

Housing Tenancy Agreement and Conditions – Outcome of Consultation

Tenant Handbook – Outcome of Focus Group

Background:

It is vitally important to the Council as a Landlord that before new important documents are introduced, residents/tenants feedback is obtained to ensure that the information we provide is easy to understand. Legal documents such as these can be confusing.

The housing tenancy agreement and conditions survey was launched on 13th August 2019 and ran until 16th September 2019. Please see Appendix 1

The survey was predominately on-line, however, paper copies were made available for completion by those that did not have access to the internet.

As the housing tenancy agreement and conditions content is laid out in law, the purpose of the survey was in relation to how well the document is laid out, how easy it is to follow, if tenant and landlord responsibilities are clear, and if the information/notes are helpful.

In addition to seeking feedback, the aim was to also raise awareness of the Housing Tenancy Agreement and Conditions documents and that changes are proposed.

In order to reach as wide an audience as possible, the following communication plan was undertaken:

Audiences and channels:

Tenants directly

- Who have previously asked to be involved in consultations, via email.
 - Who we engage with in the field (locality, repairs and maintenance, home support, etc.), and via direct 'in person' contact including leaving a leaflet.
 - Who receive letters from us during the period, via leaflet insert.
- Staff
 - Via Oracle & line management.
- Members
 - Via email
- Newspaper readers
 - Via press release.
- Social media audiences
 - Who are reached, via content
 - Who comment seeking response, via conversation where appropriate.

Communications Plan

- Part 1: Begin rollout of all communication in weeks 1-3, including a portion of ad spend
- 'Pause at end of week 3'
- Part 2: Review metrics and assess whether any additional promotional activity is required.

Communication Materials

- Optimised web page for the consultation survey, under the relevant Housing page of the website, category tagged to be available via www.redditchbc.gov.uk/consultations.
- Press release
- Designed and printed "leaflet" to be left with tenants (& for leaflet display, potentially)
- Social content

Communication Measures

- Social media numbers
- Quantity/success rate of leaflet distribution
- Survey response numbers

Outcomes:

Social media numbers

Part 1: Facebook – General audience, text and image: 12,076 people saw the post and 522 engaged, e.g. clicked on it, commented, shared it – cost £125. Paused - week 3 to review measures. Part 2: Facebook - Targeted 3 age groups, young 18-35, middle aged 35 -55 , 55 and older to ensure that we covered all age, similar text and image was slightly altered – cost £125

- Age 55+ - 5,710 people saw the post and 242 engaged
- Age 35-55 - 4,274 people saw the post and 109 engaged
- Aged 18-35 - 2,214 people saw the post and 119 engaged.

All of the face book posts had the desired affect we had satisfactorily reached **24,274** face book accounts with **992** engagements. These numbers for Facebook are considered to be high in comparison with any other Council related social media interactions. Meaning people were interested and saw it. Total cost £250.00.

Other promotion:

Following an email to all Councillors to promote the survey, Communications saw that a good numbers of Councillors shared on Facebook in an attempt to increase who saw it.

Housing Officers hand delivered leaflets whilst out on their patches and delivered approximately **450** spread across the borough and were sent out with general post/email correspondence.

Promotional posters were displayed in outlining public offices with Customer Services promoting the survey.

From the halfway point we were able to identify from the website the number of people clicking onto the survey **136 tenants and none tenants 64**. A total of **200** people, twice as many tenants than none tenants.

Outcomes:

The final figures that completed the surveys are:

	Partials (no info)	Complete (some/full info)
Tenants	218	70
Non-tenants	80	18
Total	298	88

The number of people that actually engaged with the survey is **386** although only **88** fully completed the survey.

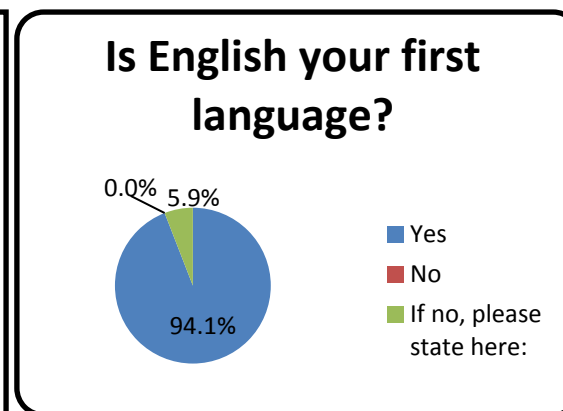
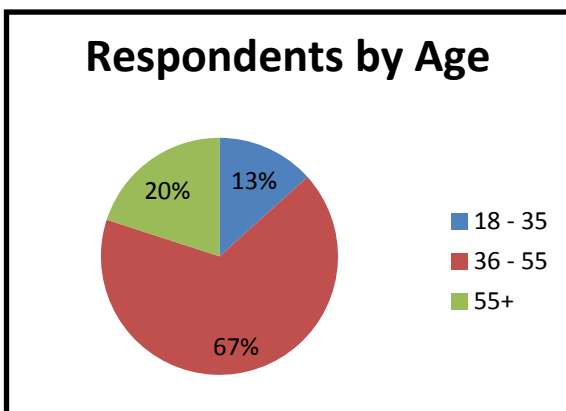
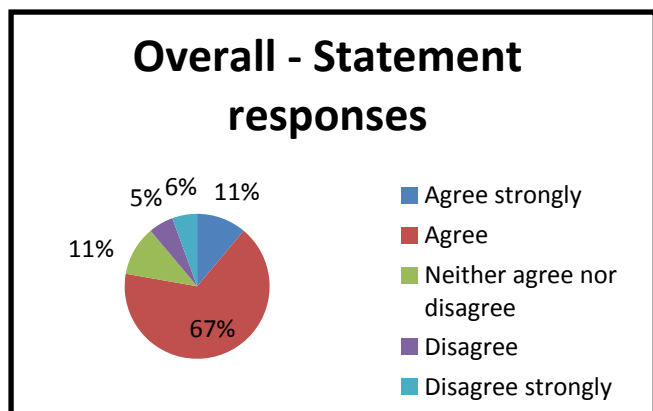
288 were tenants and **98** none tenants.

Although the numbers of respondents in comparison with the number of opportunities to respond is disappointing, upon reflection we accept that many tenants and none tenants may not have had either the time or the interest to read through a lengthy document in order to make comment. For those that did respond a number of positive and negative comments were received (please see end of this document), some reflected on the specifics of the document which will help to shape the final version and others were more service specific which will be looked into further by the relevant team manager.

Responses to questions:

The Future of Redditch Borough Councils Tenancy Agreement - Non Tenants

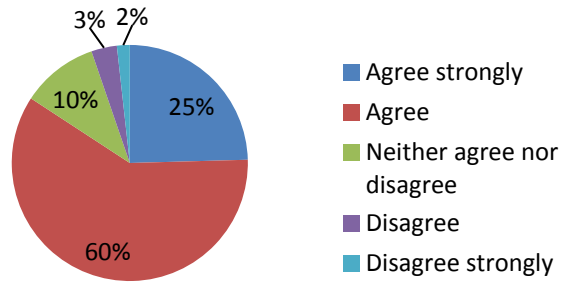
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?								
Answer Choice		Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Response Total	
Please select								
1	The document is well laid out	2	12	2	1	1	18	
2	The document is easy to follow	3	12	2	0	1	18	
3	Tenants responsibilities are clear	4	8	2	2	1	17	
4	Landlords responsibilities are clear	3	11	2	0	1	17	
5	The notes/information are helpful	2	9	4	0	1	16	
If you disagree with any of the statements please explain why:							4	
							answered	18
							skipped	0



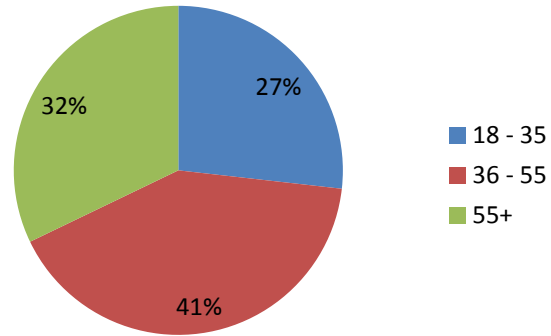
The Future of Redditch Borough Councils Tenancy Agreement - Tenants

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?								
Answer Choice		Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Response Total	
1	The document is well laid out	14	34	6	2	1	57	
2	The document is easy to follow	12	37	5	3	0	57	
3	Tenants responsibilities are clear	19	29	7	2	0	57	
4	Landlords responsibilities are clear	16	33	4	2	0	55	
5	The notes/information are helpful	16	30	8	2	1	57	
If you disagree with any of the statements please explain why:							6	
							answered	59
							skipped	11

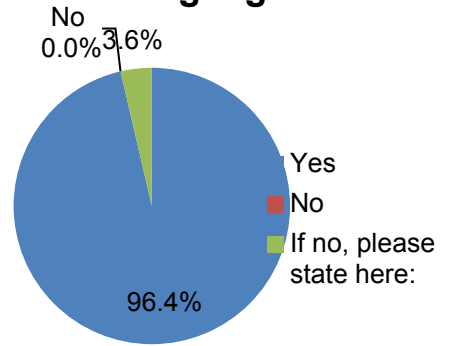
Overall - Statements responses



Respondents by Age



Is English your first language?



Conclusion:

In conclusion the survey results are as follows :

- 83% of the people that responded agreed that the document was well laid out, 21% agreed strongly.
- 85% of the people that responded agreed that the document was easy to follow, 20% agreed strongly
- 81% of the people that responded agreed that the tenants responsibilities in the document were clear, 31% agreed strongly
- 87% of the people that responded agreed that the landlords responsibilities in the document were clear, 26% agreed strongly
- 76% of the people that responded agreed that the notes/information in the document are helpful, 24% agreed strongly

Overall; 83% of all responses received, agreed with the statements regarding the proposed document with 25% of people strongly agreeing. It is therefore recommended that subject to suggested amendments and further document word checks, that the Housing Tenancy Agreement and Conditions are adopted.

In addition the lowest response rate in terms of agreement is in relation to the notes/information being helpful. As it is the intention to also introduce a Tenants Handbook, this should mitigate the need for additional notes/information within the legal document. To understand our tenant's views on this during the survey they were asked if they would like to attend a focus group to discuss the implementation of a Tenants Handbook and a Rechargeable Repairs Policy. In total 26 people said they would like to, and provided their details.

All 26 people were contacted and 16 people confirmed that they were interested in attending a focus group. Please see section on Tenant Handbook for the outcome of the focus group (NB: Rechargeable Repairs Policy is covered in a separate report).

Tenants Handbook:

A draft Tenants Handbook has been created to support the Housing Tenancy Agreement and Conditions of Tenancy providing more detailed information and advice for Housing Tenants. Although this document is not being submitted to members for full approval we are seeking members support for this. As part of the survey we asked if people were willing to attend a focus group to discuss the document in more detail.

On Tuesday 14th September 2019, 6pm – 8pm Housing Officers facilitated a focus group with 10 residents, 9 tenants and 1 none tenant in attendance; they were divided into 3 groups. The following questions were asked which also includes their responses;

Housing Focus Group Feedback Forms: **TENANTS HANDBOOK**

No	Question
1	<i>Do you think it is necessary to provide tenants with a Handbook in addition to the conditions of tenancy?</i>
	Group: 1. No – it should be referred to in the tenancy agreement and conditions of tenancy 2. Yes – much more detailed than the tenancy conditions 3. Yes
2	<i>Do you think that all tenants should be provided with a hard copy?</i>
	Group 1: No – only if requested A hard copy should be available in communal blocks, e.g. Bentley Close, Harry Taylor. Group 2: If tenants request a hard copy then they should have one. A copy could be provided via email, give people the option Group 3: Inclusions, language, digital, but majority on line Carbon footprint. Include a disclaimer to say information correct at time of printing
3	<i>Do you think we should encourage tenants to look on the website?</i>
	Group 1: Yes – advised where you can use a computer, e.g. Town Hall, Library Refer to at sign up/request at sign up. Group 2: Yes – encourage to look on website but ensure those who don't have access to internet can have a hard copy. Group 3: Yes – local paper updates, could be a news letter Understand the need for digital inclusion, offer inclusive ways of looking at the handbook Saves time for the organisation and tenant as can follow links to other agencies.

4	<i>What do you like about the handbook?</i>
	<p>Group 1: Presented ok</p> <p>Group 2: Diagrams for repairs, useful information e.g. How to bleed a radiator Size of print is good/easy to read Like the contents sections.</p> <p>Group 3: Like the repairs sections, jobs can be done yourself as per diagrams, Like the how to quick guides, can give better diagnostics of repairs saving time Rent section good explanation Like the font.</p>
5	<i>What do you dislike about the handbook?</i>
	<p>Group 1: Would like more clarification where it talks about officer discretion Would like it to be publicised that it is an addition to the Tenancy Agreements not the terms and conditions of tenancy Where it states adequate parenting, what is classed as adequate parenting? Think this should be taken out Needs to be proof read before printed, published Where it states 'no smoking' in communal areas should also say 'no vaping' Layout needs to be more clearer Bullet points on original format That it states flats above ground/1st floor should have laminated flooring shouldn't be stipulated when tenants find this cheaper/preferred option</p> <p>Group 2: No comments made</p> <p>Group 3: Duplication of contact numbers, would like numbers upfront, take off to reduce number of pages.</p>
6	<i>Do you think anything is missing that would be useful information?</i>
	<p>Group 1: No comments</p> <p>Group 2: No comments</p> <p>Group 3: Define responsibilities of leaseholders</p>

At the end of the sessions the groups were asked to provide feedback. They collectively agreed that the Council should produce a Tenants Handbook that is available for all tenants via the website. Attendees were also advised that the intention going forward would be for the Housing Website to be based on the Handbook and a quick demonstration of how that could look was carried out. In conclusion they were all very much of the view that tenants should not automatically be sent a hard copy as this would be costly and potentially not all tenants would be interested in having a paper document in their homes, however, they did also feel that it was important to provide a copy to those tenants that didn't have access to the website or needed the document provided in a different font or language to overcome any diversity barriers.

The group attendees did present some general individual housing issues that were dealt with by officers, overall the evening was positive. It is therefore considered that the new Tenants Handbook (subject to suggested updates/amendments) be implemented along with the Housing Tenancy Agreement and Conditions, in addition to further development of a Tenants Handbook Housing website approach.

Survey Comments:

Non tenants

- I would include something explicit that deals with if a partner moves in, or moves out, in terms of adding on or removing a tenant. When a property is officially abandoned? At 4 weeks unless notified? Are there exceptions to this such as prison or hospital stays? Permission required to allow other non-family, non-tenants to stay, e.g. friends, as they would not be classed as lodgers under your definitions if they are not paying to stay there
- Tenants responsibilities need be highlighted and accompanied with tenant's handbook.
- This is an appalling document and is not legally compliant.
- I stopped reading it as it was boring. Whilst I understand that it is a formal document and legally has to be quite basic, it needs some kind of imagery or graphics (i.e. paw print by pet section, leaf for garden section) to assist people in reading it. Colour?
- You need to bring back rules for tenancy agreements and these should be monitored and strictly adhered too about being a nuisance to others.
- Yes as long as you enforce their tenancy agreement as I have been involved with tenants and the local team and have been brushed off drugs and anti-social behaviour and the police
- Section 8 - There is reference to charges to residents for failure to clear rubbish, and a reference to a court appearance for breach of conditions - May be worth highlighting what could happen from that - fines, eviction etc. In section 7.24, it states this could mean eviction. Also ASB legislation that can be used around not managing waste, so could use that rather than referencing tenancy agreement. Maybe re-word to reference other legislation may be used in addition to the tenancy agreement.
- There are many issues with this document, such as spelling and grammatical errors, apostrophes where there shouldn't be any, and commas and full stops missing through. Hanging vs non hanging paragraphs are not consistent:
- I am concerned that you are not excluding tenants from having dogs and cats in flats, maisonettes in any property without a secure back garden. My concerns are entirely to do with the animal's welfare. No rehoming centre would allow people to adopt an animal without a secure garden. Therefore I feel strongly that the council should also exclude tenants without a secure back garden from having dogs and cats. Dogs will and do bark which in flats is going to become a nuisance to other residents resulting in arguments, complaints etc. Much Asker to exclude tenants from having them. The only exception possibly being guide and hearing dogs.

Tenants

- The council could put in a drop kerb for our drive, as my neighbour refused to go halves on the £1000 bill. As we live in an Industrial Estate, there has been an endless time our drive has been blocked by Lorries, and we can't get on or off due to it!
- Paying rent online used to show you how much your account was ahead or behind for rent when you typed in your account number
- What about pets in block of flats? Is it reasonable to allow this? I disagree I have a high sensitivity to cats! Yet 3 people in my block have them, I'm allergic to antihistamines so that's not no option for which in itself is a temporary option not a permanent option. So how are you going to help people like me? Because of this situation my asthma has gotten worse, my face feels, swollen, I feel constantly ill how is that fair on me or my kids. The stress of this situation has caused bad anxiety flare ups, my heart is becoming worse. This has also been caused by the anti-social behaviour and abuse I've been subjected to
- Errors noted:

- The old tenancies are also easy to follow. Only the council never take action. I have been living above an illegal sublet for 4 months who also works for the council. Nope nothing done. He did a flit off his own back. The law and my landlord should have protected me but it didn't. Useless unless the council actually used these agreements and actually took bad tenants to court. Old or new they are not worth the paper they are written on.
- Really should have been checked before putting out like this!
- Do the exterior rules apply equally to people who have bought their property Anti-social behaviour part
- States tenants cannot have wooden or laminate flooring in any flat above ground however what if the tenants don't have money to pay for carpets or have young children who are younger than five they are going to be loud and r potty training so having a carpet would put their health at risk I don't think this is a fair rule to have due to you not considering all the facts. When we signed our tenancy agreement it said nothing about not being able to have the floor we wanted and to change the 3 years later in unfair. For u not to considered the fact that kids do make noise during the day is unfair and should really be re thought we have been trying to move for over a year due to having to have laminate floors as we have been reported for anti-social behaviour before just because our kids are playing in the day time between 8-7pm. In my opinion this rule is totally unfair now if the council would like to supply use with carpet then fine but our finances cannot stretch to buying any other flooring then what we already have and having the flooring we do have is clean and bacteria free so ours kids cannot contract hand foot and mouth again as potty training comes with a lot of accidents and cleaning a wooden or laminate floor is a lot more obtain able then cleaning a carpet
- There are some spelling/grammar mistakes within the document.
- Item 7 needs to be carefully proof read. Words phrases missing or incomplete. Item 9.10 after "no smoking" I think "or vaping" should be added.
- Council do not keep exterior of houses in good repair.
- Much clearer than older agreement. Antisocial behaviour now clearly set out, with responsibilities and outcomes.
- Hope you the landlord stick to what your agreements state in the tenancy agreement and not fob tenants off. Also it wouldn't hurt your staff to ring tenants back when told they would
- The ownership of Pets and Animals is not at all clear with respect to tenants occupying 1 bed flats
- Lack window keys- none in my flat which I queried but no resolution therefore I do not open my public front windows. Other tenants have also confirmed they did not receive or find window keys- same in Batchley. Woodrow
- Are the council going to replace all kitchens that are falling apart before this goes through?