

West Lothian Council

Property Management & Development

Tenant Survey 2012 - 2013

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 reports on the findings of our latest tenant survey.

Our tenant survey is issued on a two-yearly basis – both because of the scale of the administrative task and to avoid survey fatigue among our customers. The invitation to take part was issued in August 2012, with a reminder in September. Although we have previously sent the invitation to all tenants, this time we concentrated on tenants of buildings (as opposed to ground leases, etc), as these tenants are most likely to have regular contact with PM&D.

Our previous experience had been that tenants responded to a paper survey rather than electronic, so the survey was again issued by post. The response again justified this approach. The returns for the last four surveys are:

2006: 110.	Survey issued by paper only
2008: 47.	Survey only available electronically.
2010: 110.	Survey posted, with letter including a dedicated hyperlink. 85% of returns on paper
2012: 110	Survey posted, with letter including a dedicated hyperlink. 94% of returns on paper

415 surveys were issued, so the response rate is 26.5%

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. The results are shown in Appendix 1.

Many of the findings are similar to 2010.

There is a stability in our tenant base:

- Over half have been our tenants for at least 6 years (2010 – 48%)
- This is much higher for the shops and larger industrials (71% and 82% respectively), but still fairly high at 42% for the small industrial units, where a turnover can be anticipated.
- More than three quarters have been trading for more than 6 years (2010 – 75%); and just under three quarters have been in West Lothian for that period (2010 – 67%; 2012 – 73%)

The vast majority of tenants originated in West Lothian (2010 – 95%; 2012 – 91%); and most are either sole traders or limited companies – the former being most marked in the shops (as in 2010).

The proportion of tenants who came to our property as New Starts is down – 40% in 2012 compared with 54% in 2010 – with the change most marked in the small industrials and offices.

Average employment levels per property are understandably low, given the nature of our stock, with 79% of businesses having under 5 employees (2010 – 80%).

Only 13% of tenants expect to move in the next 5 years, about half of the 2010 figure, further demonstrating a stability in the tenant base. Some of those who are expecting to move will be doing so as a result of the council's action to replace West Calder Workspace

While a high proportion of tenants learn about us by word of mouth the council's website and Business Gateway again play a significant role as a source of tenants. However, it is noticeable that the number coming through the website is much lower than 2010 (19% compared with 35%) possibly reflecting the

problems we have had since the change of service from SPN CoStar. Hopefully this will improve once the NovaLoca service has bedded in.

Once again, location was by some distance the most important factor in selecting a property. The flexible letting policy, size and rental levels combined being less than two thirds of the "location" total.

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.

(% satisfied or very satisfied)	2012	2010
Are you satisfied with the condition of your current property?	81.9	79.8
If the Council is responsible for repairs to your property, are you satisfied that they are carried out in a reasonable timescale?	80.3	71.2
Are you satisfied with the repair workmanship?	83.9	78.9

Although performance has improved in each case, it is worth noting that the majority of comments we receive still refer to dissatisfaction with the service we deliver in respect of repair and maintenance. Accordingly there still seems to be a need 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. A strict comparison between the results from 2010 and the current survey is difficult, as we have changed the structure of the questions. Where the 2010 survey asked for our service to be scored on a four point scale (Excellent/Good/Adequate/Poor), the 2012 survey was based on five points (Excellent/Good/Adequate/Poor/Very Poor). Assessment is, however, still to be on the percentage of Excellent and Good scores. The range of questions was also reduced, and some of the text changed, to tie in with corporate standards.

We had expected the change to produce a lower percentage satisfaction level – believing that there might be a tendency for people to select the middle (Adequate) option. However, it is satisfying to report that with the exception of the section on Information, there has actually been a significant improvement across the board.

A copy of the survey outcome will be issued to all respondents who asked for feedback, and we will also circulate information with rent invoices to all our tenants. As with the 2010 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 Able Platers of St.Andrew's Way, Livingston.

March 2013

You Said: In order of importance, you again said that 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, both by type and location. As our customer base is predominantly local and new start, the council's policy will support development of business across West Lothian, and within the communities we serve.

You Said: There is general satisfaction with the condition of our properties; the timescale for work being carried out; and the quality of workmanship – all scored over 80% satisfaction. However, your comments show that the condition of some properties is still unsatisfactory.

We Did: We will try to achieve further improvement in the delivery of repair and maintenance, where it is the Council's responsibility. We are also engaging on a programme of planned maintenance and improvement to our stock of small industrial units, which we expect to be implemented over the next two years.

You Said: In considering the delivery of our service to customers, you said that our performance had improved since 2010. However, this was less evident in our ability to keep you informed of the progress of a request.

We Did: We have reinforced with our people the need to maintain a high level of service as a matter of routine good practice, and are investigating how we can improve feedback to tenants, particularly on the progress of repair work.

Appendix 1 – Customer Insight (Tenant Survey)

	All results	Monthly industrial	Larger industrial	Shop	Office	All Main Buildings
Ownership						
Sole trader	27%	9%	17%	67%	25%	27%
Limited company	57%	84%	75%	25%	42%	62%
Partnership	5%	4%	8%	4%	8%	5%
Other	10%	2%	0%	4%	25%	5%
How long have you been trading						
<1 year	6%	4%	8%	9%	0%	5%
1 to 5 years	16%	18%	0%	17%	25%	16%
6 to 10 years	17%	16%	25%	22%	25%	20%
over 10 years	61%	62%	67%	52%	50%	59%
How long have you been in WL						
<1 year	6%	4%	8%	8%	0%	5%
1 to 5 years	21%	27%	0%	17%	42%	23%
6 to 10 years	13%	13%	33%	17%	0%	15%
over 10 years	60%	56%	58%	58%	58%	57%
How long have you been in your current premises						
<1 year	10%	5%	18%	8%	17%	9%
1 to 5 years	37%	53%	0%	21%	67%	40%
6 to 10 years	23%	21%	55%	29%	17%	27%
over 10 years	31%	21%	27%	42%	0%	24%
Why did you move to your current location?						
Relocation within WL	23%	21%	18%	20%	58%	26%
Relocation from outside WL	9%	14%	0%	5%	17%	10%
Expansion	16%	26%	27%	15%	0%	20%
New start	40%	40%	55%	55%	17%	42%
Other	12%	0%	0%	5%	8%	2%
How many employees do you have?						
None	14%	11%	0%	13%	5%	9%
1 - 5	65%	73%	33%	79%	91%	74%
6 - 10	9%	7%	33%	8%	0%	9%
11 - 20	6%	7%	25%	0%	0%	6%
21 - 50	2%	0%	8%	0%	0%	1%

51 - 100	2%	0%	0%	0%	5%	1%
> 100	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%

Are you likely to move in the next 5 years?

Yes	13%	20%	0%	13%	18%	16%
No	87%	80%	100%	88%	82%	84%

How did you learn of your current property?

word of mouth	40%	44%	33%	63%	44%	47%
Signboard	13%	15%	11%	11%	22%	14%
Press advert	3%	0%	0%	16%	0%	4%
WL website	19%	28%	22%	11%	22%	22%
SPN	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Business Gateway	11%	13%	33%	0%	11%	12%
Other	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Factors affecting choice of property (% first choice)

Location	63%	50%	50%	47%	55%
Flexible letting policy	15%	10%	15%	7%	13%
Rental levels	10%	0%	10%	20%	11%
Size of property	10%	30%	20%	7%	14%
Suitability	3%	10%	5%	20%	7%

Factors affecting choice of property (overall weighting)

	All main buildings Rank	Small Industrial Rank	Larger Industrial Rank	Shop Rank	Office Rank
Location	1	1	1	1	2.00
Flexible letting policy	4	4	4	4	3=
Rental levels	2	2	3	2	1.00
Size of property	3	3	2	3	3=
Suitability	5	5	5	5	5.00

Appendix 2 – Customer Satisfaction

	2010	2012	Change
Delivery			
Please rate the service you received compared to what you needed	58.3%	68.3%	10.0%
Please rate how well the service handled any problems that arose	53.3%	67.7%	14.3%
Please rate how easy it was to contact us	65.6%	73.8%	8.2%
Timeliness			
How would you rate the promptness of the service's response to your request?	58.4%	69.0%	10.6%
How would you rate the service's ability to resolve your issue at the first point of contact?	50.6%	58.0%	7.4%
Information			
In general, how would you rate the service's performance in keeping you informed of the progress of your request?	62.5%	63.3%	0.8%
Please rate the accuracy of the information provided, as relevant to your needs	65.9%	65.7%	-0.2%
Please rate the quality of the information, as relevant to your needs	N/A	67.7%	N/A
Professionalism			
How would you rate our people's professionalism in terms of the knowledge and skills of our staff	76.1%	83.0%	6.9%
Staff attitude			
How would you rate our people's attitude in terms of friendliness and helpfulness of our staff?	80.6%	89.0%	8.4%
Overall Level of Service			
How would you rate PM&D's overall level of service?	74.7%	82.8%	8.1%