

## Customer consultation: October - November 2021

The government publish a set of consumer standards for social landlords, including the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (July 2017). This standard requires us to specifically consult with our customers at least once every three years on the best way of involving you in the governance and scrutiny of your housing management service.

### The survey

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government) consulted with tenants and housing professionals across the country about the safety of tenants' homes and how they could make their views known and listened to by landlords.

The Government then published a White Paper in 2021 which continued to prioritise safety and promised to review the regulatory standards that landlords must follow. When drafting our survey, we wanted to not only ask how you want to have your voice heard, but to also respond to other themes in the White Paper including being safe in your home and knowing how we are performing.

The survey was open to all Cottsway customers or members of their households aged 16 or over. Available both online and in hard copy (with a QR code) we delivered 1,000 copies with the help of our repairs operatives and a door-knocking campaign. We visited as many communities as possible, knocking on 735 doors and talking to 222 customers in person, leaving everyone with a printed copy of the survey. As well as the survey we also took reports about repairs, anti-social behaviour and even enquiries about moving home. All issues were reported back to our colleagues in the repairs and neighbourhood management teams to be dealt with.

We had an enormous response compared to previous consultations, with 697 customers completing our survey and 309 customers leaving a total of 759 comments - huge thanks to everyone who took the time to respond.

Responses to the survey have been analysed and key themes identified from customers' comments. This short report gives you a summary of the results. We will use these responses to review our communications with customers about safety and performance and to help inform our new Customer Engagement Strategy, due to be published 2022.

### Customer survey 2021



Tell us your views on our services, performance and how you think we can improve, and you could be in with a chance of winning a £50 gift card!

Understanding your views helps inform our decisions so we can improve where needed, and shape the services we provide to customers and communities.

The standards you can expect for our services are set out in our Customer Charter, available on our website or by post on request.

We also try to keep you informed about lots of other performance data through our website, social media and our bi-annual 'Homepage' e-zine.

We do this so that you know what to expect from us and can hold us to account if we fail to deliver as promised. Some of the information we provide includes our:

- Annual report, value for money summary and full financial statements
- Customer satisfaction rates and a quarterly summary of feedback and complaints
- Financial and regulatory judgements
- Quarterly expenditure on developing new homes.

We carry out work to keep you safe in your home and to ensure it meets Government safety standards. If we need to attend your home or update you on any important changes, including those to your rent and/or service charges, we contact you direct either by letter, email, text or phone.

To let us know your thoughts on how we are doing, please complete our short survey before 5 November 2021.

You can do this online, by scanning our QR code with a smart phone or visiting: [www.cottsway.co.uk/survey](http://www.cottsway.co.uk/survey)



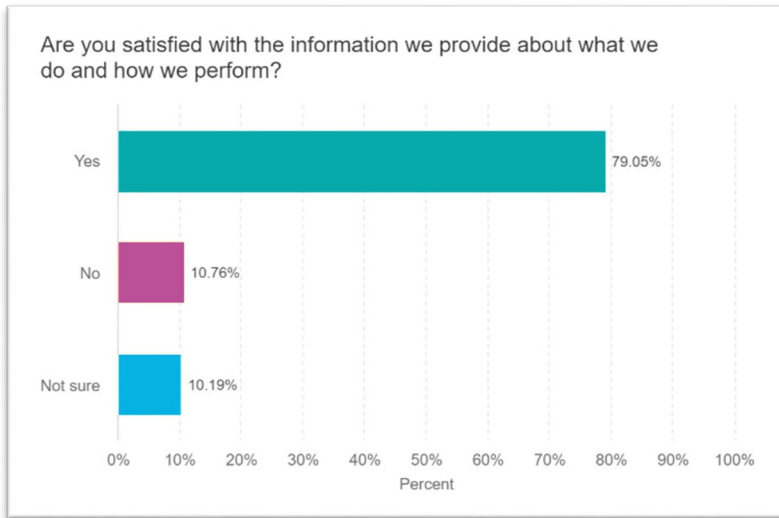
Alternatively, complete the survey overleaf and return in the Freepost envelope provided, or send it in a stamped envelope to:

Cottsway Housing Association  
Cottsway House  
Heynes Place, Avenue Two  
Witney OX28 4YG

## The results

We asked four main questions then one on how you prefer to give us your views. Here are the results:

### Q1 Are you satisfied with the information we provide about what we do and how we perform?



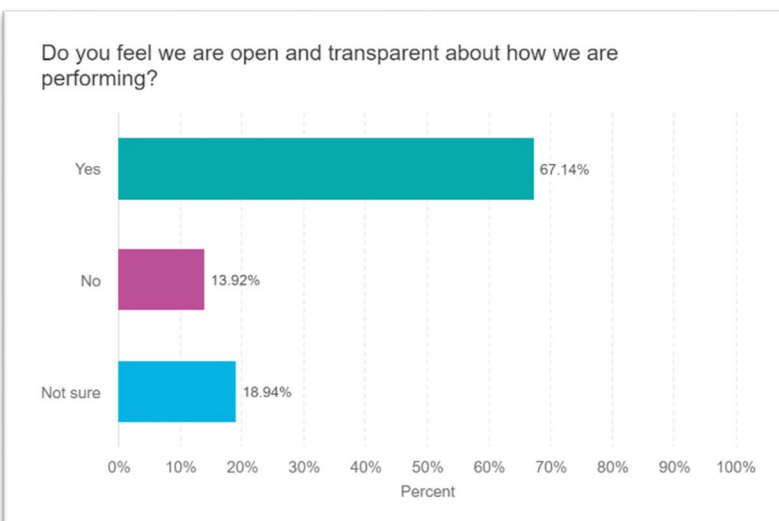
“The information that Cottsway provide is simple to understand and has very little information that would otherwise be unnecessary.”

“Comprehensive website and good written information when needed. Staff always friendly if I ever ring to seek information.”

“The information provided is convoluted, difficult to understand and not ‘friendly’ for those with disabilities and learning difficulties.”

The vast majority of respondents (79%) were satisfied with the information we provide although around 20% were not satisfied or were unsure. Comments revealed that although some customers knew where to look for information on our website and found it easy to interpret, a number either did not know about it or found the information difficult to understand. Several customers commented that for those who do not use the internet our performance information is mostly inaccessible – we know from our regular survey programme that only 67% of our customers have access to the internet, much lower than the national average of 90% of households.

### Q2 Do you feel we are open and transparent about how we are performing?



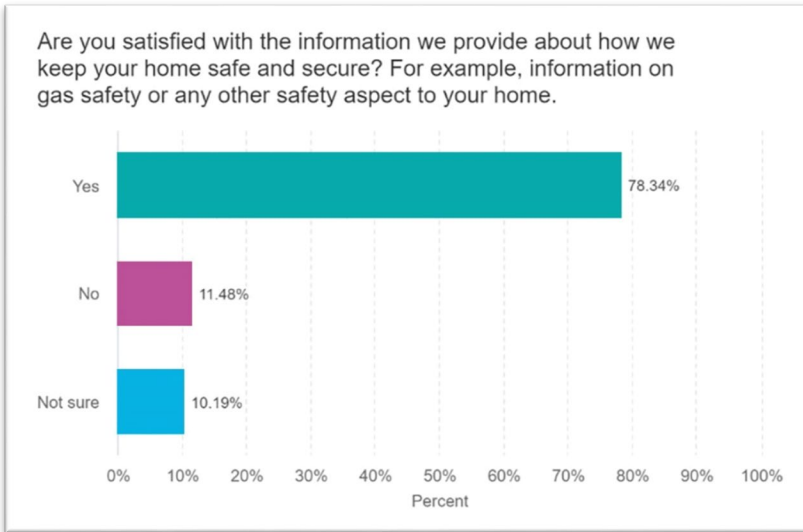
“Almost impossible to know whether we, as tenants, are privy to all performance related information. But in general terms, it seems that Cottsway aim to communicate transparently with its tenants.”

“I do not feel you are transparent at all or how money obtained from rent is spent.”

“For those of us who do not use the internet any information you may provide is inaccessible and therefore unseen.”

Just over 67% of respondents felt we were open and transparent about our performance, with almost 20% unsure and 13% saying we're not. This was reflected in a number of comments that customers either did not receive information about our performance, were unsure or unconvinced that we are open, or did not know where to look for information. This suggests a difference in expectations about communication and in some cases, a degree of digital exclusion as we have published performance information regularly on our website for the last two years.

**Q3 Are you satisfied with the information we provide about how we keep your home safe and secure? For example, information on gas safety or any other safety aspect to your home**



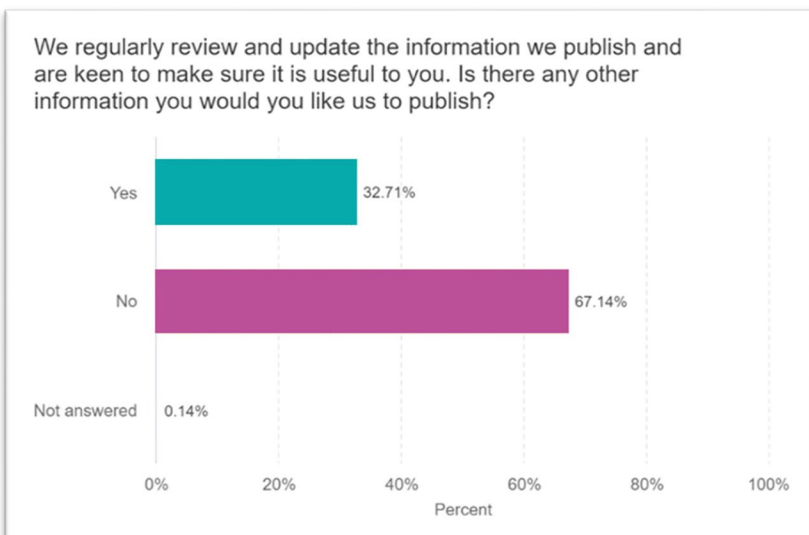
“We cannot recall the last time we were provided with any further safety or security information.”

“I have no information on the way you keep my home safe and secure. I don’t have any information on gas safety or any other aspect.”

“I feel safety is a priority. I’m always informed of checks.”

We were pleased to see almost 80% of respondents are satisfied with the safety and security information we provide but again noted that 11% are not and 10% are unsure. Of the comments we received most referred to the annual gas safety inspection, which suggests we have more to do to promote the other ways that we keep customers safe, such as electrical safety testing, radon monitoring, carbon monoxide monitoring, legionella testing and asbestos surveys.

**Q4 We regularly review and update the information we publish and are keen to make sure it is useful to you. Is there any other information you would you like us to publish?**

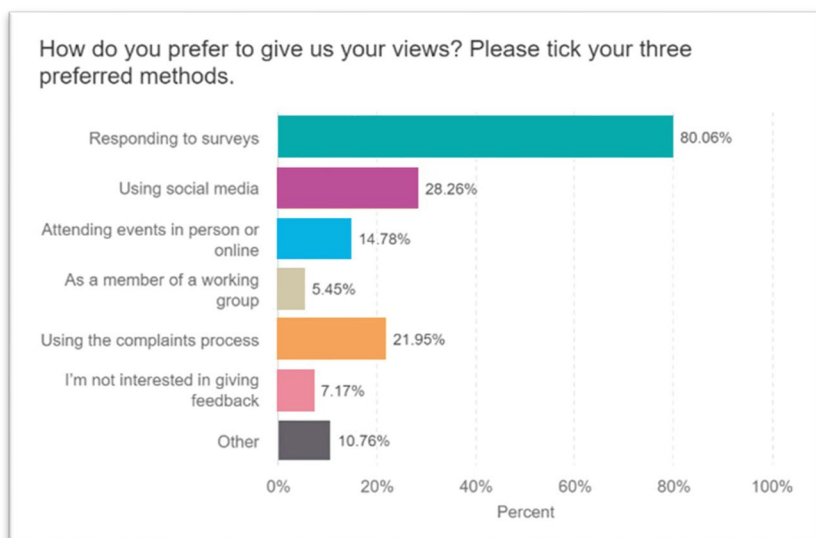


“We believe that there is sufficient information available on Cottsway's website, as well as correspondence received.”

“Information on your green policies and how you are making homes more energy efficient and, with the current gas crisis, what you plan to do about replacing gas boilers and heating to move to renewables.”

Whilst the majority (67%) are happy with the information we publish just over 32% of respondents wanted to see additional information. We received 137 comments on this question with many who commented wanting more information on repairs and maintenance (tenant responsibility, timescales, and details of programmed works). Other requests included information about new builds and stock distribution, environmental policies (open space, play areas, insulation, tree planting etc), the number of evictions and staff profiles. Some respondents noted the difficulty of commenting on what more was needed when they felt they weren't receiving information in the first place.

## Q5 How do you prefer to give us your views? Please tick your three preferred methods.



"My preference would always be via telephone as I believe views are best conveyed via 1:1 dialogue, where queries can be raised."

If I need to give my views, I'd like to be able to give it easily via a form or email.

Email, online chat, phone - customer services are fabulous!

Just over 80% of respondents prefer surveys for giving feedback with social media favoured by 28%. Direct involvement through attending events is preferred by almost 15% and taking part in a working group the least popular option at 5%. Nearly 22% of those who responded were willing to use the complaints process and just over 7% were not interested in giving feedback in any format.

## Conclusion

The aim of this consultation was to understand our customers' experience of the housing management service we provide with an emphasis on the safety and security of their homes, as set out in the Housing White Paper. We have had a great response and are pleased to see the majority of respondents are generally happy with the services and information we provide. The feedback we have received will be used to improve our services and shape our next Customer Engagement Strategy, due in 2022. Thanks to everyone who took part and to colleagues who helped us to deliver it.

## And finally...

### Where we knocked on doors:

- **Gloucestershire:** Andoversford, Apperley, Bourton on the Water, Berkeley, Cheltenham, Eastington, Gloucester, Kings Stanley, Northleach, Quedgley, Stoke Orchard, Tetbury, Whitminster, Winchcombe.
- **West Oxfordshire:** Carterton, Chipping Norton, Bladon, Long Hanborough, Witney.
- **Wiltshire:** Stratton St Margaret.
- **Worcestershire:** Evesham.

### Number of responses we received:

- 697 surveys completed - 656 online and 41 paper.

### Prize draw

89% of respondents entered the prize draw to win one of five £50 shopping vouchers. The winners were: JC, Cirencester; JWC, Witney; VS, Cirencester; KT, Chipping Norton and EW, Witney – congratulations to you all!

Cottsway House  
Heynes Place  
Avenue Two  
Witney  
Oxfordshire OX28 4YG

[www.cottsway.co.uk](http://www.cottsway.co.uk)

E: [contact@cottsway.co.uk](mailto:contact@cottsway.co.uk)

T: 01993 890000

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