

# West Lothian Council Property Management & Development

## Customer consultation review 2014-2015

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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 2014-15 in formally consulting our customers.

### **Segmentation and consultation programme**

As a result of our 2012 WLAM Assessment, we modified our programme of customer surveys and the methodology for reporting results and this has flowed into the 2014 WLAM Assessment

The bi-annual survey programme is continuing, alternating the surveys of tenants of the councils commercial property portfolio and of occupiers of the councils office buildings. These provide us with insight into our customers' views and requirements, which influence the delivery of our service. In addition, the two year cycle allows time for these changes to be implemented and "bed in" before the next survey is despatched.

As with previous years we are striving to improve the response rate from our generic customer survey, which is now the only source for our performance indicators, by offering both electronic and paper versions of the survey. The latter has proved again to be our customers' preferred method of response particularly for the Tenant Survey.

### **Target setting**

At the PM&D Quality Team meeting in June 2013 it was agreed that we should set challenging long term targets, aiming to reach 90% customer satisfaction in all PIs by 2016-17 with incremental targets being set accordingly. The exception is satisfaction with the equality of service delivery 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 below 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 responses increased from 36 to 60 demonstrating our commitment to improve the level of returns from our customers

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. Notwithstanding this we are not compromising our aim to reach the progressive target of 90% satisfaction by 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 and it where possible, identify changes to our service delivery.

Corporate PI ref.	Delivery: Please rate the following	Covalent Ref.	2013/14 result	2014/15 TARGET	2014/15 result
6a.2	The service you received compared to what you needed	PMD.122	85.71%	86%	89.66%
6a.9	Our handling of any problems that arose	PMD.129	87.88%	84%	90.38%
6a.12	How easy it was to contact us	PMD.132	85.71%	84%	86.44%
	<b>Timeliness: Please rate the following</b>				
6a.1	The promptness of our response to your request?	PMD.121	85.71%	84%	87.72%
6a.8	Our ability to resolve your issue at the first point of contact?	PMD.128	82.86%	82%	90.74%
	<b>Information: Please rate the following</b>				
6a.3	Our performance in keeping you informed of the progress of your request?	PMD.123	85.29%	80%	87.27%
6a.10	The accuracy of the information provided, as relevant to your needs	PMD.130	82.35%	81%	91.38%
6a.11	The quality of the information provided, as relevant to your needs	PMD.131	79.41%	81%	89.83%
	<b>Professionalism: Please rate the following</b>				
6a.5	Our people's professionalism in terms of the knowledge and skills of our staff	PMD.125	85.71%	87%	91.53%
	<b>Staff attitude: Please rate the following</b>				
6a.4	Our people's attitude in terms of the friendliness and helpfulness of our staff	PMD.124	91.43%	90%	94.83%
	<b>Our Service: Please rate the following</b>				
6a.7	The overall quality of customer service.	P:PMD.127	80.56%	84%	88.33%
6a.6	Were you treated fairly? (NB Yes/no answer)	PMD.126	93.94%	100%	94.64%

## 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.

Many of the findings are similar to 2012.

There is a stability in our tenant base:

- Over half have been our tenants for at least 6 years (2014 – 57.14%)
- The survey shows 37.14% of tenants have been in the same unit for in excess of 10 years reflecting a high degree of satisfaction that the premises meet their needs.
- Almost three quarters have been trading for more than 6 years and or have been in West Lothian for that period (2014 – 73%).

The vast majority of tenants originated in West Lothian (2012 – 91%, 2014 – 87.33%); and most are either sole traders or limited companies.

The proportion of tenants who came to our property as New Business Start Ups – 42.86% in 2014 compared with 40% in 2012. These figures support the rationale for holding a varied portfolio for startup 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 70.42% of businesses having under 5 employees (2012 – 79%). This demonstrates that the availability of council premises available for lease is supporting employment and new business in the county.

Some 27.94% of tenants expect to move in the next 5 years in order to grow their business whilst this is an increase on the previous survey (2012 – 13%) this represent continued stability and growth if business in West Lothian.

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 has increased significantly (2014 – 41.08% compared with 2012 – 19%) reflecting the improvement in service since our new commercial property search facility has bedded in.

Once again, location was by some distance the most important factor in selecting a property, with size, rental levels 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)	2014	2012
Are you satisfied with the condition of your current property?	77.78	81.9
If the Council is responsible for repairs to your property, are you satisfied that they are carried out in a reasonable timescale?	79.31	80.3
Are you satisfied with the repair workmanship?	86.21	83.9

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 continue to improve good repair workmanship 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.

### **Equality questionnaire**

The equality questionnaire was developed during 2006/2007 to ensure that PM&D 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.

### **Occupier Surveys**

In the autumn of 2014 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 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:

- External repairs and redecoration including window and door repairs. The council is aware of these issues and we are endeavouring to put in place a schedule and specification to facilitate these works

- Works requests. 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.
- Lack of heating and insulation. The council's industrial and small business units do not have heating nor does the council have the funding available to install it. Supply of heating and hot water are a tenant responsibility under the terms of the lease
- Security. Security for individual units is the responsibility of the occupier however where possible the council will encourage occupiers to close and lock gates
- Improvements to access roads and issues with congestion. The council where possible will undertake works to improve the road surfaces and we will work with occupiers to alleviate congestion and poor parking

A full analysis of the results can be seen on our Website: [www.westlothian.com./pmd](http://www.westlothian.com./pmd)

### **Building user groups**

As Facilities Managers of the council's headquarter office buildings we have regular contact with council staff who occupy these properties. The Building User Groups (BUG's) provide a forum for feedback and comment from our colleagues, and for us to raise specific issues of concern (e.g. energy management). The BUG 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.

### **Complaint and compliments analysis**

We record feedback from customers who make comments or complaints about our service. In 2014/15 we received five complaints of which two were partially upheld. The complaints related to lack of access to units and failed communication respectively.

**April 2015**