West Lothian Council
Property Management & Development

Customer consultation review 2010 - 2011

PM&D works with its customers, partners, stakeholders and other services of the council 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 services as a result of comments received. This document outlines our activity during 2010/2011 in formally consulting our customers.

Segmentation and consultation programme

As a result of our 2008/09 WLAM Assessment we have continued to develop and extend our programme of customer surveys. Our revised consultation programme is included as Appendix A. A two yearly pattern of consultations with our major customer segments, and in which we alternate the Tenant and Occupier surveys, is now well embedded. The alternation of these two surveys is driven by a number of factors.

- For a small team, it is more resource efficient for PM&D to focus on a different segment of our customer base each year. (We have over 700 tenants and 1300 occupiers – so the numbers are more manageable on a two-yearly pattern).
- It also allows us to focus on the outputs and actions from a single major survey each year, rather than trying to deliver two sets of service improvements.
- We also hope to avoid survey fatigue among our customers by going back to them every year.
- Our contact with these customer groups is continuous, and this day-to-day involvement allows us to develop customer insight and implement change on a continual basis, rather than simply relying on survey outcomes.

Review of method of analysis

As a result of our WLAM assessment we agreed to carry out a review of the methods by which results are analysed, and the way they are presented. This was driven by the historically low levels of participation in our generic customer survey, which runs through the course of each year. It was felt that the number of returns meant that the analysis was not really statistically significant and reporting performance based on this survey alone – which had been the case in previous years – was not particularly robust.

While each of our customer surveys is different – and is designed to inform customer insight by eliciting information and opinions specifically relevant to the target segment of our customer base – they all contain common questions relating to our performance against the 5 Drivers of customer satisfaction, which form the basis of our customer Service Standards. (Delivery; Timeliness; Professionalism; Information; and Staff Attitude). This question set was expanded in 2008/09 in line with corporate standards, and continues to evolve.

It was agreed that we would amalgamate the results of these questions from all surveys in our report and analysis of results for future years.

Because the council's standard method of analysis (% of replies that are of Good and Excellent) is not particularly sensitive for small surveys we have introduced a method of weighting results, as had been used in our staff survey results. These are more sensitive to variations in performance and we place more emphasis on them in assessing what action to take.

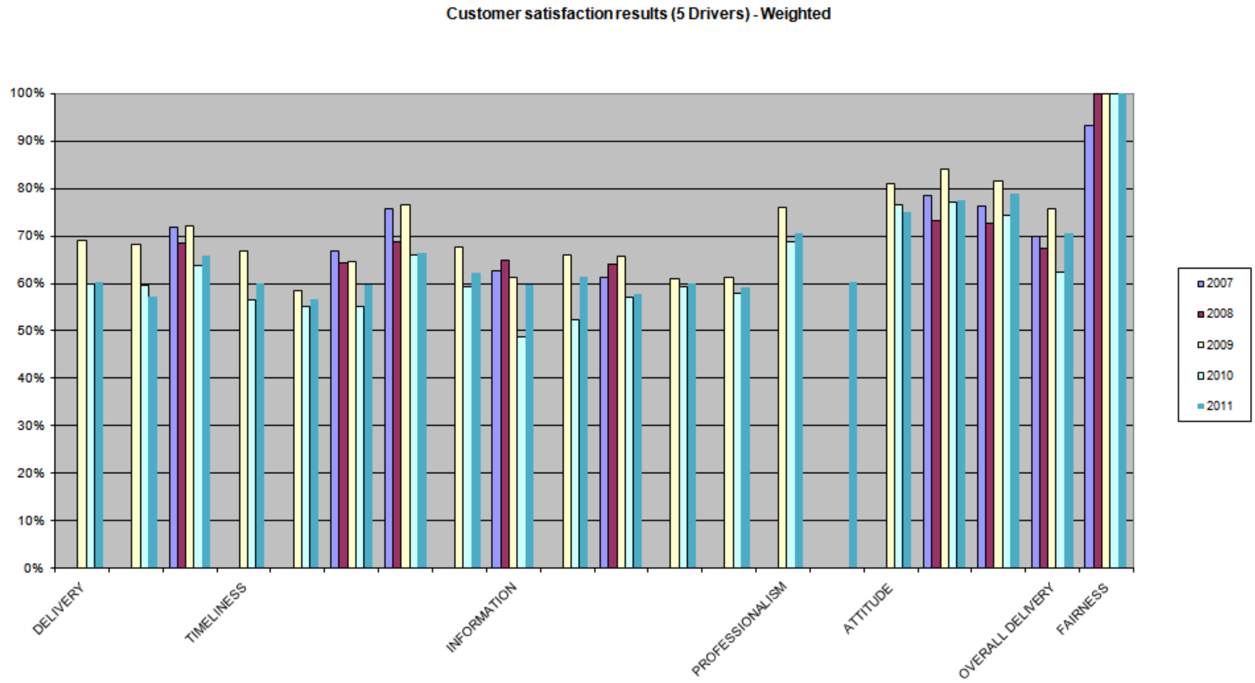
Target setting

At the start of the year the Quality team reviewed the amalgamated results for 2010, and set challenging targets – for both "Good/Excellent" and weighted results – based on performance during the previous year. It is now evident that a two-year pattern of trends is beginning to emerge relating to the cyclical nature of our consultation – alternating the tenant and headquarter building surveys. To compare like with like we should really look at trends based on alternate years.

1. Overall Performance against Customer Service Standards (5 Drivers)

The chart shows the amalgamated results for our performance against the 20 questions, which are based on the 5 Drivers and our customer Service Standards. The results presented are for the more sensitive "weighted" analysis. The results are generally below target, which is disappointing, but are nevertheless reasonably good – in particular it is pertinent to note that a weighted score of 66% equates to all customers considering your service to be "Good". This reinforces the contention that our targets are challenging. Detailed results for the past 5 years (both weighted and Good/Excellent), and from each of the 2010/11 surveys are included in Appendices B and C. Specific actions we will take are identified in the sections below, on each customer segment.

The section on the Tenant Survey, below, will expand on some of the reasons behind the results. Nevertheless, where a weighted score of 66% represents all customers marking the service as good, all our results were within 85% of that level, and only 5 of the 19 results were less that 90% of that level. Our overall level of satisfaction, at 70.56%, and the levels for staff attitude and professionalism give a degree of satisfaction.



2. Customer survey 2010/11

Customer questionnaires have been issued to the full range of PM&D's external customers for a number of years. In the past the issue of these questionnaires was sporadic, and the returns have often been low, raising the issue of their statistical significance. We endeavour to issue questionnaires on a more routine basis, and it has also become standard practice to include details of where customers can give feedback on the performance of the service in all correspondence issued (both paper and electronically). Disappointingly returns remain poor – again only 12 replies this year. The reason for this is unknown, however, it is noted that there is an increasing number of surveys and questionnaires issued, not just by the Council, and our continued low response may in part be a result of survey fatigue. We have tried to compensate by amalgamating the results, as noted above.

As can be seen in Appendix C, which compares results from this years surveys, results from the generic customer survey are consistently high, both in "Good/Excellent" and weighted analyses, but we do not believe them to be statistically significant and there is little we can learn from them.

Our survey also asks if we offer fair and equal access to our services, and the response was 100% affirmative.

As in previous years there were a number of compliments received that commended staff, and in particular the Property Assistants, for their helpfulness, courtesy and providing an excellent service.

Despite falling returns we will continue to issue our Customer Survey, and will amalgamate results to provide a more sensitive analysis.

3. Tenant Questionnaire 2010/11

We have generally issued our tenant survey on a two-yearly basis, and the latest was sent to all tenants in November 2010. In response to a disappointingly low level of response in 2008, when the survey was issued electronically, we reverted to issuing the survey by letter, and were rewarded with a far higher level of return. From 110 replies in 2006, and a drop to just 47 in 2008, it was pleasing to achieve the same return as in 2006. 85% of returns were by paper, suggesting that we should continue to offer this option in future.

Customer Insight

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

In general, results show there is a stability in our tenant base – almost half have been our tenants for over 6 years. Three quarters have been trading for over 6 years and around two thirds have been based in West Lothian for that period. Naturally the figures are slightly lower for the small industrials, which are subject to monthly leases. Only 5% of tenants have originated from outside West Lothian, demonstrating the particularly local basis of our customers. Over half were new businesses when they became our tenants.

Average employment levels per property are understandably low, given the nature of our stock, with the 80% of businesses having under 5 employees. The pattern of ownership is perhaps predictable. The majority of tenants are small Limited Companies, except for shops, where over two thirds are Sole Traders.

Three quarters of tenants don't envisage moving in the next 5 years – further demonstrating a stability in the tenant base – and of the 25% who do expect to move, three quarters expect to expand.

While a high proportion of tenants learn about us by word of mouth it is noticeable that over half of the tenants of small industrial units come to us through the on-line property register. The Business Gateway is also a source of tenants for the small industrial units. Advertising and signboards are significant for shops and offices – but then we don't tend to advertise the small industrials. We will use this information to develop how we promote our properties, and target occupiers, in the future.

In a change from the last survey, location was by some distance the most important factor in selecting a property. This reflects the 2006 survey, whereas in 2008 flexible letting and rental levels had been the most significant factors – perhaps reflecting the more volatile economic climate at the time.

While 80% of those who replied were satisfied with the condition of the property – similar to the last survey – the level of satisfaction with repairs has fallen considerably. The last contact most tenants had with PM&D was on matters relating to property repairs. Where the Council was responsible for undertaking those repairs, around 70% of tenants were satisfied or very satisfied that they were carried out timeously – a drop of 20% from 2008. Similarly there was a decrease of 15% in levels of satisfaction with the workmanship.

However, cognisance must be taken of the timing of our survey. Most of our tenants will have received their survey as the intense bad weather hit, and those in the industrial units just after their rents had been increased for the first time in two years, and the comments reflect this. Several tenants have made reference to the council's response to snow clearing and repairs following snow damage. The survey was closed early in the New Year, when we were still catching up with resultant repairs. We will, however, endeavour to ensure that timely completion of repairs and good workmanship are encouraged and delivered wherever possible

Customer Satisfaction

In common with all our surveys questions were analysed against the five key drivers of Customer satisfaction. Although there was an improvement in all but two of the results from 2010, that analysis incorporated the Occupier surveys, so is not strictly comparable. When compared with the last results that included the tenant survey there is a general reduction in performance. We will focus on improvement in those areas where respondents said our performance was poorest

We believe that the response again reflected the timing of the survey – as satisfaction levels were consistently lower than the previous tenant survey. In particular, the results for questions such as delivery against expectation, ability to resolve an issue at first point of contact and keeping advised of progress, suffered a marked drop. During the bad winter, the council's policy was to prioritise the deployment of resources for both snow clearing and repairs on the basis of vulnerability – to ensure, for example, that the young and elderly (who are not part of PM&D's customer base) were looked after first. We recognise that this did not necessarily find favour with commercial tenants, and indeed private sector landlords would not have had to face this sort of decision.

We also reviewed the specific comments made as part of the survey analysis. Interestingly most of the comments expressed dissatisfaction with the delivery of repairs, which is inconsistent with the generally high, albeit reducing levels of satisfaction noted above.

We asked what tenants would change about their property. For some of the older, converted buildings, the general condition of the property was a major concern. But the most prevalent comments were about security.

A copy of the survey outcome will be issued to all respondents, and we will also circulate information with rent invoices to ensure that all our tenants get a copy of the feedback. As with the 2008 survey tenants responding to the survey were advised that their names would be entered into a draw, with the prize a £250 credit towards their rent. The successful tenant was Oakbank Products of West Calder Workspace.

You Said:	In order of importance, you said location was most important to you in your current choice of property.
We Did:	The council's policy is to retain a balanced portfolio of commercial property, across both property type and location. As our customer base is predominantly local and new start, the councils policy will support development of business across West Lothian, and within the communities we serve.
You Said:	Given the choice, you said improving the security of your property would be your top priority.
We Did:	We have recently involved the local Crime Prevention Unit in a review of security at one of our schemes of small units, and will investigate whether this can be rolled out across the portfolio.
You Said:	In considering certain aspects of our service particularly service delivery and timeliness, you said that our previously high standards had dropped.
We Did:	We have discussed the survey results with our people at a team briefing session, and have reinforced the need to maintain a high level of service as a matter of routine good practice.
You Said:	The condition of properties and the standard of repair and maintenance was a concern to several tenants.
We Did:	We will be engaging with colleagues in Maintenance and Building Services to review the level of service we give to those tenants of properties where the council is responsible for repairs, and will endeavour to improve both the timeliness and quality of workmanship.

4. Equality questionnaire

The equality questionnaire was developed during 2006/2007 to ensure that PM&D does not discriminate in the delivery of its services. Initially the questionnaire was issued with application forms for the lease of our commercial property (shops, offices and industrial units) but we subsequently expanded the distribution by attaching the questionnaire to our customer surveys.

The questionnaire asks for comments and suggestions as to how we can improve our service. The only comment related to the accuracy of telephone numbers on promotional leaflets.

5. Building user groups

As Facilities Managers of the council's headquarter office buildings we have regular contact with council staff that occupy these properties. The Building User Groups provide a forum for feedback and comment from our colleagues, and for us to raise specific issues of concern (e.g. energy management). The Building User Group for Civic Centre includes all partners, and not just West Lothian Council employees. In most of the other buildings the management/occupier interface works best where a single officer is nominated as the focus for any occupier comment/concern – however, as the council's office rationalisation programme progresses we will review whether and how BUG's should operate in these properties.

6. Focus Groups

Our use of Focus groups has been intermittent and largely determined by the identification of specific topics. This year we joined with Economic Development to facilitate a focus group with property professionals (agents, owners and developers) to review how West Lothian could be promoted to mobile investment projects and migrant businesses, to encourage participation, productivity and prosperity.

7. Complaint and compliments analysis

During the past few years we have developed, and hopefully improved our processes for handling and recording comments, suggestions and complaints received about our service, as well as requests under the Freedom of Information Act. However, our systems have, to some extent, been superseded by the new Corporate CRM system. Records of customer feedback (outside of formal surveys), may now be kept in two different places.

In 2010/11 routine comments on our service were handled internally and no formal complaints were escalated to the council's Corporate system.

April 2011

APPENDIX A

Customer Consultation Methods – Analysis and Programme

Target Group	Method	Date Undertaken	Analysis Date	Feedback method	Consultation Effective	Actions to improve consultation	Next Programmed consultation
All Customers	Customer satisfaction questionnaire	Ongoing with annual analysis	Annually in March	• Service Plan • Internet • Results sent to respondents who requested feedback	Yes – but low numbers mean analysis is combined with other surveys to be statistically meaningful	• Continue to improve distribution – e.g. broaden availability of link to Survey Monkey (letter footers; service standards leaflet; mail shot?)	Ongoing
All Customers	Equality questionnaire	Ongoing with annual analysis	Annually in March	• Service Plan • Internet	Yes	None	Ongoing
All tenants of non-operational portfolio	Tenant Survey	November 2010	March 2011	• Service Plan • Internet • Results sent to respondents who requested feedback • Specific issues raised by tenants to be addressed by property managers • Letter with bullet points on outcome and referring to Internet page to be sent with May invoices	Yes – but low numbers mean analysis is combined with other surveys to be statistically meaningful	• Continue with paper survey as well as electronic option • Consider most appropriate follow up for teasing out specific issues • Consider feedback through newsletter and liaison group	October 2012 – and every 2 years
Garden ground customers	Customer satisfaction questionnaire	April 2006 to March 2007	March 2007	• Absorbed into customer questionnaire analysis because of low return	No	N/A	Discontinued

Target Group	Method	Date Undertaken	Analysis Date	Feedback method	Consultation Effective	Actions to improve consultation	Next Programmed consultation
All Customers	Consultation on Service Standards	January 2010	March 2010	• Service Plan • Internet	Yes	N/A	TBC
HQ building users (incl Civic Centre)	Customer satisfaction questionnaire	February 2010	March 2010	• Service Plan • Internet • Link emailed to all staff originally circulated • Synopsis on office notice boards	Yes	• Improved email lists for main buildings	Autumn 2011 and every 2 years
HQ building users (incl Civic Centre)	Focus Group (BUG's)	Ongoing		• Minutes of meetings	Yes	• Encourage more participation • Review frequency	Ongoing
All Customers	Internet and intranet content survey	August 2007	September 2007	None given, to be followed up in a subsequent survey to make sure that sites have included information suggested	Yes	N/A	TBC
Internal Customers of Professional Services	Customer Satisfaction questionnaire	February 2010	March 2010	• Service Plan • Internet • Results sent to respondents	Yes	N/A	January 2012
Targeted client groups (House builders; agents; business community)	Focus Group	Periodic		• Meeting notes and minutes circulated	Yes	• Possible consideration of programme of Focus Groups – even over a prolonged period	TBC

March 2011

APPENDIX B: TRENDS 2007 - 2011

	2007 (Customer and tenant surveys)		2008 (Customer and occupier surveys)		2009 (Customer and tenant surveys)		2010 (Customer, professional services and occupier surveys)		2011 (Customer and tenant surveys)			
									Target	Result	Target	Result
Delivery	% Good/ Excellent	Weighted	% Good/ Excellent	Weighted	% Good/ Excellent	Weighted	% Good/ Excellent	Weighted		% Good / Excellent		Weighted
Please rate the service you received compared to what you needed					82.22%	68.90%	67.20%	59.81%	85%	62.96%	70%	60.19%
Please rate how well the service handled any problems that arose from your request					76.09%	68.12%	67.81%	59.60%	80%	57.43%	70%	57.10%
Please rate how easy it was to contact us	82.96%	71.86%	75.00%	68.58%	83.67%	72.12%	70.81%	63.88%	85%	69.52%	75%	65.72%
Timeliness												
How would you rate the promptness of the service's response to your request?					81.08%	66.68%	64.81%	56.57%	85%	63.37%	70%	60.07%
How would you rate the service's ability to resolve your issue at the first point of contact?					60.61%	58.59%	63.80%	55.21%	65%	56.00%	60%	56.67%
How would you rate our speed in returning telephone calls and replying to letters and emails?	78.05%	66.95%	62.59%	64.27%	69.70%	64.65%	63.56%	55.20%	70%	64.71%	65%	59.81%
How would you rate our punctuality when attending meetings?	87.93%	75.59%	75.91%	68.62%	85.19%	76.55%	81.65%	66.05%	90%	70.73%	80%	66.26%
How would you rate our promptness in processing documentation?					81.82%	67.69%	70.81%	59.22%	85%	65.98%	70%	62.20%
Information												
In general, how would you rate the ser vice's performance in keeping you informed of the progress of your request?	71.88%	62.51%	63.31%	64.99%	72.09%	61.25%	54.12%	48.63%	75%	67.00%	65%	59.67%

	% Good/ Excellent	Weighted	% Good/ Excellent	Weighted	% Good/ Excellent	Weighted	% Good/ Excellent	Weighted		% Good / Excellent		Weighted
Please rate how accurate and comprehensive the information about the service was					74.42%	65.90%	59.05%	52.31%	75%	70.10%	70%	61.52%
How would you rate PM&D's ability to give information on other relevant council services?	66.94%	61.16%	68.84%	64.02%	73.53%	65.69%	67.23%	57.07%	75%	65.82%	70%	57.81%
How would you rate our explanation of any terms and obligations contained in our documentation?					63.41%	60.98%	70.78%	59.32%	65%	68.42%	65%	60.01%
How would you rate the clarity of our published and promotional material?					67.44%	61.25%	65.76%	57.80%	70%	66.67%	65%	59.15%
Professionalism												
How would you rate the staff's knowledge and skills in dealing with your request?					86.96%	76.10%	78.67%	68.79%	90%	78.85%	80%	70.52%
How would you rate our staff's understanding of your needs as our customer?										65.22%		60.15%
Staff attitude												
How would you rate the staff's attitude towards you?					89.80%	80.96%	87.39%	76.55%	90%	82.86%	85%	74.93%
How courteous were our staff?	89.39%	78.55%	86.43%	73.35%	90.00%	84.01%	88.13%	77.16%	90%	84.76%	85%	77.47%
How helpful were our staff?	87.12%	76.27%	81.43%	72.63%	87.76%	81.64%	85.20%	74.43%	90%	79.05%	85%	73.02%
Overall Level of Service												
How would you rate PM&D's overall level of service?	81.95%	69.94%	76.26%	67.40%	85.42%	75.70%	73.23%	62.47%	90%	77.67%	80%	70.56%
Do you consider that PM&D offers fair and equal access to the services it provides? (NB Yes/no answer)	93.33%	93.33%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100%	100.00%	100%	100.00%

APPENDIX C – Detailed survey analysis

Survey Analysis 2011										
	Customer Survey			Tenant Survey			Consolidated Results			
Delivery	**% Good/ Excellent**	**Weighted**		**% Good/ Excellent**	**Weighted**		**% Good/ Excellent**	**Weighted**		**% Poor**
Please rate the service you received compared to what you needed	100.0%	88.9%		58.3%	56.6%		63.0%	60.2%		7.4%
Please rate how well the service handled any problems that arose from your request	90.9%	81.8%		53.3%	54.1%		57.4%	57.1%		8.9%
Please rate how easy it was to contact us	100.0%	86.1%		65.6%	63.1%		69.5%	65.7%		4.8%
Timeliness										
How would you rate the promptness of the service's response to your request?	100.0%	91.7%		58.4%	55.8%		63.4%	60.1%		10.9%
How would you rate the service's ability to resolve your issue at the first point of contact?	100.0%	87.9%		50.6%	52.8%		56.0%	56.7%		9.0%
How would you rate our speed in returning telephone calls and replying to letters and emails?	100.0%	88.9%		60.0%	55.9%		64.7%	59.8%		7.8%
How would you rate our punctuality when attending meetings?	91.7%	86.1%		67.1%	62.9%		70.7%	66.3%		3.7%
How would you rate our promptness in processing documentation?	100.0%	97.2%		61.2%	57.3%		66.0%	62.2%		3.1%
Information										
In general, how would you rate the ser vice's performance in keeping you informed of the progress of your request?	100.0%	91.7%		62.5%	55.3%		67.0%	59.7%		9.0%
Please rate how accurate and comprehensive the information about the service was	100.0%	88.9%		65.9%	57.7%		70.1%	61.5%		5.2%
How would you rate PM&D's ability to give information on other relevant council services?	90.0%	70.0%		62.3%	56.0%		65.8%	57.8%		10.1%

	% Good/ Excellent	Weighted		% Good/ Excellent	Weighted		% Good/ Excellent	Weighted		% Poor
How would you rate our explanation of any terms and obligations contained in our documentation?	100.0%	83.4%		63.9%	56.6%		68.4%	60.0%		4.2%
How would you rate the clarity of our published and promotional material?	91.7%	72.2%		63.0%	57.2%		66.7%	59.1%		2.2%
Professionalism										
How would you rate the staff's knowledge and skills in dealing with your request?	100.0%	97.2%		76.1%	67.0%		78.8%	70.5%		2.9%
How would you rate our staff's understanding of your needs as our customer?				65.2%	60.2%		65.2%	60.2%		10.9%
Staff attitude										
How would you rate the staff's attitude towards you?	100.0%	100.0%		80.6%	71.7%		82.9%	74.9%		2.9%
How courteous were our staff?	100.0%	100.0%		82.8%	74.6%		84.8%	77.5%		1.0%
How helpful were our staff?	100.0%	100.0%		76.3%	69.5%		79.0%	73.0%		4.8%
Overall Level of Service										
How would you rate PM&D's overall level of service?	100.0%	97.2%		74.7%	67.0%		77.7%	70.6%		2.9%
Do you consider that PM&D offers fair and equal access to the services it provides? (NB Yes/no answer)	100.0%	100.0%					100.0%	100.0%		

Appendix D – Customer Insight (Tenant Survey)

	All Buildings	Monthly industrial	Larger industrial	Office	Shop
Ownership					
Sole trader	28%	22%	0%	0%	68%
Limited company	60%	69%	92%	67%	16%
Partnership	10%	7%	8%	17%	16%
Other	2%	2%	0%	17%	0%
How long have you been trading					
<1 year	5%	5%	0%	0%	11%
1 to 5 years	20%	27%	0%	33%	11%
6 to 10 years	22%	25%	8%	0%	32%
over 10 years	53%	43%	92%	67%	47%
How long have you been in WL					
<1 year	6%	7%	0%	0%	11%
1 to 5 years	27%	29%	33%	33%	16%
6 to 10 years	25%	27%	13%	33%	26%
over 10 years	42%	38%	53%	33%	47%
How long have you been in your current premises					
<1 year	14%	11%	22%	0%	16%
1 to 5 years	38%	51%	17%	50%	21%
6 to 10 years	28%	27%	28%	17%	37%
over 10 years	20%	11%	33%	33%	26%
Why did you move to your current location?					
Relocation within WL	18%	18%	25%	0%	19%
Relocation from outside WL	5%	5%	0%	17%	6%
Expansion	23%	20%	42%	33%	13%
New start	54%	57%	33%	50%	63%
Other	0%				
How many employees do you have?					
None	16%	18%	8%	0%	21%
1 - 5	64%	64%	25%	100%	79%
6 - 10	11%	13%	25%	0%	0%
11 - 20	4%	2%	17%	0%	0%
>20	5%	2%	25%	0%	0%

Are you likely to move in the next 5 years?					
Yes	33%	37%	42%	0%	28%
No	67%	63%	58%	100%	72%
If Yes, Why?					
Expansion	74%	88%	60%		40%
Down-sizing					
How did you learn of your current property?					
word of mouth	43%	30%	67%	50%	63%
Signboard	4%	0%	0%	25%	13%
Press advert	4%	0%	0%	0%	19%
WL website	35%	51%	22%	25%	0%
SPN	1%	0%	0%	0%	6%
Business Gateway	13%	19%	11%	0%	0%
Factors affecting choice of property (% first choice)					
Location	59%	55%	67%	67%	63%
Flexible letting policy	12%	20%	0%	0%	5%
Rental levels	16%	11%	17%	33%	21%
Size of property	9%	11%	17%	0%	0%
Suitability	4%	2%	0%	0%	11%