

West Lothian Council

Property Management & Development

Customer consultation review 2016-2017

Property Management and Development (PM&D) is responsible for all council property which includes both operational and commercial assets together with both the capital and revenue resources and staff deployed to manage these. PM&D works with other services, external and internal customers, partners and stakeholders to deliver its services in the best way possible. As an integral part of this process we regularly consult with our customers to ensure that we meet their expectations and needs. Customer feedback is welcomed and we review our how we deliver our services as a result of comments received. This document outlines our customer survey activity during 2016-17 and the performance results.

Segmentation and consultation programme

PM&D has over the past few years reviewed and modified our programme of customer surveys and the methodology for reporting results to reflect the changing structure and requirements for the West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM) and Customer Service Excellence (CSE). Our 2015 WLAM assessment confirmed this method appropriate and therefore has continued to be adopted to ensure continuity and comparison of results.

A bi-annual survey programme of alternating the surveys of tenants of the council's commercial property portfolio and of occupiers of the council's office buildings has been implemented. In addition we undertake an annual customer satisfaction survey into which all our customers have input. These provide us with insight into our customers' views and requirements, which influence the delivery of our service. In addition, the two yearly cycle allows time for these changes to be implemented and "bed in" before the next survey is despatched.

The service is committed to improve the response rate from our generic customer survey, which is the primary source of our performance indicators in this regard. This includes offering both electronic and paper versions of the survey, including links on e-mails, verbally requesting customers accessing services to provide feedback and incorporating into all correspondence and on the service pages of the council's intra and internet pages.

Target setting

The service operates at a long-term strategic level due to the nature of property assets and the significance of the resources deployed in the management of these. The service has an establish "Quality Team" who are responsible for supporting service improvements and monitoring performance together with supporting WLAM and CSE. Since 2013 the group agreed that we should set challenging long term targets, aiming to reach at least 90% customer satisfaction in all PIs by 2016-17 with incremental milestone targets in the interim being set accordingly to monitor progress. A full review of Performance measures is being undertaken during 2017-18 with new targets set for a 5-year and 10-year horizon. The only exception is satisfaction in terms of equality of service where the target will remain at 100%.

Overall Performance against Customer Service Standards (Customer Satisfaction)

The table below shows the results for our performance against the 12 questions in our generic customer survey, which are based on the 5 Drivers of Customer of Satisfaction. The responses show the percentage of results that were Excellent and Good. In all areas the results show an improvement over the previous year, and performance is above target. The survey size on this occasion was 42 against the previous year of 34.

Given the size of the survey a small change in the number of responses scoring the services as "good" and "excellent" can lead to a high variation in the percentage levels of satisfaction. We have performed ahead of our progressive target of 90% satisfaction for the year 2016-17.

Where respondents answered a question Adequate, Poor or Very Poor, they were asked for additional information, so that we could understand their response, where possible this is used to identify changes to our service delivery.

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Corp. PI ref.	Delivery: Please rate the following	Cov. Ref.	2015/16 result	2016/17 Target	2016/17 Result	Perf. against 2015/16	Perf. against target 16/17
6a.2	The service you received compared to what you needed	PMD.1	96.97	90%	95.24%	below	above
6a.9	Our handling of any problems that	PMD.1	96.77	90%	93.94%	below	above
6a.1	How easy it was to contact us	PMD.1	100%	90%	97.44%	below	above
Timeliness: Please rate the							
6a.1	The promptness of our response to your request?	PMD.1	96.97	90%	97.62%	above	above
6a.8	Our ability to resolve your issue at the first point of contact?	PMD.1	96.88	90%	95.12%	below	above
Information: Please rate the							
6a.3	Our performance in keeping you informed of the progress of your	PMD.1	100%	90%	97.30%	below	above
6a.1	The accuracy of the information provided, as relevant to your	PMD.1	100%	90%	97.62%	below	above
6a.1	The quality of the information provided, as relevant to your needs	PMD.1	96.88%	90%	97.56%	above	above
Professionalism: Please rate the following							
6a.5	Our people's professionalism in terms of the knowledge and skills of	PMD.1	100%	90%	95.24%	below	above
Staff attitude: Please rate the							
6a.4	Our people's attitude in terms of the friendliness and	PMD.1	100%	90%	95.12%	below	above
Our Service: Please rate the							
6a.7	The overall quality of customer	PMD.1	96.88	90%	95.24%	below	above
6a.6	Were you treated fairly? (NB Yes/no answer)	PMD.1	100%	100	95.24%	below	above

Customer Insight

Initial questions in the survey are designed to tell us more about our tenants. We have again analysed the results by the type of property occupied – specifically industrial units (both long and short leases); offices and shops.

Unlike other commercial landlords over the past few years there is some stability in our tenant base:

Over half have been our tenants have been trading for at least 6 years (2015-16 – 67.8%)

Over half have been our tenants have been located in West Lothian for at least 6 years 62.2% (2014-15 - 73%)

The survey shows 30.3% (2014-15 – 37.14%) of tenants have been in the same unit for in excess of 10 years whilst this is a slight reduction on the previous survey results during this period there has a degree of tenants relocating within the portfolio.

The vast majority of tenants originated in West Lothian 85.3%; and most are either sole traders or limited companies. The proportion of tenants who came to our property as New Business Start Ups – 39.3% in 2016 compared with 42.86% in 2014. These figures support the rationale for holding a varied portfolio for start-up businesses, coupled with month to month leasing providing tenants with flexibility not commonly available in the private sector.

Average employment levels per property are understandably low, given the nature of our stock, with 64.4% of businesses having under 5 employees (2014 – 70.42%). This demonstrates that the availability of council premises available for lease is supporting employment and new business in the county.

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Some 24.14% of tenants expect to move in the next 5 years in order to grow their business whilst this is a decrease on the previous survey (2014-15 – 27.94%) this represent continued stability if business in West Lothian. While a high proportion of tenants learn about us by word of mouth and the council's website and Business Gateway again play a significant role as a source of tenants 70%. This is an improvement on previous years. Once again, location was by some distance the most important factor in selecting a property, with rental levels, size and flexible letting policy being secondary factors.

Overall the results reflect the important role the council plays across the communities in West Lothian, providing property from which our tenants can provide services to their local customers.

Three questions relate to the condition of the property, and, where the council has responsibility for repairs and maintenance, satisfaction with that service.

(Percentage satisfied or very satisfied)	<u>2016</u>	<u>2014</u>
Are you satisfied with the condition of your current property?	80	77.78
If the Council is responsible for repairs to your property, are you satisfied that they are carried out in a reasonable timescale?	64	79.31
Are you satisfied with the repair workmanship?	75	86.21

The majority of negative comments received primarily relate to the dissatisfaction with repair and maintenance which are not directly delivered by the service but we are committed to improving. Accordingly we continue to be ensure timely completion of repairs and workmanship is high wherever possible. The slight drop in condition and repair of properties will be addressed through a planned maintenance programme we have in place to address some of these issues together with managing construction services, building services and external contractors pro-actively to improve quality and timeliness.

Occupier Surveys

In the autumn of 2016 over 400 occupiers of our commercial property portfolio (the Tenanted Non-Residential Property portfolio) were asked to complete our Tenant Survey. We had a response rate of 20.46% this was an increase on the previous response rate of 17.5%. The results demonstrate the significant role the Council plays as a landlord, in providing space for local SME's. The outcome of the survey has been reported back to occupiers as follows: -

“You said, We did”

Areas of concern that were highlighted by Tenants included the following:

- Works requests for repairs and redecorations. Occupiers have advised that it takes a long time for works to be undertaken and when completed the works are not to a sufficient standard. A working group has been set up to liaise directly with WLC Building Services in order to raise the concerns and arrange repairs.
- Repairs and redecoration including external repairs. The council will strive to assist the tenants who occupy under a Full Repairing and Insuring Lease however they must be aware that under the terms of the lease all repairs are their responsibility.
- Security and tidiness of yards. Security for individual units is the responsibility of the occupier however where possible the council will encourage occupiers to close and lock gates. Officers are aware of issues relating to tidiness and inconsiderate car parking and are working to improve matters.

A full analysis of the results can be seen on our Website: www.westlothian.com./pmd

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Building user groups

As Facilities Managers of the council's headquarter office buildings we have regular contact with council staff and those of our partner organisations (i.e. Police Scotland, Scotland Court Service and NHS) who occupy these properties. Whilst there is day to day engagement between occupiers and managers of each building in terms of formal governance and decision making each has a Building User Group (BUG). This provides a forum for feedback and comment or to raise specific issues of concern (e.g. cleaning, security and energy management). The BUG's continue to meet on a regular basis to explore key issues and explore and resolve these.

Complaint and compliments analysis

We record feedback from customers who make comments or complaints about our service. In 2016/17 we received fourteen complaints, none of which were upheld.

Equality questionnaire

The equality questionnaire seeks to ensure that PM&D can demonstrate it does not discriminate in the delivery of its services. It is primarily issued with application forms for the lease of our commercial property (shops, offices and industrial units). The questionnaire asks for comments and suggestions as to how we can improve our service – no comments were received.

April 2017