



This is an Open Report

Report to: Community Protection Panel

Date: 16th March 2009

Subject: Performance Report: Wigan & Leigh Housing 2008/09
3rd Quarter

Report of: Director of Environmental Services

Contact officer: Peter Layland 01942 828983

Purpose / summary: To report the third quarter performance of Wigan & Leigh Housing for 2008/09 and the results of the recent STATUS survey.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: This is an information report

Recommendation / decision: To note the report

This report does not involve a key decision

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	Wigan & Leigh Housing Company has a management fee of £15.3m for 2008/09
Staffing:	No implications for the Council
Policy:	Housing Strategy
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Report includes progress on equality issues
Wards affected:	All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

No

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to

an existing policy or procedure?

No

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **N/A**

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **N/A**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **N/A**

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X		X
Discussion leading to a decision		Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	X

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
Comm Prot 16 March 09			

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer M. Kimber

Date 25 February 2009

1. Background

1.1 In April 2002 the Council set up an Arms Length Management Organisation to manage its stock of Council dwellings. The nature and scale of the contract with Wigan and Leigh Housing is significant. Within the contractual arrangement with Wigan and Leigh Housing (WALH) the company is required to submit performance management information.

1.2 Wigan and Leigh Housing manage approximately:

- 22,833 Council houses
- additional ALMO capital resources of £137m
- an annual management fee of over £15m
- contributes to key housing and corporate objectives

1.3 The company's performance also impacts on key government assessment of the Council's performance notably:

- Council's Housing Strategy and
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment soon to be Comprehensive Area Assessment

1.4 The performance management framework that helps govern the relationship between Wigan and Leigh Housing and the Council has been regularly reviewed and its main elements are :-

- System of monthly and quarterly meetings
- Monitoring of key performance indicators
- Annual meeting
- Annual Questionnaire

1.5 This 3rd quarter report provides information on key performance targets (Appendix 1).

2. Summary of Performance

2.1 Wigan & Leigh Housing (WALH) demonstrated some improvement in most service areas during 2007/08. Performance has continued to improve during the first three quarters of 2008/09 with 55% of indicators that are reported on a quarterly basis on or exceeding target. Importantly 16 of the 20 indicators measured are improving. Many of the indicators are only available annually and therefore a complete picture is not available until year end. A summary of performance is attached at Appendix 1.

3. Critical Risk Factors

3.1 Homeless Prevention

The area of most concern continues to be the homelessness prevention indicator (BV213). Top quartile performance is 4 households per 1000 in a full year, year to date performance of 1.63 represents an annual equivalent to 2.2 cases which is only slightly above the bottom quartile figure of 2. The third quarter year to date target was 2.63. In real terms 119 cases of homelessness have been prevented in the third quarter of the year. WALH have made this

indicator an “at risk” indicator which will ensure considerable focus is given to this area of work. They have carried out a restructuring of the housing options advice teams and performance has improved within the third quarter. Whilst the year end target is unlikely to be achieved, performance has improved to a level where, if sustained, the target for 2009/10 would be achieved. BV213 is a particularly important indicator locally due to the high levels of homelessness in the Borough.

3.2 Rent Arrears Collection

The third quarter target was 97.38% of rent to be collected, performance was 97.13%. The effect of the economic downturn means chasing rent arrears is becoming more difficult. The timing of the non collecting weeks in December has also affected performance but this will not be fully clear until the year end figure is produced. WALH are refocusing their efforts on advice and assistance to ensure people are maximising their income.

4. **Good Performance**

4.1 Average time to re-let Local Authority Housing

Performance has continued to improve significantly over the last 3 years. Further improvements can be made and WALH have given this indicator “at risk” status which means there is close monitoring of the work and action plan to ensure continuous improvement. The third quarter target was 32.5 days and performance exceeds the target at 26.96 days. This is based on 1759 properties changing tenants in the first three quarters of the year.

4.2 Proportion of Empty Homes as a percentage of the stock

Performance is currently ahead of the year end target and is one that has improved considerably over the last 3 years. It is an important indicator given the current high demand for property. The performance of 1.03% represents 236 vacant properties out of a stock of 22,833. Given this good performance any further gains will be small in size.

4.3 Repairs Performance

The completion of urgent repairs within government time limits continues to improve. In quarter 3 alone 99.25% of urgent repair jobs were completed within target. This represents a failure of 38 jobs out of a total of 5064. The third quarter position shows that 99.03 % of jobs were completed on target, the target is 96%. The average time taken to complete non-urgent jobs is 7.93 days the target is 8 days. The proportion of gas safety certificates outstanding is ahead of target and is currently 403 properties. A review of gas safety procedures has commenced.

5 **STATUS Survey**

5.1 Government guidelines state that a tenant satisfaction survey should be run every two years. WALH last ran the survey, known as STATUS, in 2006. The survey informs national indicators relating to tenants satisfaction with the whole service, particular parts of the service eg repairs as well as satisfaction with their opportunities to become involved in the service. In 2008 WALH

undertook a 10% sample survey of their tenants to provide up to date satisfaction levels. Appendix 2 is the report to WALH Board outlining the overall results of the STATUS survey.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 General performance by WALH continues to improve in most of the key areas. In some areas, repairs performance and empty properties performance is outstanding. However, the report has identified areas of concern such as homelessness and rent collection, WALH have put plans in place to attempt to address this. The economic downturn has the potential to further exacerbate problems in this area. WALH are mindful of this and are monitoring the impact closely.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 The third quarter performance (2008/09) of Wigan & Leigh Housing be noted. The results of the recent STATUS survey be noted

Performance Framework

Ref	Indicator	2007/08 Performance	Third Quarter Target	Third Quarter Performance	Improving?
BV12	The number of working days/Shifts lost due to sickness absence	9.68 Days	6.75 Days	7.44 Days ☹	Yes, but still below target
BV212	Average time to Re-let Local Authority Housing (old L15)	33 Days	32.5 Days	26.96 Days ☺	Yes
BV66a	Proportion of Rent Collected including Arrears C/fwd	97.75%	97.38%	97.13% ☹	No
BV66b	Number of LA tenants with more than 7 weeks of (gross) rent arrears as a % of LA tenants	4.41%	4.25%	4.24% ☺	Yes
BV66c	% of LA tenants in arrears who have had Notices Seeking Possession served	50.87%	34.50%	43.33%	N/A
BV66d	% of LA tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears	0.33%	0.22%	0.15% ☺	Yes
HS01	Proportion of Empty Homes as a percentage of the Stock	1.08%	1.26%	1.03% ☺	Yes
L9a	Proportion of former tenant arrears collected	12.88%	10.50%	10.45% ☹	Yes, but still below target
BV183i	The average length of stay in B&B	1 week	1 week	0.32 weeks ☺	Yes
BV213	Households considering themselves homeless who approach for housing advice and housing advice casework intervention	1.95	2.63	1.63 ☹	Yes

	resolves their situation, per 1000 households in the authority				
BV214	Proportion of households accepted as homeless who were accepted as homeless within last two years	2.38%	2.63%	1.98% ☹	No
NI 156	Number of households living in temporary accommodation.	60	50	57 ☹	Yes but below target
NI 158	% of non decent stock	NEW		5%	Yes
L19	% age of urgent repairs completed within Government time limits	97.75%	96%	99.03% ☺	Yes
L20	Average time to complete non-urgent repairs	8.93 Days	8 Days	7.93 Days ☺	Yes
	% of repairs which are emergency / urgent repairs	21.63%	15%	18.04% ☹	Yes but still below target
	Proportion of gas servicing certificates outstanding	2.17%	7%	2.53% ☺	Yes
	Repairs & Maintenance Satisfaction (STATUS) survey	87.24%	90%	89.15% ☹	Yes but still below target
	Local Authority Tenants Satisfaction with landlord services (STATUS)	83.47%	83%	87.01% ☺	Yes
	Satisfaction with participation opportunities – all (STATUS)	73.28%	73%	71.66% ☹	No

WIGAN AND LEIGH HOUSING BOARD 3RD FEBRUARY 2009

Report of the Director of Strategy, Policy and Projects

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TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY 2008/09

Purpose/Summary:
To inform Board Members of the initial results of the tenant satisfaction survey, pending publication of a detailed report analysing all findings and key issues arising.
Recommendations:
That Board notes the content of the report.

For decision, discussion or information?	Information
For the open part or the press and public excluded part of the agenda? If press and public excluded please state reason.	Open

Resource and Value for Money Implications:	None.					
Employee Implications:	None.					
Key Risks incl. Company reputation, business relationships, health and safety and legal implications	None.					
Equality (Impact) Assessed?	Yes		No		Not Applicable	N/A
Equality & Diversity and Community Implications:	The report highlights a range of characteristics of tenants that should influence the design of services in future.					
Environmental Implications:	None.					
Area Forums Affected:	None.					
Tracking/Process	Consultation	Area Forum/s	Committee	Board		
				3.02.09		

1.0 Background

- 1.1 New Government guidance requires that the tenant satisfaction survey is run every two years. In line with this guidance, the tenant satisfaction survey was run during September and October 2008.
- 1.2 The primary reason for undertaking the survey is to obtain tenants' opinions and produce information for the relevant National Indicator, that is NI 160, "Tenant satisfaction with the overall service provided by the landlord".
- 1.3 The overall aim of the study is to assess tenant satisfaction with the housing services offered by Wigan and Leigh Housing. This will enable the organisation to make informed decisions and tailor future service developments to meet the needs of customers.
- 1.4 As in 2006, when the organisation purchased SNAP software and scanning hardware, the decision was taken to carry out the survey in-house. The survey was carried out using the National Housing Federation's standardised tenant satisfaction survey, known as STATUS.

2.0 Results

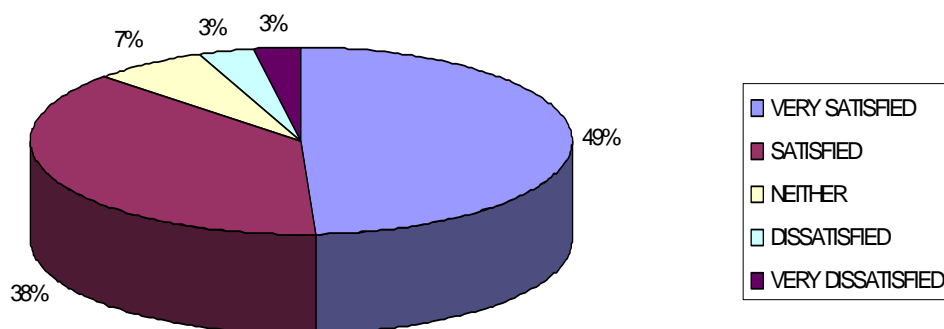
- 2.1 In 2006 a full census survey was carried out, to feed into work being undertaken on SMART Neighbourhoods. This time a sample of tenants were surveyed.
- 2.2 In accordance with the National Housing Federation's guidance and the relevant national indicator (NI 160) definition, only general needs tenants were audited and the following groups were specifically excluded:
 - Sheltered tenants
 - Residents in hostel accommodation
 - Leaseholders

Sheltered Housing tenants are to be surveyed separately as part of the normal annual survey. This is being reviewed to allow more comparisons to be made with the results coming out of this STATUS survey of general needs tenants.

- 2.3 10% of the tenant population was surveyed; that is, 2,131 surveys were posted out. Surveys were posted out during the week commencing 8 September 2008 with returns accepted up to the planned date for closing down the booking-in system, which was 17 October 2008. The survey was widely publicised and a prize draw was also included, with a first prize of £500 and five runner-up prizes of £100.
- 2.4 A 39% response rate was achieved, with 831 completed surveys. Guidance shows that anything over and above 585 responses will produce a statistically robust sample. The results have a confidence interval of +/- 4%; this means that we are 95% confident that if we had surveyed all of our tenants, the results would fall within 4% of those found for the sample of tenants.
- 2.5 Tenants were asked their views on the housing service and 87% expressed satisfaction with the overall service provided by Wigan and Leigh Housing;

with 49.1% very satisfied and 37.9% fairly satisfied. In addition, 6.9% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 6.1% expressed dissatisfaction.

N1 160 Overall Satisfaction With Service



This is an increase in overall tenant satisfaction of 3.5% since the last survey was carried out in 2006. What is particularly pleasing is the significant increase in the percentage of tenants who state they are very satisfied with the service, up by more than 14% since 2006.

It should be noted that in 2006 sheltered housing tenants were included within the Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Their reported satisfaction with the overall quality of the service was 91.90%, which was significantly higher than the average for tenants (83.5%). This had the effect of increasing overall satisfaction last time which makes the improvement in 2008 even more impressive.

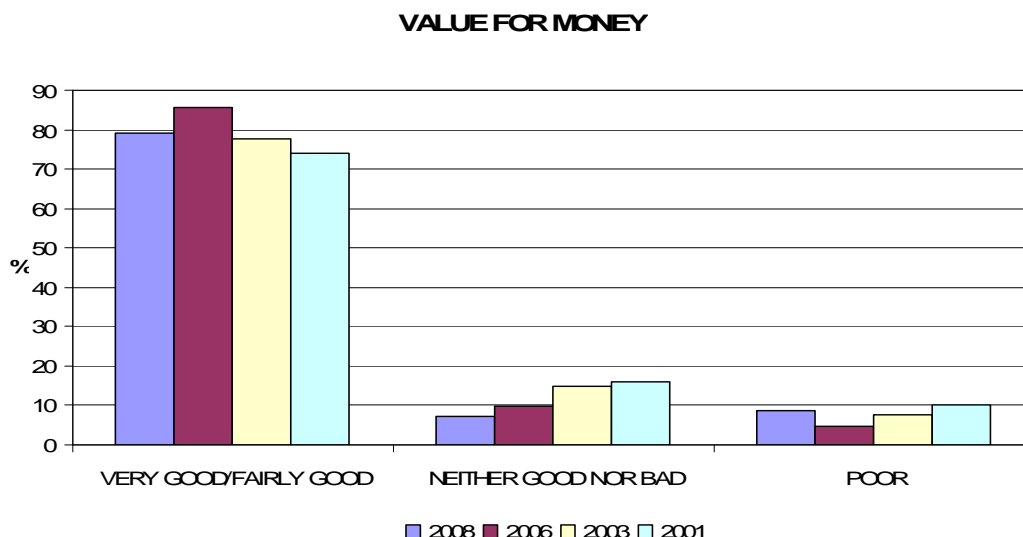
2.6 Tenants were asked their opinions of their home. 88.4% of households were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the quality of their property, an increase compared to 85.3% in 2006. There was a small decrease in satisfaction levels with the general condition of their home but this was still high at over 85%, and the change in performance is likely to be a reflection of the period of time since the Decent Homes improvement programme, compared to when the 2006 survey was conducted.

2.7 A range of factors were explored to assess the level of tenants' satisfaction with their area. 77.8% of tenants stated they were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the area in which they live, meaning that satisfaction has decreased 3% since the last survey.

Although the majority of tenants expressed satisfaction with the area in which they live, some local problems were highlighted. The results show that tenants are mainly concerned about litter and rubbish in the street, disruptive children & teenagers, car parking, drug use, noisy neighbours and drunk or rowdy behaviour.

2.8 Tenants were asked for their views on the service they received from Wigan and Leigh Housing, including whether they felt it was value for money and what their priorities were.

Tenants were asked whether they felt the rent for their property represented value for money. 79% thought the rent charged was very good or fairly good value for money, and 8.7% stated that it was poor value for money. This is lower than in 2006 when 85.6% thought rent represented good value for money and only 4.6% poor. It is likely that this shift is linked to the end of the Decent Homes programme and reduction in investment in properties, compared to rent increases. In view of this, it is positive that more than three quarters feel that rent represents good value for money.

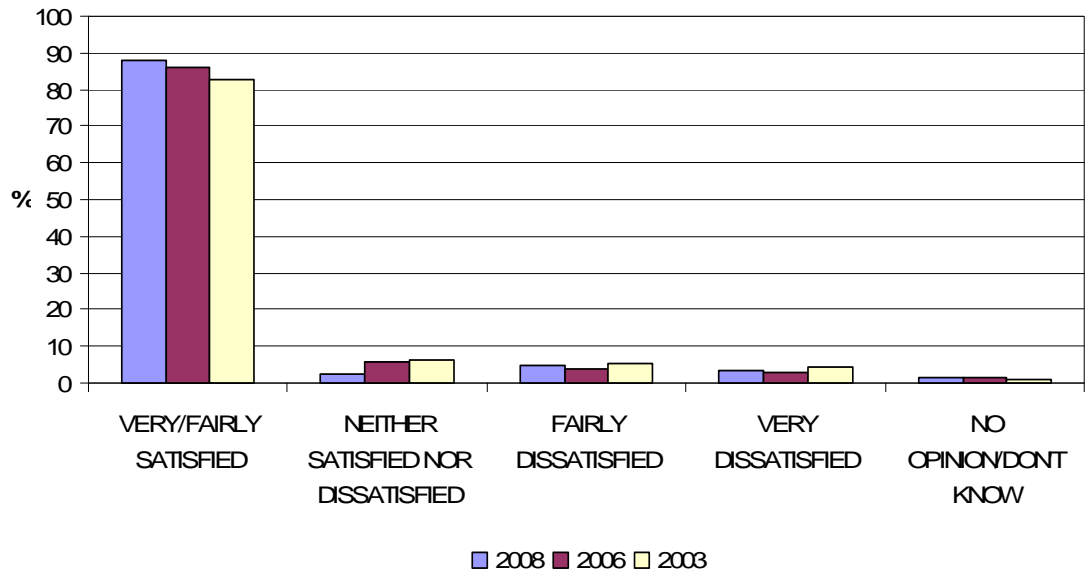


2.9 Tenants were provided with a list of services and asked to highlight the three that they considered to be the most important. The main priorities related to services connected to their home, followed by those regarding their neighbourhood. Those relating to accountability and tenant involvement were of lower priority. Tenants prioritised services as:

1. Repairs and maintenance
2. Overall quality of home
3. Dealing with anti-social behaviour
4. Neighbourhood as a place to live
5. Keeping tenants informed
6. Taking tenants' views into account
7. Value for money for your rent

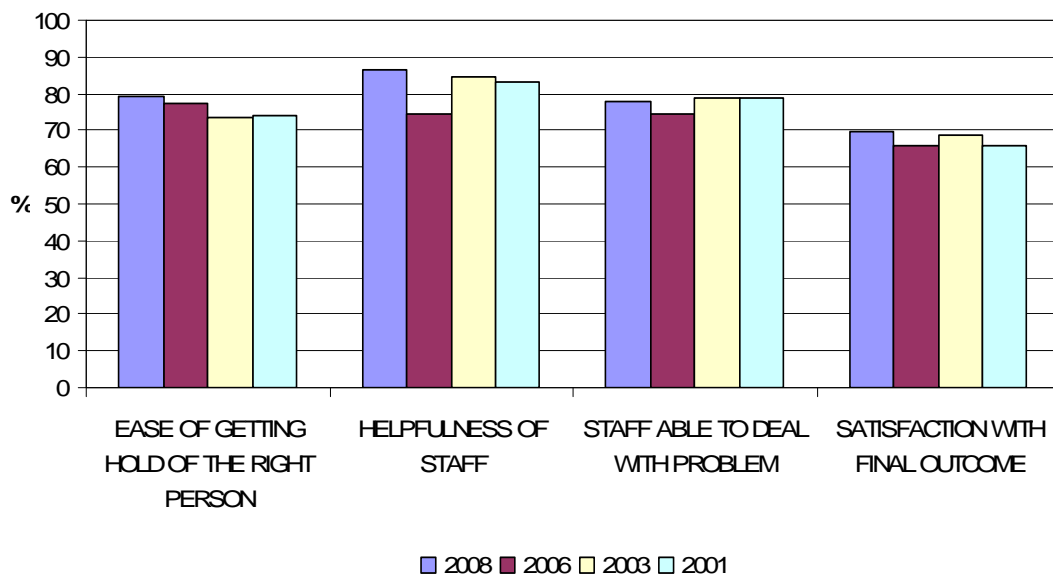
2.10 Tenants were asked their views on the repairs service that they received. 88% were satisfied with the way repairs and maintenance are dealt with, including 51.5% who were very satisfied. This is an improvement on the last survey figures.

SATISFACTION WITH REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE



- 2.11 This year tenants were also questioned on their views on the anti-social behaviour service (NASBU). 13.7% of tenants stated that they had reported anti-social behaviour in the last 12 months. Of those tenants who had made a report, 54.5% said that getting hold of the right person was easy, whilst 32.7% said it was difficult. 56.3% of tenants found staff to be helpful, with 29.2% stating staff were unhelpful. 31.9% tenants stated that staff were able to deal with their problem; however, 50% stated that staff were unable to deal with their problem. It is possible that some tenants interpreted this question as meaning staff being able to provide a positive resolution to the problem, rather than having an ability to handle the complaint.
- 2.12 Tenants were asked whether or not they had been in touch with Wigan and Leigh Housing in the last 12 months, other than to pay rent, and if so, the reason why and their satisfaction with the service they received. 67.2% of tenants had been in contact with their landlord in the last 12 months. Of these, over three-quarters at 79.3% of tenants felt it was easy getting hold of the right person when they last contacted Wigan and Leigh Housing, although 13.8% had experienced some difficulty. 86.3% of tenants found staff to be helpful, which is a significant improvement on the 74.6% recorded from the 2006 survey, which had represented a downturn in performance and had been one of the key drivers in the Improving the Customer Experience (ICE) project.

SATISFACTION WITH CONTACT



2.13 Tenants were asked their views on the way that Wigan and Leigh Housing communicates with them. 82.7% of tenants felt that they were kept well informed about the things that affect them as a tenant, including 40.7% who said that Wigan and Leigh Housing were very good at keeping them informed.

31.9% of tenants were very satisfied with how Wigan and Leigh Housing listened to their views when making decisions, whilst a further 36.5% were fairly satisfied. Whilst this indicates that satisfaction has decreased by 5% since 2006, levels of dissatisfaction remain broadly the same and it is neutral opinion that has increased.

2.14 The results of the survey also show an increase in neutral opinion since 2006, on tenant participation and opportunities for involvement in decision making.

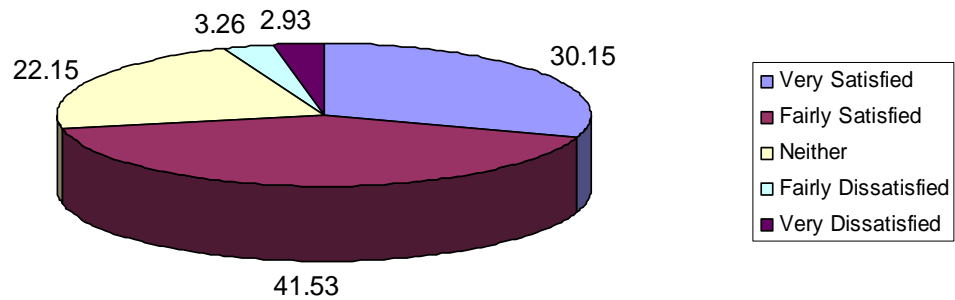
56.1% were satisfied with opportunities for participation in management and decision-making. This compares to 62.7% in 2006, 62.6% in 2003, and 51% in 2001. Levels of dissatisfaction did not show the same level of decrease; however, 21.7% did not express an opinion, and this was considerably higher than the 14.5% in 2006.

Although the Best Value Performance Indicator (BV75) regarding opportunities for participation in management and decision-making no longer exists, Wigan and Leigh Housing has chosen to continue to monitor this indicator so that it can compare trends in its own performance and with its peers.

To calculate this indicator, any 'no opinion' responses are excluded from the calculation. This gives a performance figure of 71.7% compared to 73.2% in 2006.

The approach to tenant participation falls within the scope of the ICE project, plus the revised Tenant Compact is shortly to be published, which should raise the profile of tenant involvement opportunities again.

SATISFACTION WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING (old BV75)



3.0 Full report findings

- 3.1 The full report will contain more detailed findings from the satisfaction survey and how these compare to previous surveys. It will highlight main areas of improvement and any areas for concern or further investigation.

Housemark are shortly to introduce a benchmarking tool that will allow comparisons with peer organisations to be made across a number of key indicators within the STATUS survey.

The full report and details of benchmarking will be presented to Board as soon as these are finalised.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 In the main the findings from the survey are excellent.
- 4.2 Results demonstrate that tenants' satisfaction levels with their home, being kept informed about things that affect them as a tenant, and the repairs service are high.
- 4.3 Particularly pleasing is the increase in overall satisfaction with the service, as reported against the National Indicator and that almost 50% of tenants state that they are very satisfied with the overall service.
- 4.4 One area that the 2006 survey highlighted as an area for concern was the percentage of respondents who found staff to be helpful. Satisfaction levels have increased significantly since then and are higher than reported in any of the previous three STATUS surveys.
- 4.5 Some of the areas that show lower levels of satisfaction in 2008 and may need further investigation are satisfaction in the neighbourhood as a place to live, value for money of rent, how the organisation listens to the views of tenants when making decisions that affect them, and opportunities for participation in management and decision making.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members of the Board are asked to note the results from the 2008/09 survey, as detailed in this interim report.