

Thamesmead Estate Charges Survey – Summary of Results

1. Methodology and respondent profile

- 1.1 The survey was conducted online and by post, with a total of 412 responses.
- 1.2 Of those that specified their tenure, 172 were tenants, 137 freeholders and 100 leaseholders.

2. Estate charges

- 2.1 Respondents were asked if they pay an estate charge, and if they know how much they pay. The majority of respondents said that they do pay an estate charge (78%). Of these, almost one third (92 respondents) said they don't know how much they pay. We have included all responses in the analysis, not just those respondents who said they do pay an estate charge.

Do you pay an estate charge?		Do you know how much you pay?	
Yes	78% (323)	Yes	57% (234)
No	9% (37)	No	39% (160)
Don't know	12% (48)	Blank	4% (18)
Blank	1% (4)		
Total responses	412		412

3. What does the Estate charge pay for?

- 3.1 There was little consensus about what the estate charge pays for, with a spread of answers from 'all' to 'none' across all categories. This suggests that transparency over the charges is lacking, a point which was backed up in comments.

	Roads	Pavements/ paved open spaces	Trees	Canals & lakes	Grassed areas
All	7%	22%	23%	29%	31%
Some	35%	47%	43%	26%	45%
None	33%	15%	14%	23%	11%
Don't know	25%	16%	19%	21%	13%
Total no. responses	379	392	386	382	395

4. How good are Gallions at looking after different elements?

4.1 In all categories, half or more respondents gave Gallions a score of 'poor'. 'Pavements and paved open spaces' receiving the highest proportion of 'poor' scores, however 'canals and lakes' also received low scores, with just under a fifth saying upkeep was 'good'. Scores of 'excellent' were consistently low, with the highest at 5% for 'grassed areas'. A significant number of respondents scored 'don't know' across the categories.

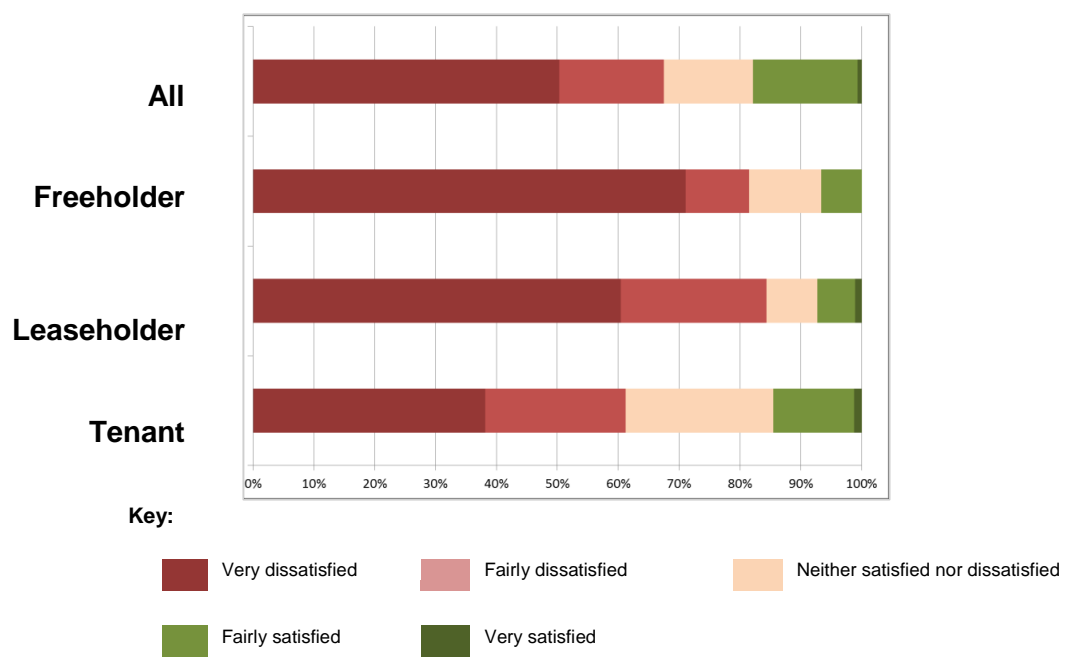
	Roads	Pavements/ paved open spaces	Trees	Canals & lakes	Grassed areas
Poor	50%	63%	53%	54%	52%
Good	27%	23%	29%	19%	34%
Excellent	1%	3%	2%	1%	5%
Don't know	22%	11%	16%	27%	10%
Total no. responses	400	397	404	398	398

5. How satisfied are you that your estate charge provides value for money?

5.1 Overall there were high levels of dissatisfaction from respondents, with only 17% 'fairly satisfied' and just less than 1% 'very satisfied' that their estate charge provides value for money. Half of respondents were 'very dissatisfied', and a further 17% 'fairly dissatisfied'.

Satisfaction by tenure

5.3 It appears that leaseholders were less satisfied with the estate charges than other tenures, with 84% 'fairly' or 'very dissatisfied'. However, more freeholders registered that they were 'very dissatisfied', at 71%. Overall, tenants were the least dissatisfied; however satisfaction was still low at only 14%.



6. Reasons for dissatisfaction

6.1 Respondents were asked to explain the reasons for their dissatisfaction with the service. This was a free text answer, so answers have been classified. The table below shows how many times those who were 'very' or 'fairly dissatisfied' referred to different aspects of the service, ranked by the highest number of mentions.

How satisfied are you that your estate charge provides value for money?	Very dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Total
Value for money/cost	71	13	84
Grassed areas/ flower beds	40	13	53
Transparency of charges	36	11	47
Rubbish/ litter/ fly tipping	38	9	47
Pavements and paved open spaces	34	8	42
Duplication with council tax	35	3	38
Trees	25	10	35
Quality of service	32	3	35
Canals and lakes	27	7	34
Communication with Gallions/ customer service	27	3	30
Frequency/timeliness of estate maintenance	18	8	26
Roads	21	3	24
Horses	11	6	17
Discrepancies between who pays the charge	12	2	14
Dog fouling	11	1	12
Cleanliness/maintenance of communal area	7	4	11
ASB/drug use/crime/vandalism	9	2	11
Bins for dog waste, litter, household waste/ bin stores and chutes	6	5	11
Estate lighting	6	3	9
Parking	3	3	6
Lifts	3	3	6
Gates	4	0	4
Drains	2	2	4
Graffiti	3	-	3

Feel unsafe	3	-	3
Play area	2	1	3
Entry doors	2	-	2
Vermin	1	1	2
<i>Some/ all issues outside of scope</i>	29	7	36

7. How could we improve your estate services or charges?

7.1 Once again, this was a free text answer, so answers have been classified. The table below shows the points which were mentioned by the highest number of respondents, split according to their level of satisfaction.

7.2 The most frequent suggestions were that the estate charge should be made more transparent, reduced or removed altogether, and that communication with residents should be improved.

	Very dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Neither	Fairly/ Very satisfied	Total
Clarify the charges/ more transparency	28	9	2	6	45
Reduce the charge	25	8	4	1	38
Improve communication with residents/ customer service	20	2	3	4	29
Remove the charge	24	2	1	-	27
More/better staff (Gallions/sub-contractors)	13	6	3	-	22
Tackle litter/rubbish/fly tipping	5	9	5	1	20
Clarify what Council Tax pays for	11	2	3	2	18
Improve general cleaning/maintenance	11	6	-	-	17
Improve grassed areas	8	3	4	1	16
Increased monitoring/walkabouts	13	1	2	-	16
Higher frequency/ faster action	10	4	-	1	15
Discrepancies between who pays and how much	12	2	-	1	15
Improve pavements and paved open spaces	6	5	1	-	12
Penalise residents who dump rubbish/ dog fouling	5	3	2	-	10

- 7.2 Respondents also made mention of the following: Better value for money (8); remove horses (8); CCTV/security (8); More efficient procurement/sub-contracting (6); Improve roads (5); Improve trees (5); Improve canals and lakes (4); Lighting (4); Play area for children (3); Have wild areas to reduce maintenance (1); Vermin (1).
- 7.3 Four respondents said they were happy with the service, and two gave support for increasing the charge.
- 7.4 A number of suggestions fell outside of scope: Install double glazing (4); lifts (4); garages/parking (4); reduce rent level (3); window cleaning (3); reduce bills (1); repairs (1); don't spend money on magazines (1); include freeholders in refurbishment work (1); refurbish blocks (1); sinking fund (1); treat wooden areas on flats (1).