

## Executive Summary

### 1.1 Introduction and methodology

- Milton Keynes Council wished to commission a survey of residents across the borough to assess their satisfaction with the services provided by their landlord, providing information for Best Value Performance Indicators BVPI 74 and 75.
- The research was undertaken using a postal self-completion questionnaire that was sent to all tenants of the Council. Fieldwork took place during August and September 2006. The questionnaire was based upon the standard questions contained within the National Housing Federation's standardised tenants satisfaction survey (STATUS) to enable comparison with other social housing providers, with additional questions included.
- In total, 1490 tenant questionnaires and 643 homeowner questionnaires were returned, which represents an overall response rate of 32%. The overall data is accurate to +/- 1.9% at the 95% confidence interval. This means that if 50% of people are satisfied with services, we know that between 48.1% and 51.9% of all residents – including those not invited to participate in the survey – hold this view.

### 1.2 Profile of respondents

#### Tenant profile

- Fifty three percent of tenants were female and 41% were male. The remaining 6% of respondents did not give an answer.
- The most common age range amongst respondents was tenants aged 75 or over, comprising one fifth of responses. A further 18% of respondents were aged 65-74, revealing a high proportion of older residents amongst tenants in Milton Keynes.
- The majority of respondents had been tenants of the Council for longer than 10 years, with the largest single group (40%) having been tenants for 21 years or more.

#### Homeowner profile

- Sixty three percent of respondents to the homeowner survey were shared owners and 35% were leaseholders.
- A majority of respondents had been an owner of their property for more than 5 years, with the most common response being that respondents had owned their property for between 11 and 20 years (32%).

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## Household composition

- A high proportion of both tenant and homeowner households were comprised of a single adult, with single adults aged over 60 (31%) comprising the most common tenant household type, whilst single adults aged under 60 (30%) were the most common homeowner household type.
- A much higher proportion of tenant households did contain someone with a longstanding illness or disability when compared with homeowner households. Indeed, whilst more than half of all tenant households (54%) contained someone with a longstanding illness or disability, this compared to 28% of homeowner households.
- The largest single ethnic group amongst respondents was the 86% of both tenants and homeowners who described themselves as White British.
- Forty eight percent of tenants indicated that their income was solely from state benefits, 22% indicated that it was partly from state benefits and 16% indicated that they received no state benefit at all. Twenty two percent of respondents refused to answer this question.
- The most common source of income was the state pension, which was received by more than one third of respondents (38%).
- The most common working status amongst tenants was being wholly retired from work (36%), whilst 10% of respondents were permanently sick or disabled. Twenty four percent of respondents were in employment, split between those in full time work (16%), those in part time work (7%) and those who are self-employed (1%).

### 1.3 Overall opinions of the Council

- BVPI 74 measures tenant's satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord. A NET figure of 67% of tenant respondents and 50% of homeowners were found to be satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council.
- Older respondents were more likely to record higher levels of satisfaction when compared with those in younger age groups. Whilst shared owners were found to be far more satisfied than leaseholders.

### 1.4 Home and neighbourhood

- A NET result of 74% of tenants were satisfied with their accommodation. Lower levels of satisfaction were recorded amongst BME tenants and tenants in younger age groups.
- A NET figure of 62% of respondents believed the condition of their homes was good.
- When asked about levels of satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live, 69% of tenants and 75% of homeowners recorded that they were satisfied. Lower levels of satisfaction were recorded by residents in the Milton Keynes East area.
- The neighbourhood issue that was most likely to be regarded as a serious problem by both tenants and homeowners was litter and rubbish (27% tenants, 23% homeowners).

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The other issues commonly selected as serious problems by tenants were vandalism (17%), noise from people (14%), graffiti (13%) and dogs (12%). Meanwhile for homeowners, the other issues commonly selected as serious problems were graffiti and vandalism (both 13%).

### 1.5 Contacting the Council

- Eighty percent of tenants and 52% of homeowners had been in touch with the Council within the last 12 months.
- This contact was by telephone for a majority of both tenants and homeowners (73% and 68% respectively). Office visits were the next most popular method of making contact for both tenants and homeowners (19% and 15%), whilst contact via email (10%) or in writing (6%) were also common options for homeowners to contact the Council.
- For tenants, in the majority of cases contact with the Council was with regard to repairs (65%), with rent or housing benefit queries comprising the main reason for contact for a further 12% of respondents. Meanwhile, the principal reasons for contact were repairs (28%), service charges and advice (both 19%).
- A majority of both tenants (62%) and homeowners (54%) suggested that it was easy to get hold of the right member of staff.
- A majority of both tenants (72%) and homeowners (57%) believed that staff were helpful, whilst 66% of tenants and 59% of homeowners indicated that staff had been able to deal with their problem.
- Though 60% of tenants (60%) and 57% of homeowners indicated that they were satisfied with the final outcome of their contact, a third of homeowners (33%) and 29% of tenants indicated dissatisfaction.
- Levels of satisfaction were particularly low amongst tenants who had made contact via letter, with just 32% expressing satisfaction with the final outcome of their contact. Equally, levels of satisfaction were very low amongst tenants who had made contact with regard to a transfer or exchange (29%) or an issue with their neighbours (31%). Similarly, homeowners who had made contact regarding an issue with their neighbours (32%) or a complaint (31%) recorded particularly low levels of satisfaction. Meanwhile, tenants who had made contact with regard to their rent or housing benefit recorded significantly higher levels of satisfaction than the average (81%).
- Throughout the questions assessing the contact process, the trend for lower scores to be recorded by tenants in younger age ranges and leaseholders (in contrast to shared owners) was again evident.

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### 1.6 Repairs

#### Tenants

- A NET figure of 60% were satisfied with the repairs service provided by the Council.
- Seventy two percent of tenants had requested repairs to their home in the past 12 months. Of these, 79% have had a repair completed within the home over the same period.
- For all of the elements of their most recent repair that tenants were asked to rate, more than two thirds of the respondents rated them as good.

#### Homeowners

- Eighteen percent of homeowners had requested a repair to their block within the past 12 months. Of these 114 respondents, 51% contacted the repairs service centre first, whilst 21% contacted the Home Ownership team and 19% contacted their local estate office.
- There were mixed levels of satisfaction with the service available for reporting repairs, with quite satisfied being the most common response (32%), yet more than a quarter of those who had reported a repair suggested they were very dissatisfied (26%). Similarly, when asked how easy it had been to report the repair, the most common response was that it was quite easy (40%), yet a sizeable proportion of respondents (18%) also suggested it was very difficult to report their repair.
- NET responses for satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service show 31% of homeowners were satisfied with their repairs service, 45% were satisfied with their cleaning service and 44% were satisfied with their landscaping service.

### 1.7 Communicating with the Council

- A NET figure of 75% of tenants and 66% of homeowners considered the Council to be good at keeping tenants informed.
- More than two fifths of both tenants (44%) and homeowners (40%) believe that the Council takes their views into account a little in making decisions. However, more than one fifth of both tenant (22%) and homeowner respondents (27%) suggested that they did not think their views were taken into account at all in making decisions.
- BVPI 75 measures tenant's satisfaction with the opportunities for participation in management and decision making. A NET figure of 50% of tenants and 33% of homeowners were satisfied.
- Only one quarter of tenants (25%) had heard of Tenant Participation Compacts, with 53% not aware of them and 23% not giving an answer. Amongst those respondents who were aware of Tenant Participation Compacts, 70% were found to be satisfied with their local Tenant Participation Compact.

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### **1.8 Rent and service charges**

- A NET figure of 64% of tenants rated their rent as good value for money.

### **1.9 Services provided by the Council**

- Repairs and maintenance was selected by more than half of both tenants (75%) and homeowners (55%) as being one of the most important services provided, with the overall quality of the home (59%) and value for money of rent or service charge (51%) also being popular choices amongst tenants, whilst keeping owners informed (52%) and taking owners views into account (50%) were popular choices for homeowners.
- Repairs and maintenance (66%), the overall quality of your home (66%) and taking tenants' views into account (60%) were all selected by more than three fifths of tenants as requiring either some or much improvement. Meanwhile, when homeowners were asked the same question, the most common choice for requiring much improvement was again the repairs and maintenance service (29%) Taking owners' view into account and the value for money of the service charge were also common selections for requiring much improvement (both 22%).