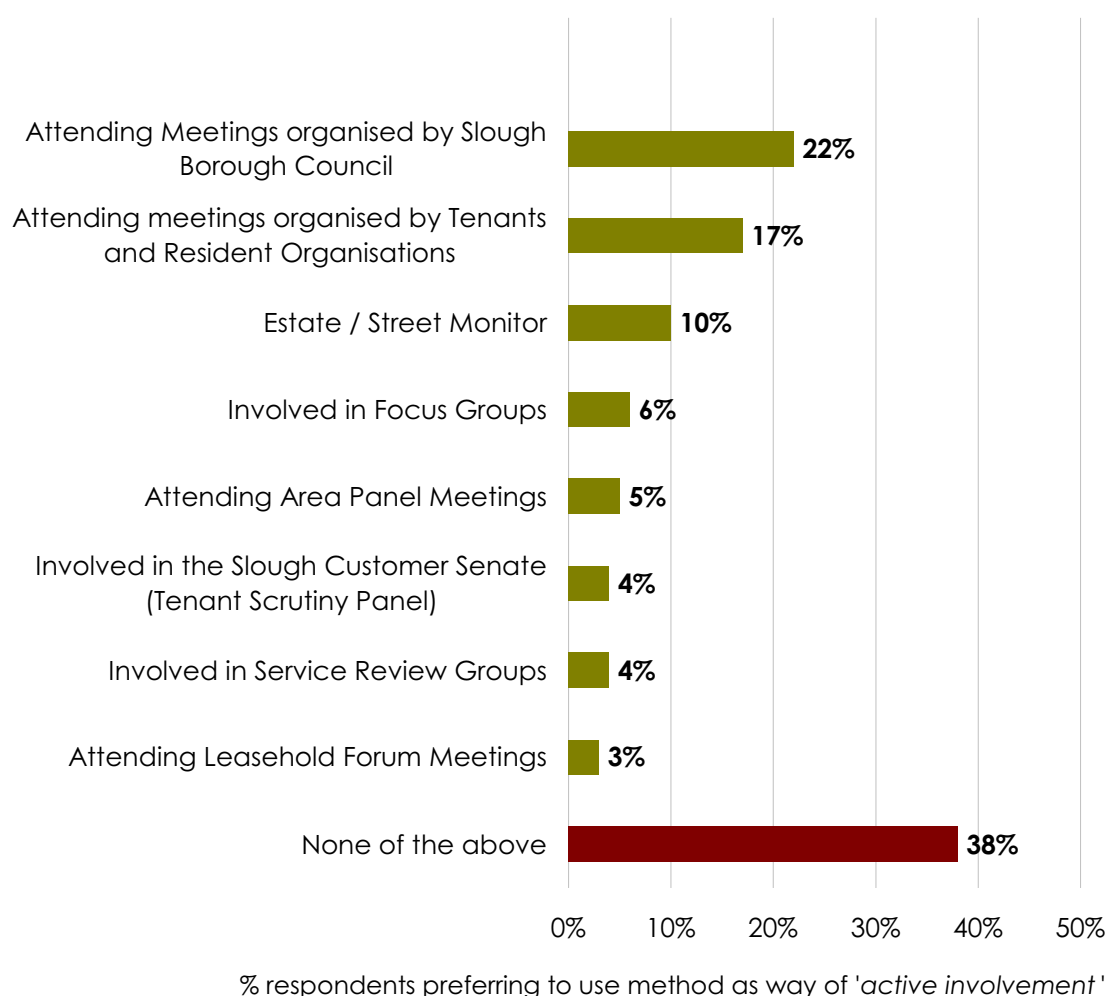


Figure 34

Perhaps not surprisingly, there is less interest in getting involved in more active ways. The most frequent choice here was 'none of the above'. The only areas where there did seem to be some interest were attending Council-organised meetings and tenant-organised meetings.

Some of these figures need to be seen in context; although only 6% said they would be interested in participating in focus groups, this actually relates to 98 respondents, more than enough needed to run such events.

Respondents were also provided with the opportunity to state other forms of getting involved that were of interest to them. Ideas that were mentioned included a 'fun day' organised by the Council and more visits from staff/housing officers. Several residents referred to receiving information via letter, although this did not seem to be in the spirit of the question, which is concerned with how residents themselves can more have say in the way the service operates.

Figure 35 presents the same information at ward level.

40%+ 20% - 39.9% 10% - 19.9% <10%

	Surveys	Telephone Conferencing	Email Surveys	Texting	On-line chat	Twitter	Facebook	None of the above
Baylis and Stoke	51%	12%	12%	5%	4%	3%	3%	45%
Britwell	51%	16%	21%	10%	6%	3%	6%	41%
Central	42%	15%	19%	8%	6%	2%	5%	42%
Chalvey	40%	16%	16%	11%	4%	1%	4%	37%
Cippenham Green	50%	12%	16%	5%	4%	3%	4%	54%
Cippenham Meadows	44%	7%	23%	13%	7%	1%	6%	44%
Farnham	49%	8%	21%	8%	6%	4%	6%	52%
Foxborough	51%	9%	12%	5%	4%	0%	4%	50%
Haymill	39%	18%	19%	10%	8%	3%	8%	50%
Kedermister	50%	21%	20%	12%	8%	3%	4%	42%
Langley St. Mary's	38%	7%	24%	7%	5%	0%	5%	46%
Upton	32%	11%	8%	2%	2%	1%	2%	45%
Wexham Lea	44%	10%	17%	5%	6%	1%	5%	48%
Borough	46%	13%	18%	8%	6%	2%	5%	46%

Figure 35a - Armchair (Colnbrook with Poyle excluded from analysis due to sample size)

First, looking at the more passive forms of involvement, we see that for some wards 'none of the above' is the most popular response, while for others it is 'surveys'. The lack of interest in social media is consistent across the borough, with no individual wards reporting more than 8% (Facebook) or 4% (Twitter).



	Attending meetings organised by the Council	Attending meetings organised by tenants / residents organisations	Focus groups	Attending Leasehold Forum meetings	Estate / Street Monitor	Attending Area Panel meetings	Involved in service review groups	Involved in Slough Customer Senate	None of the above
Baylis and Stoke	19%	14%	5%	1%	9%	5%	1%	3%	34%
Britwell	26%	16%	5%	2%	9%	6%	4%	5%	33%
Central	28%	24%	6%	6%	8%	9%	5%	5%	41%
Chalvey	32%	18%	6%	4%	8%	6%	7%	2%	34%
Cippenham Green	20%	15%	6%	4%	8%	5%	5%	6%	35%
Cippenham Meadows	23%	18%	3%	6%	10%	5%	4%	6%	30%
Farnham	16%	12%	3%	6%	10%	4%	3%	5%	45%
Foxborough	18%	14%	4%	2%	6%	8%	4%	4%	38%
Haymill	17%	15%	8%	6%	12%	5%	6%	6%	43%
Kedermister	26%	18%	8%	3%	12%	6%	4%	3%	38%
Langley St. Mary's	21%	16%	7%	1%	13%	4%	7%	6%	44%
Upton	15%	19%	6%	0%	12%	2%	1%	3%	44%
Wexham Lea	21%	18%	5%	1%	8%	6%	4%	5%	38%
Borough	22%	17%	6%	3%	10%	5%	4%	4%	38%

Figure 35b - Active (Colnbrook with Poyle excluded from analysis due to sample size)

We see more dark orange in Figure 35b, indicating the relatively lower levels of interest in these more active forms of engagement. Figures rarely exceed 10%, although all wards reported more than this level for both meetings organised by the Council and meetings organised by tenants / residents associations.

Appendix

Colnbrook and Poyle: A Resume of Findings

Due to the low number of residents in Colnbrook and Poyle that are tenants it is not possible to reliably analyse the 5 responses received. As such a brief resume of findings is included to ensure the responses are represented fully.

Profile of respondents

Age & Sex	Male	Female	Overall
18 - 29	1		1
30 - 49		1	1
50 - 69		3	3

Ethnicity	Count
White British	3
Asian or Asian British	1
Not recorded	1

Religion	Count
Christian	2
Hindu	1
No religion	2

Limiting Long Term Illness	Count
Yes – limited a lot	2
Yes – limited a little	1
No	1

Sexuality	Count
Heterosexual/Straight	5

Of the five responses three were from Colnbrook, two were filled out online.

All respondents who answered the following questions were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with:

- maintenance of your home?
- gives you the opportunity to make your views known
- being kept informed about things that might affect you as a resident
- treats you fairly

- anti-social behaviour
- complaints
- enquires generally
- and are likely to recommend Council's Housing Service to family or friends
- the service provided by Slough Borough Council
- the overall quality of your home
- your neighbourhood as a place to live
- your rent as value for money
- how the Council deals with repairs and maintenance
- that the Council listens to your views and acts on them

Three of the five were fairly satisfied with Moving or swapping your home (transfers and exchanges), with the other two responding as being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Four tenants knew about the Service Standards, and only two were fairly satisfied with gas servicing arrangements with the other three being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Three tenants were either very or fairly satisfied with their service charges as value for money, with the remaining two being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Three respondents considered the following a priority:

- listening to residents' views and acting on them
- repairs and maintenance
- dealing with anti-social behaviour
- value for money for your rent (and service charge).

Only two respondents considered Keeping residents informed a priority.

No one prioritised:

- the overall quality of your home
- your neighbourhood as a place to live,
- support and advice on claiming welfare benefits and paying rent

All respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- the Housing Service provides an effective and efficient service.
- the Housing Service is providing the service I would expect from my landlord
- the Housing Service treats its residents fairly

- the Housing Service has a good reputation in my area
- the Housing Service has friendly and approachable staff
- I trust the Housing Service

Four respondents had contacted the Housing Service in the last 12 months with a query other than to pay rent or service charges. Of those four, three found getting hold of the right person easy, and staff to be helpful with their query answered within a reasonable time.

With regards to other reasons for contacting the Housing Service all five had been in contact. Three were very or fairly satisfied with the ability of staff to deal with their query quickly and efficiently and the final outcome of their query. One being neither nor for both questions and one was dissatisfied for both questions.

Two have internet access and would use email to contact the Housing Service. Four would telephone and write. Two would choose to visit the offices and read the newsletter. Only one respondent would contact the Housing Service by Text/SMS. One would also choose for staff to visit their home or attend open meetings plus all other ways to contact the service except Text/SMS.

Four out of five were satisfied with the cost of contacting the Housing Service by telephone.

Everyone was either fairly or very satisfied with advice and support about rent and income, except one who answered neither question, nor for claiming Housing Benefit and other welfare benefits, support for new tenants and support for vulnerable tenants.

Only two are aware of the complaints procedure and two made a complaint in the last twelve months. Both of these were fairly satisfied with all the services received and overall. One was very willing to complain in the future and the other answered neither nor for this question.

Two have had repairs in the last year and again were fairly satisfied with all the services received and overall. Both were shown ID and their appointments were kept. Everyone would also like the opportunity to choose the date and time of repair appointments in future.

All five were either fairly or very satisfied with their last communication with the housing service, but only three felt they were the focus of the staffs' attention.

Three knew who to contact for additional support and all felt they get adequate support now.

Four said they were happy to take part in surveys but did not specify what type of survey with two saying that they would attend meetings organised by Slough Borough Council.

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 06 November 2013

CONTACT OFFICER: Neil Aves – Assistant Director for Housing and Environment
(For all enquiries) (01753) 875263

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Councillor James Swindlehurst – Commissioner for Neighbourhoods and Renewal

PART I
FOR CONSIDERATION & COMMENT

OLDER PEOPLE'S HOUSING OFFER

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an overview of current services provided by Housing in relation to older people's accommodation and charts the transformation of the service over the recent past.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

- 2.1 That the Panel note the report and, in particular, the current status of the supported housing complexes and the level of service provided by external agencies.

The Slough Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Corporate Plan

3a. Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

The quality of, and access to, housing is a key priority for the council. Slough's Wellbeing Strategy names housing as one of five priorities with the vision that:

"By 2028 Slough will possess a strong, attractive and balanced housing market which recognises the importance of housing in supporting economic growth."

Housing is central to the health and wellbeing of the population; it gives the ability to access work and for older residents suitably located and adapted dwellings provide a safe environment for retained independence.

3b. Slough Wellbeing Strategy: Cross-Cutting themes

Elderly Residents who are adequately housed, and feel safe are able to take pride in their community and work to improve the image of the town as well as improving their own quality of life and life chances.

3c. **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

Housing is a contributory factor to the wellbeing of Slough residents, and the provision of any form of housing to those in need supports the priorities in the JSNA and it contributes to reducing inequalities in health by avoiding the occupation of poor quality sub-standard housing.

3d. **Corporate Plan 2013/14**

The project contributes to the priorities in the Corporate Plan by improving the customer experience by ensuring that the available services and facilities are responsive to the demands of local residents.

4 **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no additional financial implications relating to this report

(b) Risk Management

This report records the historic transition from Sheltered Housing through to Supported Housing and beyond and, as such, is purely retrospective and without associated risk.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no human rights implications for this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

As a reference report this does not make any recommendations as to future operation of the service or of policy change. Should changes be proposed in future an EIA will be completed at that stage.

(e) Workforce

There are no workforce implications within this report

5 **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 Like the majority of the council's housing stock, those designated as being exclusively for older people were built around 50 years ago and for much of their early life business carried on with little change. At its peak in 2003 the Sheltered Housing Service supervised over 2,500 dwellings which were split across complexes, clusters and free standing and isolated units in the following proportions.

No.	Stock category
229	Units in sheltered complexes
541	Units in associated outside 'sheltered' schemes for persons aged 60 and over
667	Units for persons over 58 (ground floor flats and bungalows)
1031	Units with first allocation option for persons over 50 and possible use

	by under 50
15	Units with a general needs classification but currently attracting a Supporting People charge
+5	Extra Care (Redwood House)

- 5.2 At that time this represented around one third of the total housing stock but the quantity of designated units owed more to a policy decision to avoid offering the Right-to-Buy to all tenants rather than any detailed assessment of need.
- 5.3 Around ten years ago, national changes in housing benefits and rent policy introduced two initiatives which affected the operation of the Sheltered Housing Service. Firstly, service charges were 'de-pooled' from the basic rental charge identifying for the first time to managers and tenants alike, the true costs of operating services. Second was the introduction of the Supporting People initiative which removed care and support charges from the basic housing benefits to be alternatively funded through a unified single Supporting People grant fund.
- 5.4 A review of the service at that time identified that the stock also included a number of sheltered complexes whose quality of provision was no longer considered acceptable or appropriate. These buildings were configured with bed-sit accommodation and shared sanitary facilities. These sites were gradually decommissioned, the residents relocated and the sites redeveloped in partnership with an RSL.
- 5.5 At the same time to reduce costs and provide a wider base for the support service, the residential wardens living in the blocks were replaced with a floating support service with the teams of up to 20 Supported Housing Officers co-located to provide services to the complexes as well as the outlying dwellings firstly in four, then three and ultimately two teams across the borough. This coincided with a change in designation from Sheltered Housing to Supported Housing as the Government drove changes to the classification status and attempted to provide greater clarity over what constituted care and support.
- 5.6 The remaining nine complexes continue to operate to this day providing accommodation on the following sites
- Allington Court 38 units
 - Armstrong House 19 units
 - Apsley House 21 units
 - Brooke House 27 units
 - Redwood House 21 units
 - Garrick House 8 units
 - Kennedy House 17 units
 - Seymour House 23 units
 - Calstock House 8 units
- 5.7 A combination of reducing demand for supported housing and the relative unattractive, outdated nature of the stock continued to lead to over provision and to counter this the first initiative was to re-designate all upper floor accommodation and outlying stock as being reserved for over 50's rather than just over 60's.
- 5.8 It was recognised that this alone could not resolve the issue but would assist in regularising the management of the stock and of the 2,483 units designated in the Council's stock records at 1st April 2003 for use by older people:

- 333 (14%) were currently let to persons aged less than 50
- 304 (12%) were currently let to persons aged 50 to 59

5.9 In 2007 supply and demand of supported accommodation was reviewed and it was found that with a dedicated stock of 2,500 units for older people there were only 300 older people on the housing register seeking such accommodation, whereas for persons under the age of 50, 1100 applicants were competing for the 97 available general needs units.

5.10 This imbalance clearly needed to be addressed and the de-designation programme identified the long term future of stock reserved for older people and proposed that over time the less desirable or inappropriately located stock would be released for general needs housing to reduce the waiting time for such clients. In these locations subsequent lettings would be managed sympathetically with offers being made to clients in their 40's and 50's rather than to a young individual or household where a clash of lifestyles would lead to immediate problems.

5.11 Any older people finding themselves in de-designated stock were given immediate priority to relocate into retained stock if they felt that the change in residence was something that would affect them adversely. In practice only nine residents across the borough opted to seek a move.

5.12 Following the review the following units were released to general needs housing

Studio bungalows	222
1 bedroom flats	853
1 bedroom bungalows	73
1 bedroom houses	40
1 bedroom mobile homes	26
Other properties	9
Total	1288

The advantages of de-designation were that:

- the dwellings could be let to a person of any age;
- the properties would be eligible for purchase under the right to buy;
- supported housing service would be available to new tenants as floating support, for which a charge would be made;
- existing receivers of Supported Housing services, will continue to receive the service under existing charging arrangements for the duration of their tenancy; and
- 70% of current residents in proposed de-designated blocks were aged under 60 at the start of their tenancies and 48% of current tenants were aged under 60 as at January 2007 so there was a limited impact upon clients compared to the benefits being derived.

5.13 Because of the specific nature of their design the supported housing complexes remained 'designated' and as such, except in very rare cases, individual dwellings are retained solely for those over the age of 60.

5.14 Over the past five years the complexes and cluster units have also benefited from Decent Homes investment into the individual units providing new bathrooms and kitchens, double glazing and energy efficient heating systems and in many case communal lounges and catering facilities have also been upgraded.

- 5.15 The next change to the supported housing service was prompted by the year on year reduction in Supporting People (SP) funding grant from central government used to finance the service which continued to be available to the residents of the remaining 1,500 designated units. In 2007, the total cost of operation was £830,111 per annum, which included funding of £700,000 from SP. By 2010 this funding was reduced to £300,000 with a further proposed reduction to £200,000 in the following year.
- 5.16 Rather than being an evolving service designed to meet the needs of older residents it became an exercise in simply managing decline such that the service was reduced through natural wastage from a head of service, four seniors and 14 officers down to one senior and six officers.
- 5.17 Thus while under the management of People 1st (Slough) Ltd., when the Supporting People commissioning team proposed the retendering of the floating support contract it was decided that People 1st, or SBC directly, could not compete with the national accredited specialist providers on cost or service quality and would not submit a bid to continue operating the service after the re-tendering period.
- 5.18 The direct impact of this on supported housing residents was less than might be imagined as at the time of transfer, only around 250 of the 1,500 clients were in receipt of any form of support, the rest were entirely independent but simply choosing to live in a community of similarly aged residents.
- 5.19 The benefit to the council corporately was the continuation of the service for reduced expenditure and to a tenure blind client group which means that elderly vulnerable residents of Slough can now receive the necessary support regardless of whether they are council or RSL tenants, private tenants or indeed homeowners, based upon need rather than simply 'the colour of their front door'.
- 5.20 The nine sheltered schemes consisting of one-bed and bed-sit flats all have common rooms and laundry facilities and guidelines are provided to prevent inappropriate use or occupation of a communal lounge by one or more residents. Some sites have guest suites which enable residents to have extended family or friends to stay for limited periods although this is limited to occasions when providing care rather than for purely vocational purposes. A charge for this is made to cover operational costs and bookings are managed through the housing service.
- 5.21 Historically, when each scheme had a resident warden there was a greater involvement with a programme of social activities and in some cases this has continued although it has generally declined and despite several attempts by the housing service to promote social activities the increasing independence and mobility of residents has meant that many prefer to 'do their own thing'.
- 5.22 Historically, all designated properties have had 'pull cord' community alarms operated by Careline although according to tenants' needs they have been disconnected. With the introduction of far more beneficial assistive technology coupled with the increasing obsolescence of the hard wired community alarm system, the pull cord service has been decommissioned to be replaced by independent dispersed alarms, pendants and other monitoring equipment to provide an enhanced service to those that specifically need it. All supported housing residents were contacted as part of this process and only around 250 have been assessed as having a need for the technology or indeed expressing a desire to have it. This number, of course correlates with the proportion who have an identified support need.

- 5.23 This reassessment of needs based provision while not providing the reassurance of a 'what if' scenario to an otherwise fit and able older person does mean that the increasingly limited funds available are concentrated on those clients with an identified need.
- 5.24 The other reason why residents of supported housing generally require less support and are seen to be increasingly independent is the introduction of the borough's extra care facilities which have delivered 120 units of rented and shared ownership accommodation which provide support to increasingly frail residents. Many of the residents of The Pines and Northampton Avenue have transferred from supported housing tenancies, homes which have in turn been let to older people with generally better health, mobility and independence.
- 5.25 The essence of Extra Care Sheltered Housing is that the people living in a complex will receive a wide range of support and, will therefore, be able to avoid the need to progress through a system of different institutions if their needs become more acute. Extra Care Sheltered Housing cuts across the established orthodoxies for supported housing in blurring the divide between sheltered housing and the care home regime. With life expectancy increasing there will be an increasing need for more extra care facilities across the borough not only to meet support needs but also to reduce excessive expenditure for the council in having to place elderly residents in residential care when supported independent living would continue to be more cost effective and more importantly, more beneficial to the residents themselves.
- 5.26 With an identified increasing need for extra care provision, it is likely over time that the future of some of the existing complexes will be considered and evaluated for potential to extend or convert into those extra care facilities. When such a review takes place it will be done sympathetically to, and inclusive of the residents to ensure that their views are represented in any report and recommendations.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Over the past ten years the supported housing service has gone through a period of transition driven by a desire to balance supply and demand for accommodation and national reductions in public sector funding which have required services to become far more targeted and focussed on those who actually require a service and derive a benefit from it. Historically tenants received a suite of services simply because of the designation of their accommodation whereas now, services are targeted at those who have an identified need for them.
- 7.2 The council is no longer the provider of supported housing services and we are now merely one of many landlords across the borough who may provide accommodation to clients in need of support. The occupation of a designated unit does not in itself result in the provision of a service or imply any eligibility for one, instead a supported housing unit simply means that as a prospective tenant you will be housed in a cluster or complex of residents over the age of 60.

8 Background Papers

None.

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 06 November 2013

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(01753) 875263

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Councillor James Swindlehurst – Commissioner for Neighbourhoods and Renewal

PART I
FOR CONSIDERATION & COMMENT

MANAGEMENT AND LICENSING OF HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the members on the statutory function of the management of the licensing of the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) in accordance with part 2 the Housing Act 2004 within Slough Borough Council, the quality of the housing stock, the aspirations and targets of the service for the coming year and the progress of the additional licensing regime within the Chalvey Ward.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

- 2.1 The Panel is requested to note the management of the Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation is compliant in accordance with Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004. An Audit for the statutory function was completed in August 2012 (Appendix A) and detailed within the report were strengths and weaknesses in our procedures and that we have implemented actions raised in the report to address any listed weaknesses.

The Slough Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Corporate Plan

3a. Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

The quality of and access to housing is a key priority for the council. Slough's Wellbeing Strategy names housing as one of five priorities with the vision that:

"By 2028 Slough will possess a strong, attractive and balanced housing market which recognises the importance of housing in supporting economic growth."

Housing is central to the health and wellbeing of the population; it gives the ability to access work and assists in providing a safe environment for educational achievement. This function will provide safeguards for the most vulnerable in society living in affordable single person accommodation, and contributes to other council priorities by generating additional revenue income through council tax from revaluing larger HMO properties that have more than one hereditament.

3b. **Slough Wellbeing Strategy Cross-Cutting themes**

The current review of the allocations policy taking into account of the changes in legislation brought about from the Localism Act should enhance the life chances of local people by recognising applicants' community contribution in terms of employment, education, training and positive contribution to community priorities.

Working with developers to secure properties of a size which meets demand as part of planning development agreements.

Residents who are adequately housed are able to take pride in their community and work to improve the image of the town as well as improving their own quality of life and life chances.

3c. **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

Housing is a contributory factor to the wellbeing of Slough residents, and the statutory HMO licensing function supports the priorities in the JSNA and it contributes to reducing inequalities in health through preventing access to poor quality sub-standard housing whilst requiring HMO owners to ensure the mandatory licensing conditions are achieved through the licensing scheme. The mandatory license conditions are seen within the Appendix B.

3d **Corporate Plan 2013/14**

The project contributes to the priorities in the Corporate Plan by improving the customer experience by tackling the perceived degradation of the Slough environment by unlicensed houses in multiple occupation and assists in the financial management of the council by identifying those low cost homes which are eligible for additional Council Tax.

5 **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no additional financial implications on any Slough Borough Council General Fund Budget. The fee structure within the HMO licensing application process is proportionate to the staffing resource costs to process the application form, although should there be an incomplete application form, Slough Borough Council does add that cost to the total license fee.

The Housing Standards team recently visited the district valuation office in Reading when it was discussed that larger HMO properties could actually be classed as more than one hereditaments (self contained and independent units of accommodation) and currently all HMO's are usually rated and valued as a single property for council tax purposes and the future referrals of the previous licensed properties to the valuation office agency (VOA) may result in additional council tax bills to owners of larger HMO properties.

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal	HMO licensing is a statutory function and once a property has been discovered or declared a HMO through the mandatory or additional licensing process then Slough Borough Council has a duty to ensure these properties comply with the licensing regime a failure to comply with this may result in vulnerable persons living in unlicensed properties which may pose a danger to their wellbeing and failure to address the unlicensed use of a HMO would put the reputation of SBC at risk. Robust investigations and licensing prosecutions should ensure compliancy to those who choose not to license HMO's where there is a legal need to do so.	
Property	None	
Human Rights	None	
Health and Safety	None	
Employment Issues	None	
Equalities Issues	None	
Community Support	None	
Communications	There have been numerous press releases and coverage regarding the recent instances of owners of HMO's being prosecuted for operating and allowing the property to be used but failing to license the property. Leo Tarring (communications officer) is central to the press release of prosecution cases brought by SBC which arises from court appearances. The press information needs to balance public interest and personal information.	
Community Safety	none	
Financial	None	
Timetable for delivery	The function of HMO licensing is ongoing and SBC are compliant in the time limitations for receiving a completed HMO application to a license being approved and issued,	
Project Capacity	The housing standards team that have the responsibility to delivery the	

	licensing function have 2 full time vacancies. The emergence of the business transformation and directorate restructure would have seen competent and qualified staff to deliver the service however, continuing delays have seen the vacancies within the team continue. We aim to remedy this situation by appointing two interim officers to the team within 2 weeks to ensure the compliancy of HMO licenses, investigations and declarations.	
Other		

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no human rights implications for this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

The Enforcement Policy of private sector housing service delivered by the housing standards team has undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment Initial Screening in September 2008. It also complies with the aims of the enforcement concordat. It includes a range of mandatory and discretionary tools which the council has available for its use. There is no adverse impact on age, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

(e) Workforce

This report will reveal that the previous work force implication of staff capacity should be addressed through the current Housing and Environment transformation restructure in that the previous housing standards teams will be replaced by a specific regulatory enforcement team that has responsibility for houses in multiple occupation licensing and enforcement and the current criminal and rogue landlords project (previously named as the 'sheds with beds project).

6 Supporting Information

- 6.1 A Private Sector Stock and HMO Condition Survey 2009 estimates there are 2,199 HMO's in the borough mainly within the Upton, Central and Chalvey wards. It is difficult to assess with any degree of accuracy the number of mandatory licensable HMO's; anecdotally there are approximately 200 mandatory licensable HMO's. The survey estimated there are 542 HMO's in Chalvey; 29 have been issued with a mandatory licence; all others would be licensable under the additional licensing scheme. The table below indicates the HMO licensing progress so far. The renewal column refers to licenses that were initially issued in 2007 at the beginning of the new licensing regime where licenses were valid for a period of 5 years. The cost of a HMO license is £550 and an additional £480 for a license for another licensable property owned by the same landlord.

Year	New licences	Renewals	Variations	Revoked	Total
2007	14				14
2008	7				7
2009	11				11
2010	10			1	10
2011	17				17
2012	7	4			11
2013	5	8	1 (not included in total)	1	13
Being processed now					4
Overall total properties currently licensed	69				

- 6.2 Additional Licensing was introduced on November 30 2011 giving Slough Borough Council direct powers to address problems linked with poor HMO's detrimentally affecting the Chalvey area. This followed an extensive public consultation that ran from July to October 2010 involving paper survey forms being sent to local residents and landlords which was also available to fill in online. Letters were sent to councillors and external partners including National Landlords Forum, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and Thames Valley Police.
- 6.3 Chalvey was chosen as the first ward to introduce additional licensing as there was strong evidence of a significant problem of anti-social behaviour taking place in and around the location of HMO's, affecting other residents and the local community. The external condition of some HMO's in the area was adversely impacting upon the general character and amenity of the area. After consultation it was decided that all HMO's within Chalvey should be licensed; any property occupied by three or more persons who do not form a single household comes within the scope of the scheme.
- 6.4 There is no anecdotal evidence that the licensing regime has improved HMO accommodation standards internally. However, the additional and mandatory licensing scheme requires all licensed HMOs to meet the minimum standards in terms of amenity provision for bathroom and kitchen facilities, fire safety, space provision and routine testing of gas/electrical and fire safety installations. A Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) inspection is carried out on all licensed HMO's in the five year license period looking at all 29 hazards as well as HMO management regulation requirements any works identified are requested and checked.
- 6.5 At a recent Chalvey Community Forum meeting residents said they have noticed improvements in the area, with landlords doing more work to improve their properties. This is backed up by the figures below, which show that complaints about anti-social behaviour, rats and mice, fly-tipping and messy gardens were down 13 percent in 2012 compared to the previous year.

	2011	2012	Percentage change
Total Service Requests	473	411	13% ↓
Antisocial Behaviour (drugs/alcohol/groups)	37	23	38% ↓
Rats & Mice	83	58	30% ↓
Flytipping	31	24	23% ↓
Littering	14	15	7% ↑
Dog Fouling	8	7	13% ↓

- 6.6 The standard and quality of the private housing stock differs greatly between wards and that is also reflected in the construction of properties. Older properties lend themselves more towards conversion to multiple occupation because of their size and these properties are in areas that are in need of increased social and housing provision. This is due to the fact that the more vulnerable of persons seek accommodation in low cost accommodation which the HMO properties offer. The transient nature of those tenants means that the quality of care of the house and gardens is neither their individual responsibility nor their main priority.
- 6.7 The Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams (NET's) are beginning to work more closely with the housing standards team regarding the reporting of poorly maintained and empty properties which can have a direct link towards anti social and criminal activities, fly tipping and an increase in the fear of crime and inevitably affect the values of housing in the area which has a knock on effect of poorly maintained homes. A necessary tool to combat poor quality housing during austere economic times is to offer a financial incentive to improve the housing conditions both internally and externally with a view to improving the amenity of the area and the financial pressures of the authority has resulted in the review of the financial assistance policy removing capitol funds/grants or loans preventing home owners in deprived neighbourhoods to improve their homes, coupled with an enforcement function through planning (section 215 planning notices for owners to improve their properties that are seen and assessed as a detriment to the amenity of the area), the persuasive argument to improve properties should be more measured and managed. However, the ongoing directorate restructure has meant the identification of HMO's and referrals for poorly maintained properties are fragmented at best and lacking at worst as the housing standards and NET teams are not working together in the neighbourhood structure to tackle neighbourhood and community issues collectively. The scheme of delegating responsibility of issuing section 215 notices still remains with planning enforcement rather than the NET teams and this causes a conflict of prioritisation of work between enforcement and community teams.
- 6.8 The targets for service delivery of this function are totally dependent on available staffing resource. At present we endeavour to issue licenses to appropriate premises and fit and proper persons after receiving a completed application form within 8 weeks. We believe that the function is well managed with the resources available. From an inspirational perspective, additional staffing resourcing will deliver a quality of service to more landlords by completing more applications and therefore ensuring more complaint owners of HMO's with good accommodation standards. The current vacant housing standards officers posts have had previous temporary interim placements whilst the ongoing restructure completes. There are interviews the week commencing 28 October for two temporary officers on interim contracts to assist in completing more HMO applications and the arrival of the neighbourhood enforcement

teams into the proposed neighbourhood services directorate will enhance our investigative capabilities for HMO licensing.

7 **Conclusion**

This report is for the Panel to note that the audit report confirms that Slough Borough Council's HMO licensing process is well managed. However, it is clear from the number of licenses issued both mandatory and additional (98 in total 15 licenses being processed) does not address the need to license the estimated number of HMO's remaining during which time there is a risk persons may be living in HMO properties that are unlicensed and poor conditions. We have confidence that we can resource personnel into the two vacant posts for the HMO licensing function with temporary experienced staff to address the number of HMO licensing investigations that are outstanding and continue to deliver a quality service.

8 **Appendices**

- A - RSM Tenon HMO licensing audit report
- B - Mandatory HMO license conditions

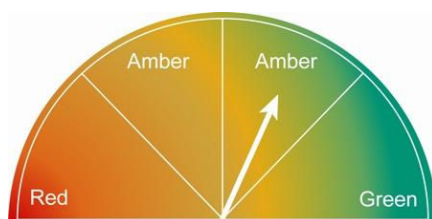
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Slough Borough Council

Multiple Housing Occupation

Internal Audit Report (7.12/13)
30 August 2012

Overall Opinion



Recommendations Raised

HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
0	3	1

Overview:

This audit was undertaken as part of the internal audit plan for quarter one of 2012/13.

We found that the controls in place were adequately designed with the exception that procedures and guidance had not been subject to a regular review and pricing lists for Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) licences had not been subject to a recent review to ensure the Council are receiving the going rate.

The weakness in the application of the HMO framework related to inspections. Sample testing identified that two six monthly reviews had not been completed in a timely manner and evidence of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System were not sufficiently robust. If an incident was to occur where an inspection had not been appropriately completed the Council's reputation could be adversely affected.

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Debrief meeting	14 June 2012	Auditors	Daniel Harris, Associate Director Chris Rising, Senior Manager Andrew Patterson, Assistant Manager Edward Snook, Auditor
Draft report issued	5 July 2012		
Responses received	30 August 2012		
Final report issued	30 August 2012	Client sponsor	Neil Aves, Assistant Director Housing Services
		Distribution	Neil Aves, Assistant Director Housing Services Julie Evans, Strategic Director of Resources Emma Foy, Acting Head of Finance



This review has been performed using RSM Tenon's bespoke internal audit methodology, **i-RIS**.

The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during our internal audit work and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist, or of all the improvements that may be required. Whilst every care has been taken to ensure that the information provided in this report is as accurate as possible, based on the information provided and documentation reviewed, no complete guarantee or warranty can be given with regard to the advice and information contained herein. Our work does not provide absolute assurance that material errors, loss or fraud do not exist.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

An audit of Multiple Housing Occupation was undertaken as part of the approved internal audit periodic plan for 2012/13.

Any property which is occupied by three or more persons who do not live together as a single family and who share amenities such as kitchen and bathroom facilities are mandatory properties to have a multiple housing occupancy licence.

The Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are monitored by a team of four individuals within the Council's Housing Team, with additional support from the Business Support Team. The Housing Team provide licences to those applicants that fulfil the HMO specification and where the appropriate licence fee has been received.

HMOs are subject to an inspection programme, whereby a visit is conducted within six months of the licence being issued and HMOs can also be subject to an audit at any point in their lifespan.

HMOs are monitored through the use of a register that records key details on each HMO and the Council also has two performance indicators relating to HMOs:

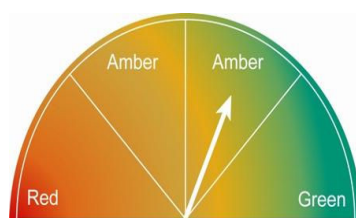
- Number of verifiable Houses in Multiple Occupation in your administrative area; and
- Estimated total number of HMOs in your area, including verifiable HMOs.

An Additional Licensing Report was completed in July 2011 and approved by the Cabinet, which identified properties in the Chalvey Community where more than three or more persons who did not form a single household that could come within the scope of additional licencing. Section 56 of the Housing Act 2004 enables Local Authorities to designate HMOs within an area of the district that are not licensable under the mandatory scheme to require a licence. In affect this enables the Council to have additional powers to address poorly managed HMOs that are having a detrimental effect on Slough.

The audit was designed to assess the controls in place to manage the following objective and risk:

Objective	To provide assurance that the Council is offering good standards in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO).
Risk	The Council's reputation could be brought in to disrepute or the Council could be held liable if risks relating to HMO are not managed. For instance, health and safety matters or vulnerable people being inappropriately placed in HMOs.

1.2 CONCLUSION



Taking account of the issues identified, the Council can take reasonable assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage this risk are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective.

However we have identified issues that, if not addressed, increase the likelihood of the risk materialising.

The above conclusions feeding into the overall assurance level are based on the evidence obtained during the review. The key findings from this review are as follows:

Design of control framework

We found that the following controls were designed adequately:

- The Flare System has security in place to make sure a limited number of people are able to access the Licences. In addition to narrow the responsible people for the licencing a small number of staff have access to the password protected public register.
- All licences are authorised by an appropriate level of authority in the form of the Housing Standards Manager, sample testing confirmed that this was operating effectively.
- Licenses are only issued by the Housing Standards Manager, whilst the Licences Decision is signed off by two employees. In addition the Housing Standards Manager does not have access to the Public Licences Log and therefore the Council maintains adequate segregation of duty throughout this process. Sample testing verified that this process was being strictly followed.
- The Council has a publicly accessible HMO Licence Register, which provides details to the public on houses in each area where HMO's licences have been given.
- The Council has an appropriate Inspection programme in place, to ensure HMO properties are of a sufficient and safe standard for residents to live.
- The Flare system provides a user of a log, when they go onto the system, of areas where resolution is required. The system does not allow the user to simply delete the issue and requires a date to be added of when the work has been completed.
- The Council has two performance indicators in place, which compares the number of HMO's identified against an estimated number of HMO's in Slough.

In addition we found the following weaknesses in the design of the Multiple Housing Occupancy control framework:

- The Council has a Private Sector Housing Procedures, which identifies the process to be followed for identifying potential HMO's prior to the licencing of the HMO. However, this had not been subject to a regular review and did not include details of the level of authority that had approved the documented process.
- The Council has created a HMO Licencing pathways and timings Flowchart, and an accompanying process document, which provides clear concise information around the processing of a HMO licence. However, this also had not been subject to a regular review and did not include details of the level of authority that had approved the documented process.
- The amount charged by the Council, has been communicated to members of the public through the initial application pack, the amount charged has also been authorised by the Council. Sample testing during this review confirmed that applicants had been appropriately charged. However, the pricing had not been subject to a review since July 2010 and therefore the Council could potentially forgoing additional revenue if this rate is no longer appropriate.

Application of and compliance with control framework

We found that a number of controls identified above were not adequately complied with. We identified the following weaknesses which resulted in one high and one medium recommendation:

- Sample testing found that two six monthly inspections had not been completed in an appropriate timeframe. If an incident was to occur at a HMO which had not been subject to an inspection the Council's reputation could adversely be affected.
- Sample testing found that no evidence other than a record on the FLARE system had been retained to demonstrate Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HSSRS) inspections had been completed in the lifespan of a HMO licence. There is the potential risk that the FLARE System could be incorrectly updated and if an incident was to occur where in-fact an inspection had not been conducted then the Council's reputation could be adversely affected.

2 ACTION PLAN

The priority of the recommendations made is as follows:

Priority	Description
High	Recommendations are prioritised to reflect our assessment of risk associated with the control weaknesses.
Medium	
Low	
Suggestion	These are not formal recommendations that impact our overall opinion, but used to highlight a suggestion or idea that management may want to consider.

Ref	Recommendation	Categorisation	Accepted (Y/N)	Management Comment	Implementation Date	Manager Responsible
1	<p>The HMO procedures should be reviewed.</p> <p>The HMO Licensing pathways and timings Flowchart require a regular review.</p> <p>All procedures should be enhanced to include details of their approval and a next review date.</p> <p>The Housing Team may benefit from consolidating their documented processes within one document. For instance, by appending the flowchart to a formal procedure.</p>	Medium	Yes	Agreed, we will be bringing this into line with the other procedures for housing which we have been updating recently.	End of September 2012	Ray Haslam, Interim Housing Standards Manager.
2	The Council should, as a minimum bi-annually, review the prices being charged to members of the public for HMO licences, to confirm that the price is consistent with the market rate.	Low	Yes	<p>As per all fees across the council we can add the retail price index plus three percent.</p> <p>Proposal could be sent to Landlords of the price increase, to encourage them to licence</p>	Fully implemented April 2013.	Neil Aves, Assistant Director Housing and Environment.

Ref	Recommendation	Categorisation	Accepted (Y/N)	Management Comment	Implementation Date	Manager Responsible
				their properties early.		
3a	At a minimum, the Housing Team should be reminded that they need to capture inspection due dates on the FLARE system in order for inspections due for completion to be identified in a timely manner.	Medium	Yes	Fairly straight forward, we can perform this in one of two ways: - Monthly report which identifies any due dates - Try and automate the system	End of September 2012.	Ray Haslam, Interim Housing Standards Manager
3b	The Housing Team could also conduct sample testing of licence files to ensure all appropriate documentation has been retained and is accurate with the information captured on the FLARE system.	Suggestion	Yes	Implementation once procedure is complete.	End of December 2012	Housing Standards Manager
3c	Inspection paperwork should be held on HMO files that are signed by the inspector to verify that the six monthly review/HSSRS has been appropriately completed.	Medium	Yes	We would expect the team to keep a copy of all of their six monthly review notes Internal Audit Comment - Given this is a compliance issue, it should be possible to implement this immediately and not by the end of December 2012.	End of December 2012	Housing Standards Manager

3 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has been prepared by exception. Therefore, we have included in this section, only those areas of weakness in control or examples of lapses in control identified from our testing and not the outcome of all audit testing undertaken.

	Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
	Risk: The Councils reputation could be brought in to disrepute or the Council could be held liable if risks relating to HMO are not managed. For instance, health and safety matters or vulnerable people being inappropriately placed in HMOs.				
1	<p>The Council has created Private Sector Housing Procedures.</p> <p>The Procedure includes guidance on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding HMO's; Proving the Property is a Licensable HMO. Gathering evidence during inspections; Considering enforcement action; and Considering additional actions, e.g. Rent Repayment Orders. 	No	<p>We obtained the Private Sector Housing Procedures dated July 2010 and noted that the procedures had not been authorised and the procedure did not include a future review date.</p> <p>The risk of neither of these being completed is that the procedures may become obsolete, alternatively the policy may not be followed if a member of staff due to it not being stated as approved, does not understand that the guidance is mandatory. These could lead to the Council not identifying a House of Multiple Occupancy and therefore forgo potential revenue.</p> <p>We observed the Housing Team's shared drive and confirmed that their procedure was accessible to employees.</p> <p>On review of the procedures we confirmed that they provided sufficient guidance on the documented procedures to be performed.</p>	<p>The HMO procedures should be reviewed.</p> <p>The HMO Licensing pathways and timings Flowchart require a regular review.</p> <p>All procedures should be enhanced to include details of their approval and a next review date.</p> <p>The Housing Team may benefit from consolidating their documented processes within one document. For instance, by appending the flowchart to a formal procedure.</p>	Medium
2	The Council has established a pricelist for HMO licence applications that has been subject to cabinet approval.	Yes	<p>We obtained a copy of the price list dated 2011, which was included within the Council's information pack which is provided to users.</p> <p>We confirmed that the pricelist had been approved</p>	The Council should at a minimum biannually review the prices being charged to members of	Low

Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
<p>The Housing department receive a cheque from the licensee with the application form. The cheque is sent via internal post to Landmark place. If the amount is to be paid in cash, the user is sent to Landmark place to pay the licence fee.</p> <p>Once the money has been received by the Cashier at Landmark place, the misc. cash machine receipting form is sent back in confirmation that the money has been received.</p> <p>Once the fee has been receipted a member of the Resources, Housing and Regeneration team adds the fact the fee has been received to either the Mandatory or Additional fees log in the HMO list.</p>		<p>by the Cabinet on the 12th July 2010. We verified that the price list provided to the public in the information pack corresponds to the information agreed in the Cabinet minutes. However, given this pricing is approaching two years since its last review and the Housing Team provided no assurance that this was to be reviewed in the near future there is a potential risk that the prices may not reflect a comparable rate against other Councils and therefore the organisation could be forgoing additional revenue. We obtained some comparative data on licence cost from 9 other Councils and the licence fee varied from £209 to £820 with rates charged by Slough (£550) around the mid-point of that charged.</p> <p>From our previous sample of ten HMO applications we obtained copies of each of the cash machine receipting forms.</p> <p>We compared these against the information held within the Mandatory licencing log and confirmed that each of the sampled licence fees had been recorded and priced accurately against the price lists.</p>	the public for HMO licences, to confirm that the price is consistent with the going rate.	
<p>The Council has an inspection programme for HMOs; Inspections are carried out in two forms.</p> <p>In the first six months of a new HMO licence a HMO visit is completed, if an issue had been identified in the initial application inspection of the property.</p>	Yes	<p>We observed that the FLARE system did record the timeframe in which inspections were due to be carried out and enabled employees to create reminders to inform them of an impending inspection that was due to be completed.</p> <p>For a sample of ten HMOs selected from the licence register, we reviewed whether the six monthly reviews had been completed and found that six properties did not require an inspection. This was</p>	At a minimum, the Housing Team should be reminded that they need to capture inspection due dates on the FLARE system in order for inspections due for completion to be identified in a timely	Medium

Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
<p>Reasons the property may not require a six month audit includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The house is a new property. ▪ The property owner has been given a grant by the council to complete the work. <p>The second inspection process is that during the life of the licence a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HSSRS) audit is completed. All HMO properties are required to complete this.</p> <p>Employees are able to identify those HMOs due for inspection through the FLARE System.</p>		<p>due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One property that had been vacant (007808); ▪ Two properties were new (006199, 005743); ▪ One property the original issue on the application inspection had been revoked, this was related to having wash basins in every room (005903); and ▪ Two properties sampled had been given grants, where the council completes the work on the behalf of the landlord; we were unable to review the grant as the paperwork is archived offsite. However, we observed that the Flare system recorded that the grant met the information contained within the schedule of works (007593, 005697). <p>For the remaining four properties we found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One property which was identified as not being on the inspection log had not had a six monthly review completed (007810); ▪ One six monthly inspections had not been carried out, due to the information on this HMO being held solely by an employee who left the organisation and this information had not been communicated to any other employee. Subsequently, a review had been conducted by the Council upon a complaint by the resident regarding a fire incident (005777); ▪ The remaining two properties were 	<p>manner.</p> <p>The Housing Team could also conduct sample testing of licence files to ensure all appropriate documentation has been retained and is accurate with the information captured on the FLARE system.</p> <p>Inspection paperwork should be held on HMO files that are signed by the inspector to verify that the six monthly review/HSSRS has been appropriately completed.</p>	<p>Suggestion</p> <p>Medium</p>

Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
		<p>confirmed within Flare to have had a six monthly review (007717, 007682).</p> <p>We noted that there was no other documented evidence to verify the completion of the inspection within the licensee's files. The risk of only recording this information on Flare is that properties could be incorrectly recorded as having an inspection.</p> <p>This could potentially result in the Council's reputation being adversely affected if an issue was to arise at a property which should have been subject to an inspection.</p> <p>We selected a sample of five HMOs sampled that were near to the expiry date of their licence to determine whether a HHSRS inspection had been completed. We found that all sampled HMOs had been subject to a HHSRS.</p> <p>However, it was noted that the inspection form did not allow room for an employee to sign once the inspection had been completed. The risk of an inspector not signing the HHSRS inspection document, is that it could be difficult to identify who completed the inspection if a problem was later identified and potentially an inspection document could be illegitimately issued.</p>		

	Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
	The following controls relate to areas in which risks have been identified. However, recommendations have been incorporated in the paragraphs above.				
4	<p>The Council has created a HMO Licensing pathways and timings Flowchart; this identifies the process in place from the Enquiry received to the Serving of the licence documents.</p> <p>The Council also has additional guidance in the form of the Licensing Process document.</p> <p>The Licensing Process explains how employees are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Receipt applications; ▪ Conduct licence checks; ▪ Draft a licence; and ▪ Produce the final licence. 	Yes	<p>We obtained the HMO Licensing pathways and timings Flowchart dated July 2006 and the documented Licensing Process dated February 2009.</p> <p>If these processes are not subject to a regular review, employees could potentially be providing licences inappropriately if the guidance had become obsolete. We noted that neither the Flowchart nor Licensing Process stated whether it had been approved or provided with a future review date. The risk of guidance material not being authorised is that it could be considered by an employee as a guide rather than a document that should be followed. Non-compliance with the correct process could result in the Council forgoing potential licence income.</p> <p>An observation of the Housing Team's shared drive confirmed that the flowchart and the licensing process were accessible to the relevant employees.</p> <p>On review of the guidance documentation and through sample testing conducted in this review we confirmed that there were no significant gaps in the guidance provided to employees.</p> <p>We have made a recommendation in paragraph one for the Council to review its procedures and processes and have suggested that the documents are consolidated within one source.</p>	See one recommendation	

4 ADDITIONAL DETAILS

4.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following members of staff for their time and assistance during the review.

Josephine Abranches, Senior Housing Standards Officer

Geraldine Levy-Hayes, Senior Standards Officer

Keith Ford, Housing Standards Manager

4.2 SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

To evaluate the adequacy of risk management and control within the system and the extent to which controls have been applied, with a view to providing an opinion. Control activities are put in place to ensure that risks to the achievement of the organisation's objectives are managed effectively. When planning the audit, the following controls for review and limitations were agreed:

Control activities relied upon:

- HMO Register;
- Private Sector Housing Procedures;
- HMO Licencing pathways and timings Flowchart;
- Licencing process document;
- Price list; and
- Cabinets pricing approval.

Limitations to the scope of the audit:

- We have not provided an opinion as to whether HMO licenses have been issued appropriately.
- The scope of the work has been limited to those areas examined and reported upon in the areas for consideration in the context of the objectives set out in for this review.
- It should not, therefore, be considered as a comprehensive review of all aspects of non-compliance that may exist now or in the future.
- Any testing undertaken as part of this audit has been compliance based and sample tested. In addition, our work has not provided any guarantee against material errors, loss or fraud or provide an absolute assurance that material error, loss or fraud does not exist.

The approach taken for this audit was a Risk-Based Audit.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The following tables highlight the number and categories of recommendations made. The Action Plan at Section 2 details the specific recommendations made as well as agreed management actions to implement them.

Recommendations made during this audit:

Our recommendations address the design and application of the control framework as follows:

	Priority		
	High	Medium	Low
Design of control framework	0	1	1
Application of control framework	0	2	0
Total	0	3	1

4.4 ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

We have made two suggestions where we have identified good practice that Slough Borough Council may wish to consider:

Suggestions Made During the Audit
The Housing Team may benefit from consolidating their documented processes within one document. For instance, by appending the flowchart to a formal procedure.
The Housing Team could also conduct sample testing of licence files to ensure all appropriate documentation has been retained and is accurate with the information captured on the FLARE system.

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HOUSING ACT 2004 Section 64

LICENCE FOR A HOUSE IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO)

SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL LICENSING PROVISIONS

(THIS LICENCE IS NON-TRANSFERABLE)

The Slough Borough Council ("the Authority") hereby grant to

of

Licence under section 64 of the Housing Act 2004, subject to the conditions set out in the schedules attached, in respect of premises situate at:-

The Authority has decided that the house is reasonably suitable for occupation by not more than the maximum of: **[*Insert number households]** [, *and]
[*Insert number persons].

This Licence is granted on : **[*Insert Date]**
It shall come into force on : **[*Insert Date]**,
and shall remain in effect for a period of ... months from **[XXXX DATE]** to **[EXPIRY DATE]**,
unless revoked.

Date: [*Insert Date]

Signed

Designation: Housing Supply & Regulation Manager
The officer appointed for this purpose

Number of Schedule 1 attachments **INSERT NO#**Number of Schedule 2 attachments **INSERT NO#**

Address for all communications:

**Housing & Environment Services
Resources, Housing and Regeneration,
Slough Borough Council,
St Martins Place,
51 Bath Road, Slough,
Berkshire SL1 3UF**

Enquires by telephone should be made to:-
Josephine Abranches

Telephone Number **01753 875264**
Our reference number **LIC/008074**

Schedule 1 Mandatory Conditions

**Referred to in the 'Licence of a house in multiple occupation' in respect of
dated [*Insert Date]**

1. The licence holder shall, if gas is supplied to the house, produce to the local housing authority annually for their inspection a gas safety certificate obtained in respect of the house within the last 12 months.
2. The licence holder shall keep electrical appliances and furniture made available by him in the house in a safe condition.
3. Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph 2
 - a. The licence holder shall ensure that all electrical equipment at the property provided by the licence holder shall be safe and compliant with the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994.
 - b. The licence holder shall ensure that all furniture and furnishings provided are compliant with The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended).
4. The licence holder shall supply the authority, on demand, with a declaration by him as to the safety of such appliances and furniture.
5. Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph 2,
 - a. all electrical equipment provided by the landlord shall be tested by a competent electrical engineer (i.e. a member of one of the following 'full competence' schemes; BRE Certification Limited, British Standards Institution (Kitemark Scheme for electrical installation work), ELECSA Ltd, NAPIT Certification Limited, NICEIC Certification Services Limited (Domestic Installer Scheme), or other appropriate scheme). A copy of the test report, identifying the equipment tested and recording the type of tests carried out and the results of those tests shall be provided on demand to the authority.
 - b. The licence holder shall supply the authority, on demand, with a declaration that all furniture and furnishings provided are compliant with The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended).
6. All works specified in Part A of the attached schedule shall be completed within INSERT DATE of the date of this licence.
[NB. This condition is to be used to ensure provision of fire precautions and, if alarms are not already installed, is MANDATORY]
7. All works specified Part B of the attached schedule shall be completed within INSERT TIME of the date of this licence.
[NB. This condition to be used to ensure provision of adequate facilities and/or amenities as specified in the licensing and management of HMOs and other Houses (misc provisions) (England) Regs 2006.]

8. Any means of giving warning in case of fire shall be inspected and serviced at periods not exceeding six months in accordance with the recommendations of Clause 45 of BS 5839-1:2004. An inspection and servicing certificate of the type contained in G.6 of BS 5839-1:2002 should be issued and the licence holder shall supply a copy of this certificate to the local housing authority within 1 month of the said inspection or service.
9. The licence holder shall supply the authority, on demand, with a declaration by him as to the condition and positioning of such alarms.
10. The licence holder shall supply to the occupiers of the house a written statement of the terms on which they occupy it (for example, a tenancy agreement). Copies of the relevant documents shall be supplied to the authority on demand.

Schedule 2 Other Conditions

**Referred to in the 'Licence of a house in multiple occupation' in respect of
dated [*Insert Date]**

1. The written statement of the terms on which they occupy the property, shall include provisions relating to antisocial behaviour, and shall include conditions such that the occupant shall be under an obligation:
 - a. Not to carry on or permit to be carried on the premises any profession trade, business or any illegal, immoral or improper activity whatsoever; and
 - b. Not to do or suffer to be done in or on the Premises any act or thing, including the use of radios, stereos and televisions, which may cause nuisance or annoyance to the landlord or to the occupiers of any adjoining premises, or other occupiers of the Premises. Radios stereos and televisions should be kept at to an acceptable level of noise especially after 11:00 pm.
2. A valid Periodic Electrical Inspection Report for 'the property' shall be provided to 'the council' within **INSERT DATE** of the date of this licence.
3. Any alterations or additions to the electrical installation shall be done by a suitably qualified and competent electrician (i.e. a member of one of the following schemes; BRE Certification Limited, British Standards Institution (Kitemark Scheme for electrical installation work), ELECSA Ltd, NAPIT Certification Limited, NICEIC Certification Services Limited (Domestic Installer Scheme), or other appropriate scheme), and on completion of such works, a copy of the Electrical Installation Certificate conforming to the requirements of British Standard 7671: 1992 (as amended) shall be forwarded to Housing Standards Team.
4. All facilities and amenities provided in connection with the property shall be maintained in good repair and working order.
5. All furniture provided shall be in good repair and working order.
6. All works specified in Part C of the attached schedule shall be completed within **INSERT TIME** of the date of this licence.
[NB. This condition to be used to ensure provision of adequate facilities and/or amenities and fire precautions as specified in the licensing and management of HMOs and other Houses (misc provisions) (England) Regs 2006]
7. There is to be no obligate sharing of bedrooms.
8. Tenants are to have 24hr direct access to all toilet, personal washing and cooking facilities and equipment.
9. The property is to be occupied in accordance with and by no more than the number of persons and households specified below:

[illegible]

(NB the total number in this table may be higher than the total number of persons permitted under the licence since a lower overall number may be determined by the number of facilities in the property. The permitted number as shown on the front of the licence shall not be exceeded under any circumstances)

Conditions to be attached only when deemed necessary:

10. The **[INERT LOCATION]** room shall not be used for **[SPECIFY PURPOSE]**
11. The licence holder and manager (if there is one) is to attend a recognised course on the Approved Code of Practice relating to the management of HMOs within 5 years of the licence being granted or publication of the code (whichever is the later).
12. The **[LICENCEE AND /OR MANAGER]** shall attend an approved training course on management of 'houses in multiple occupation' in relation to any applicable code of practice approved under section 233 and provide proof of attendance to this department within 6 months of the date of this licence.
13. The **[LICENCEE AND /OR MANAGER]** shall attend a training course on management of 'houses in multiple occupation'

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 6 November 2013

CONTACT OFFICER: Sarah Forsyth – Scrutiny Officer
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875657

WARDS: All

PART I

TO NOTE

**NEIGHBOURHOODS & COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL
2013/14 WORK PROGRAMME**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 For the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel to review its current work programme.

2. Recommendations/Proposed Action

- 2.1 That the Panel note the current work programme for the 2013/14 municipal year.

3. Joint Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

- **Housing**
- **Regeneration and Environment**
- **Safer Communities**

- 3.1 The Council's decision-making and the effective scrutiny of it underpins the delivery of all the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities. The Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel, along with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and other Scrutiny Panels combine to meet the local authority's statutory requirement to provide public transparency and accountability, ensuring the best outcomes for the residents of Slough.
- 3.2 In particular, the NCS Panel specifically takes responsibility for ensuring transparency and accountability for Council services relating to housing, regeneration and environment, and safer communities.

4. **Supporting Information**

Work Programme

- 4.1 The current work programme is based on the discussions of the Panel at its previous meetings, looking at requests for consideration of issues from officers and issues that have been brought to the attention of Members outside of the Panel's meetings.
- 4.2 The work programme is a flexible document which will be continually open to review throughout the municipal year.

5. **Conclusion**

- 5.1 This report is intended to provide the Panel with the opportunity to review its upcoming work programme and make any amendments it feels are required.

6. **Appendices Attached**

A - Work Programme for 2013/14 Municipal Year

7. **Background Papers**

None.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL
WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

Meeting Date	
8 January 2014	
Scrutiny Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of Benefits Changes incl. impact of London Boroughs policies on housing • Management and Prevention of rent arrears/voids/damage to housing stock <p>For Information (not for discussion. Should further discussion be required, to be added to future agenda)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of service charges for Council tenants and business rates
27 February 2014	
Scrutiny Items	<p>Crime and Disorder Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of work of the Community Safety Partnership incl. prostitution update • Domestic Violence
2 April 2014	
Scrutiny Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Neighbourhood Action Groups

Currently Un-programmed:

- Traffic Congestion: report back from working group

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