

# Tenants Voice



Issue : 62 : September 2006

## Tenants' Conference

A guided tour around Edinburgh's historic Surgeons' Hall and museum is on offer to participants attending this year's annual tenants' conference. The Surgeons' Hall complex on Nicolson Street is the venue for the conference on Saturday 7th October.

The theme of the conference is Community Planning and how it will affect tenant participation arrangements in Edinburgh, including the future of the Housing Area Boards and Edinburgh Tenants Federation. The conference is being organised by the Council, Edinburgh Tenants Federation and Housing Area Board representatives, and is open to all interested individuals.

During the conference a series of workshops will provide information on community planning and neighbourhood partnerships, on Services for Communities and Neighbourhood Management. Participants will be invited to help determine the future of tenant participation and Housing Area Boards, and to discuss how to build community involvement in order that local people can play their part in local decision-making, not just on housing issues but on all aspects of community life.



*The Annual Tenants' Conference will take place on 7th October at Surgeons Hall.*

There will be stalls and displays as well as a range of opportunities for participants to share their views, including via an interactive quiz. The day will end with a tour of Surgeons' Hall including the museums, for those participants that are interested.

There is no cost to attend the conference, and lunch and refreshments will be provided. Invitations to Housing Area Board members, Registered Tenants Organisations and ETF members will be issued shortly. If you'd like to come along please contact Kevin Hewie on 0131 529 7746.

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# 'The Slidey' Play Area and Community Garden Opening Day 3rd August 2006



*Everyone had fun in the sun at the opening of the new play area.*

## History of the Project

*Since 1998 North Bugtlin Tenants Association (NBTA) has been campaigning for the local play area to be developed into a proper playground for our kids. We had continually applied to every potential funder we could think of – including our then landlord Edinvar – but couldn't get funding because we only represented three streets in the area and didn't meet the criteria set by major funders.*

In December 2004 NBTA received a letter from Helen Forsyth who had recently become Director of Regeneration with the Places for People Group (Edinvar's parent company). She was looking into local

issues and how to improve the quality of life for tenants. The East Craigs Wider Action Group was subsequently 'born' in February 2005, with NBTA on the Group's committee, and among the first issues we tackled was play space in North Bugtlin. Our Community Policeman, Jeff Whelan, discovered that the National Lottery ran a fund called 'The People's Millions' and the East Craigs Wider Action Group met the criteria. Finalists had to make a video presentation for the public to vote on and these videos were televised in the middle of last year. The end result was that East Craigs Wider Action Group was awarded £50,000 by the People's Millions!

A great deal of work has been done since then to raise funding from other sources which included £1000 from local tenants, and on 3rd August this year the first phase of the new Play Area and Community Garden was officially opened by local MP, John Barrett. There's still a lot of work to be done, and many unforeseen problems have arisen since the work started. There's no landscaping in yet and the Community flower bed has disappeared somehow, but we've invited Roslyn Gillon of Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association to attend our AGM next month, when we hope to be reassured that the rest of the project will eventually be completed.



## Opening Day

Amid bright sunshine, balloons were hung up, the ice cream van arrived and the face painting lady set up her area in the shade. Tenants and their kids from all around the area came by: grandchildren brought their grannies and granddads, nieces and nephews brought aunts and uncles and everyone had 'fun in the sun'. People brought chairs to sit on or just sat on the ground when the two benches were full. Daisy the cat – who was the first to try out the new slide – came along too!

Many people took the opportunity to speak to the guests on a variety of subjects. The questions that NBTA members were most frequently asked were 'where's the landscaping?' and 'where's the Community garden?' Hopefully we'll get the answers from Roslyn Gillon at our AGM next month.

All of the funders for this project, North Bughtlin Tenants Association, Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association, the National Lottery and the City of Edinburgh Council had representatives at the playground's opening. Members of the Police Youth Action Team and most of East Craigs Wider Action Group were present. Radio Forth interviewed tenants and others on the day. Speeches were made by Helen Forsyth on behalf of East Craigs Wider Action Group, Robert Aldridge our local councillor, and Police Chief Inspector Euan Morrison. During Euan's speech PC Jeff Whelan arrived to loud cheers and applause. John Barrett MP then officially opened the 'Slidey'. Photos were taken, faces were painted, and ice cream was eaten by adults and children alike, and all the while the Police piper played his pipes in the sunshine.

*Tina Beattie  
North Bughtlin Tenants Association*

## News from Althorn Residents Association

Hello! We're a team of people who care about the area you live in. We want to help solve whatever complaints you have, no matter how big or small. Some of the things we've worked on include double parking, rubbish bins, noisy neighbours, street cleaning, dog mess, etc.

We are easy to contact, also we have meetings once a month. If you'd like to come along to them just contact the Althorn team. We're here to help, and if you're interested you can join. Membership is free – come along for a chat and a cuppa. Phil Attridge our local councillor comes along to our meetings too, so if you have any issues you'd like to raise with him he'll be happy to help.

Other groups in our area have written about what they do too and we're in the process of putting together a community magazine. We all get on fine and we have a friendly atmosphere, running youth groups and helping with disabled people of all ages. In fact we help everyone.

We also have Neighbourhood Watch in our area now, with signs up now from Albert Street to Thorntree Street.

We started 5 years ago and got good results about local road safety and rubbish bins. Things don't happen over night but we do get them done.

So come along and voice your problems. Our AGM will be held in November. The date will be given out after our meeting this month. If you want more information contact ETF.

We look forward to hearing from you.

*Mags Meechan  
Chairperson, Althorn Residents Assoc.*



*John Barrett MP, Alister Steele, Managing Director of Castle Rock Edinvar, and Simon Shearer, Chairperson of Castle Rock Edinvar, try out the new slide.*

# News from the Federation . . .

## Stormy Scenes at Federation AGM

The Federation's AGM in June witnessed some heated exchanges as a number of reports were challenged and constitutional amendments were debated, mainly over the Executive Committee's code of conduct. Some items of business were not dealt with as the meeting overran its allotted time.

Kenny Boorman and Tina Beattie were elected to the Executive Committee while Maureen Jarvis was re-elected to the Committee. A workplan, setting out the Federation's priorities for the coming year, was agreed.

A buffet and social followed, where members were joined by a number of colleagues from the Council and Housing Service.

There will be a Federation meeting on 17th October where members will be able to quiz the Executive Committee about the work it is doing on behalf of the Federation. The meeting will take place in the City Chambers beginning at 7pm. For more information contact the Federation office on 0131 556 4406 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org).

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## New office-bearers elected

Congratulations to Tina Beattie of North Bugtlin Tenants Association and Sheila Rutherford-McCallum of Ratho Station Residents Association who, at the first meeting of the new Executive Committee were elected as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. They join Betty Stevenson (Muirhouse High Rise Tenants Association) and Maureen Jarvis (Oxgangs Central Residents Association) who were re-elected as Convenor and Vice-Convenor respectively.

## Block walkabout training day

Edinburgh Tenants Federation and the Council's Concierge service have been running block walkabout training days since December 2003 in order to encourage tenants and residents in Edinburgh's multi-storeys to participate in regular block checks, inspecting and commenting on the cleanliness of their blocks and the helpfulness of their concierge and caretaking service.

Block walkabout training days take place around three times a year and participants include residents (owners as well as tenants) and Council staff. We pick an area of the city, learn how to carry out a block inspection and then visit a couple of blocks to put our skills into practice. Transport and refreshments are

provided and those that have taken part so far have enjoyed themselves. Residents who take part in block walkabout training days usually go back and participate in regular block checks where they live. This means that the concierge service is constantly being monitored by the very people it exists to serve, and this helps to ensure that the service is always looking for ways to improve. So everybody benefits.

Our next training day is on Thursday 26th October 2006, when we'll be visiting blocks in West Edinburgh. Why don't you join us? For more information contact Edinburgh Tenants Federation or, to book a place, contact Kevin Hewie on 0131 529 7746.

## Capital Improvement Programme: *what does it mean for your home?*

Everyone's heard of the Council's kitchen and bathroom replacement programme, and many tenants have already had their new kitchens and bathrooms, though the reports on their experiences have been decidedly mixed. What can tenants who are about to get new kitchens and bathrooms expect? What about the other 10,000 tenants who have yet to be scheduled into future phases of the programme?

The Federation can't answer all these questions so we've teamed up with Building Design Services, the Council department that runs the capital improvement programme, to present a Repairs Forum. The Forum is open to all tenants who are interested in learning more about the programme or who have comments to make about how it's run so far.

This will take place on Wednesday 4th October in the City Chambers from 6pm – 9pm. Representatives from BDS will be there to answer your questions and to seek your views on future work. If you'd like to come along, or to receive more information, please contact Edinburgh Tenants Federation on 0131 556 4406 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org).

## Repairs Policy

It's been a long time in the making but Council tenants will soon be receiving a booklet outlining the Council's repairs policy.

Tenant reps started working with staff from Edinburgh Building Services and the Housing Department two years ago to produce a comprehensive repairs policy that covered all aspects of the service. During that time we have looked at the repairs process from start to finish, and have helped to draft more than ten versions of the policy before we were all able to finally agree on a policy and processes that were fair and transparent.

We also helped to test tenant opinion on the proposed 'Tenants First' targets in May of this year, when some of us surveyed tenants visiting each of the local offices.

Finally we checked – and rechecked – the version of the document that tenants will receive. This has been a very thorough piece of work but one which we feel will have been worthwhile if it helps to ensure that all tenants receive a consistently good repairs service.

## Federation Quiz Night

It was one of the highlights of the Federation's calendar last year. You asked us to make it a regular occurrence. We've done what you asked. The Federation Quiz Night is back!!!

The date for your diaries is Friday 24th November and the venue has yet to be announced. As last year, teams are invited to register in advance though they can also be formed on the night. Refreshments will be provided and there will be prizes for the winners.

So, get your thinking heads on, talk to friends, family and colleagues to get your teams organised – we look forward to seeing you on 24th November!



## Should we be concerned about the future of social housing?

Having been through the process of Stock Transfer and decided it wasn't for us, should we just sit back and ignore the increasing problems of a shortage of affordable rented accommodation, anti social behaviour, poor quality housing conditions etc? Is it a case of 'I'm alright - let someone else do something about it?'

Are you concerned about your family's future? I'm alright, but I am concerned about how young people will manage to get the same advantages I got - a reasonable wage, affordable rented housing and a decent environment to bring up a family. But I do feel I have a duty to

contribute something towards the future of my children and others who face a bleak future unless something is done to address the problems.

The basic concern is affordable rented housing or the lack of it. I stay in an average local authority house, paying an average of 25% of my income in rent; but the young chap next door pays 75% of his income to a private landlord – shocking! Has he any chance of improving his situation? Can he look forward to getting a house he can afford? I didn't pay £1200 deposit before I got the tenancy of the council flat I stay in. He did.

Like me, he's on an average income but the proportion he pays in rent disqualifies him from having the same social life as I had: going out with friends to football, raising a family etc. What an existence! One thing he is doing is trying to improve his situation and it's with the efforts of Registered Tenants' Organisations and others that continue to work

together towards resolving the issues of housing, environment etc - developing communities. Over the past few years a lot of work has gone into ensuring we can contribute ideas towards addressing these issues: Tenant Participation, Area Boards, conferences etc. Now it's time to get together and agree on consolidating the true meaning of Tenant Participation.

Like a builder, we've spent time putting a brick here, a bit of timber there and still have a problem because we've been patching up and making improvements a bit at a time. Now it's time to start building proper foundations for full blown citizen participation.

Come along to the Tenants' Conference on October 7th and take part in what will be an interesting and constructive meeting. See you there!

*David Thomson  
Redbraes Residents Association*

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## Stair Cleaning Service Update

The Stair Cleaning Service has now been in operation for 3 years and is delivered by two cleaning companies. This contract is now coming to an end and we have the opportunity to make changes and improvements to the new contract which is to start in April 2007.

### How are we proposing to do this?

We have a Stair Cleaning Steering Group that is made up of residents, CEC staff, members of ETF and Cllr Sheila Gilmore. This group meets regularly to discuss the service. The intention is to use this group to develop the new cleaning

specifications and agree service improvements that will make up the new contract.

### Will the Stair Cleaning Steering Group be the only group to be consulted?

No. This time round we also want to consult with a wider group including Registered Tenants Organisations and a selection of residents. This will give us a better idea about how you – the recipients of the service - would like to see the service developing and what to add or take out of the new

contract. If you would like to take part in the consultation, please contact either the Stair Cleaning Service on 0131 529 7827 or ETF on 0131 556 4406.

### What are the kinds of things residents will be consulted on?

One of the main areas we want to consult on is the cleaning specifications. At present we carry out three types of cleaning. Feedback we have received already suggests that this is sometimes confusing as residents are unsure what 'clean' they are to receive. Our proposal is to have

just one cleaning type. This would ensure residents would know exactly what standard of service to expect and hopefully keep costs to a minimum.

## **What else is being done to improve the service?**

We have introduced a new monitoring system which will help us monitor our contractors more effectively. This includes Council staff inspecting stairs all over the city on a daily basis and carrying out quick satisfaction surveys with residents.

## **How many inspections will be carried out and how will I know how my contractor is performing?**

We will set targets of how many inspections we need to carry out each month and report stair cleaning performance throughout the city back to residents.

## **How can residents assist in monitoring?**

In the near future, cleaning staff will be required to obtain signatures in each stair they clean. This should help to ensure the stair has been cleaned satisfactorily.

## **If I don't want to sign off the stair cleaning what should I do?**

If you don't want to sign off the stair cleaning for whatever reason our contractor will issue you with a pre-

paid post card so you can send your comments to us. We will use your comments to help improve the service but your details will not be given to the contractor.

## **Can I now use my Just Rewards vouchers to pay for my stair cleaning?**

If you are a Just Rewards member you can choose to have your stair cleaning free of charge for the year by using your Just Rewards vouchers.

## **Where can I find out more information, make an enquiry or complain about the service?**

We will soon be setting up a web site which will include the following information:

- Frequently asked questions about the service
- When is your stair scheduled to be cleaned
- Performance information
- Cleaning specifications
- How to contact us
- How to complain
- Links to other council sites

You can also phone us on 529 7827. In the near future you soon be able to complain via text messages and by phoning the councils contact centre. We will advertise in local offices and on our Web page when this is to start.

Alternatively, write to us at The Stair Cleaning Service, Services for Communities, 23-25 Waterloo Place, EDINBURGH, EH1 3BH

# **The New Contract**

## **How long will the new contract last and what areas will it cover?**

The new contract for the service will start in April 2007 and run for 2 years with a possible two year extension subject to satisfactory performance. There will be 5 contracts, 1 for each of Edinburgh's new community planning areas.

## **How will the contractors be selected?**

Contractors are required to go through the Council's tendering process and will be selected on the basis of how much they will charge to carry out the service and also on the quality of the service they provide. Tenants from the Stair Cleaning Steering Group will form part of the contractor selection team that will interview contractors. The interviews are due to take place in late autumn.

We will let all residents who receive the service know which contractors have been successful in their bid. We will be in a position to tell you this early in 2007, with the new service going 'live' in April 2007.

In the meantime we want to hear from residents who receive the service on what you would like to see included in the new contract. *You can either phone us on 529 7827 or e-mail us at [staircleaning@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:staircleaning@edinburgh.gov.uk), or you can contact ETF on 556 4406 or e-mail [info@edinburghtenants.org](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org).*

*John Langton  
City of Edinburgh Council*



*Councillor Sheila Gilmore  
Executive Member for Community  
Safety and Housing*

# Making Your Voice Heard

Some of the Council services that we take for granted are the ones that we complain about the most. Street cleaning and emptying the bins seem to be quite simple things – but if they are not being done properly then it really has a bad effect on an area and people are soon on the phone to the Council.

So we are currently working up plans to change the way in which local services are run and are accountable to local people in Edinburgh. This month I want to talk about what that means and how tenants and local residents can be involved in making the decisions about how local services are run.

But first, it is worth remembering that come next May local elections will be run in a different way across Scotland. Instead of a “first past the post” system, elections will be run on a “proportional representation” system. What this means in practice is that Edinburgh will have 17 wards, each of which will have three or four elected members. In practice this means that you will have numerous Councillors to talk to about issues in your area – and I am sure that it will take a bit of getting used to for everyone!

So alongside the political change that is coming, there is also going to be a change in the way the Council works with local people.

Readers will know that the Housing Department no longer exists. The housing function is now in the Services for Communities Department. This part of the Council now deals with all the services that

make the City run, such as bin collection, roads, street lighting, and now housing.

As a Council, we want local people to have as much control over these services as possible and so we are currently working on how this might work.

The old Housing Department has had local area teams and officers for over ten years now. What we are looking to do is to bring other services such as street cleaning down to this local level as well.

Most people are interested in the services in their own area and so we are developing 12 Neighbourhood Partnerships where residents, Councillors and service providers can sit down together and work out what should be done locally. These Neighbourhood Partnerships will be a bit like the Housing Area Boards, except that they will be influencing a much wider number of things.

And this brings us to the question of the Area Boards. You have told us that you value the Area Boards and that you have seen them as a really good way to decide on spending on local priorities. From the Council’s point of view, they have been an excellent way of sitting down with local people and working out how money should be spent locally.

So if everyone has been happy with the work of the Area Boards, should we think about changing anything?

Tenants’ groups have been in the forefront of looking at issues across neighbourhoods. I’ve never been to a local meeting which doesn’t touch on a wide range of issues. Up till now, local groups may have had difficulty getting in touch with key people in Departments other than Housing.

Neighbourhood Partnerships can become the place where all the issues

that you bring to meetings with you can be sorted out. These Partnerships will be the places that spending on a range of local priorities will be sorted out. It will certainly be better than giving a whole lot of issues to do with streets and lighting and bin collection to a housing officer and hoping that he or she can sort them out.

There is a lot to be said for the Housing Area Boards joining in and becoming part of the Neighbourhood Partnerships in some way. I think that this will be the best way for us to get the sort of local services that we all want. I do believe that if you are taking decisions about spending housing money, you should also be taking decisions about spending on the area in general. The benefits of this are that you will be involved in a much wider range of discussions than you are at the moment – and this means having more say about services in a way that hasn't been done up till now.

This does not mean that the housing money we currently spend will disappear in any way. By law, the housing money that comes in from tenants rents has to be spent on Council housing. This will remain the case. But Neighbourhood Partnerships will be dealing with general Council spending, and in much bigger sums, which Area Boards have not had access to.

There are many good examples of why I think Area Boards should join in with Neighbourhood Partnerships. One that springs to mind comes from Greendykes where the Housing Area Board took the decision to spend a significant amount of money on an environmental clean up which was really needed in the area. This involved dealing with fly tipping as well as the cutting back of overgrown bushes and trees. This really made the area look a lot better. However, what is needed of course is for this to

be maintained on a regular basis to stop it all from going back to what it used to be like. And this is where other Council services – and their budgets – come in. When people take a one-off decision, they also need to be part of taking the decisions to make sure that the thing stays fixed and doesn't break down because it is not budgeted for by another Council service.

So for all these reasons, I think that the Housing Boards should become part of the Neighbourhood Partnerships. The exact form this will take is for people to discuss over the coming months. Certainly, Neighbourhood Partnerships will have a lot to learn from the ways of working developed by the Area Boards. The Council are hoping to have the Partnerships running by April of next year so there is still plenty of time for people to feed in their own thoughts on how they should be run.

Neighbourhood Partnerships will look different in different parts of the City - because all areas are not the same. They will have different people on them and have different priorities according to what is needed in their own area. But there will still be a place for tenant involvement in the making and monitoring of housing policies such as repairs, rents, lettings and so on.

I think that we have an opportunity here to make sure that the Council services really work well together locally and actually do what people know needs to be done. I hope you will join in because you are the ones who really know what your area needs.

*Councillor Sheila Gilmore  
Executive Member for Community  
Safety and Housing*

## **Save money – stay warm**

Finding it difficult to pay your fuel bills? Worried about keeping your home warm this winter? The Warmburgh Advice Team can help.

We provide FREE, independent energy efficiency advice to households in Edinburgh. We can:

- Advise you on how to keep your home warm and save money by controlling your heating effectively.
- Help access grants for central heating or insulation.
- Help in choosing a supplier.
- Advise those who are having difficulties with their fuel supplier.

Call us FREE on **0800 512 012** and ask to speak to a Warmburgh Advice Team adviser. Alternatively, drop in at our weekly surgery at the Advice Shop on Friday mornings between 9.30am and 12.30pm at 85 - 87 South Bridge.

The Warmburgh Advice Team is supported by the City of Edinburgh Council and based at Changeworks. Changeworks exists to improve quality of life and protect the environment.





*Betty Stevenson  
Convenor, Edinburgh Tenants  
Federation*

## From the Convenor

We're living in changing times. The Housing Department is now part of Services for Communities and everyone at the Council is still trying to work out what this means. Waterloo Place will be closing when the new Council HQ is finished, though plans for where everyone who currently works in Waterloo Place will work in future have not yet been finalised.

As if those changes weren't enough, we're about to see a whole heap of boundary changes and changes to the way in which we elect our councillors. At present Edinburgh elects 58 councillors in single-member wards. Next May we'll each be electing 3 or 4 councillors in just 17 multi-member wards. Councillors

will cover a bigger patch than now but we will have a greater choice in which of our councillors to contact if we have problems.

Over the past few months the Council has conducted a review of the Housing Area Boards. It's clear that the people involved with the Boards think they work well and should be continued. The difficulty is in trying to see how they could link into all the other new structures that are being set up because of Services for Communities, Neighbourhood Management and Local Community Planning Partnerships. The city is being divided into five Community Planning Areas, which will require more reorganisation of Housing staff as the six current area teams are to be reduced to five. We'll also see twelve Neighbourhood Partnerships with decisions being taken locally by members of the Partnership boards. What is not yet clear is how tenants, or indeed any other ordinary members of the community, will be able to play any part in local decision-making.

The more time we spend trying to find answers to questions, the more new questions we find that need answers. ETF is helping to organise a conference for Housing Area Board members, Registered Tenants Organisations and other interested individuals, that will explore the issues and try to establish our position. This conference takes place on Saturday 7th October at the Surgeons' Hall. I hope to see many of you there to help us make sense of all that is happening and to ensure that the tenant participation agenda is not overlooked.

It's been a busy few months for ETF.

I've had a couple of meetings with Edinburgh Building Services who carry out our repairs. I have been very critical of EBS in the past and with good cause because tenants were not getting the service they deserved. Things are improving though and one of my meetings was to discuss the use of additional information technology to schedule repairs jobs more efficiently. As you know, colleagues in the Federation have been working with EBS for two years now to produce one single all-inclusive repairs policy that clearly sets out what everyone can expect from the repairs service. This booklet will be sent to all tenants very soon. It's taken a lot of work from all involved but I think the repairs policy they've put together is a good one, and I'd like to congratulate everyone who's been involved.

August saw the opening of a new playground in East Craigs following years of campaigning and lobbying by local groups and particularly North Bughtlin Tenants Association. Their story is featured in this issue of Tenants Voice and is a real example of what tenants' groups can achieve if they keep working away at something and don't allow themselves to be put off by disappointments and obstacles. There's a lesson for us all in there.

*Betty Stevenson  
Convenor, Edinburgh Tenants  
Federation*

# City of Edinburgh Council's Housing Strategy and Investment Proposals

On 29 June 2006 the City of Edinburgh Council noted and approved in principle three reports under the title of Housing Strategy and Investment. These deal with the implications of tenants having voted against the proposals for stock transfer in December 2005. They provide the first insight into the Council's thinking on how to achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard required by the Scottish Executive by 2015. As part of this they address the urgent needs in the five regeneration areas of Gracemount, North Sighthill, Pennywell, Royston/Wardieburn and the Fort within the limited options now available.

For the first five months of this year the Council has been reviewing its options whilst also engaged in discussions with Communities Scotland to salvage key aspects of its plans under stock transfer. The plans were to deliver much needed affordable housing, to demolish and replace over 2,000 homes in the regeneration areas, to upgrade the remaining 20,000 homes to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard speedily, and all without driving rent increases above inflation. These reports give a clear indication of the revised plans developed under the stringent financial restraints imposed on Councils. Consultation with tenants and others will now take place prior to finalising the plans in the autumn.

With limited options, even more limited than some would have predicted, and no preparedness for the outcome of the stock transfer ballot, this is a very hard task. However, in the continuing absence of any relaxing of the Scottish Executive's total commitment to stock transfer, the real pain for the foreseeable future will be felt by the current and future tenants of Edinburgh.

First amongst those to feel the pain are the tenants in the regeneration areas who have worked long and hard and waited far too long in poor conditions to now have their plans to refurbish or replace their homes dashed. Second are the ever increasing numbers of potential new tenants as the ability to narrow the gap between demand and supply of affordable rented housing is severely compromised. Finally are the remaining current tenants who will see improvements to achieve modern housing standards taking longer and by means of year on year rent increases way above inflation.

Of course it should not be this way. But in the absence of a change in current Scottish housing policy the Council's options are severely limited and Edinburgh's tenants will pay a heavy price through delayed improvements and less new build, unrealised plans to develop new communities and a return once again to the top of the league for high rents in Scotland. The immediate chances of a change in policy now rest on two separate but perhaps linked developments. These are: a no vote on the part of tenants in stock transfer ballots in Stirling and Renfrewshire, due in the autumn and/or the outcome of the Scottish elections in May 2007. Either has the potential to force a radical rethink on housing policy and the role of Councils in the provision of housing.

Even so, that would still leave the larger problem of the restrictions on public sector borrowing at the UK level with Treasury rules forcing major investment through the not for profit and private sectors and the exclusion of Councils from this role.

*Raymond Pringle,  
Edinburgh Tenants Federation*

# Dates for Your Diaries

4 October

Repairs Group meeting on the Capital Programme 2006/07, 6pm – 9pm, European Room, City Chambers. For more information or to book transport contact Edinburgh Tenants Federation on 0131 556 4406 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org)

7 October

Tenant Conference on Tenant Participation, Housing Area Boards and Community Planning, 9.15am – 5.30pm, Surgeon's Hall, Nicolson Street. For more information or to book a place contact Kevin Hewie on 0131 529 7746 or email [kevin.hewie@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.hewie@edinburgh.gov.uk)

17 October

Federation Meeting, 7pm – 9pm, City Chambers. For more information or to book transport contact Edinburgh Tenants Federation on 0131 556 4406 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org)

23 October

High Flats Meeting, 7pm – 9pm, Birnies Court. For more information or to book transport contact Edinburgh Tenants Federation on 0131 556 4406 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org)

26 October

Block Walkabout Training Day, 9.30am – 4.30pm West Edinburgh. For more information or to book a place and/or transport contact Kevin Hewie on 0131 529 7746 or email [kevin.hewie@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.hewie@edinburgh.gov.uk)

24 November

Federation Quiz Night, 7pm – late, venue tbc. For more information or to enter a team contact Edinburgh Tenants Federation on 0131 556 4406 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org)

## Final Call for Membership Renewals

We are currently removing individuals and organisations that have not renewed their membership of the Federation from our database.

receive Tenants Voice and other information as either a Full or Associate Member please contact the Federation office on 0131 556 4406 as soon as possible to renew your membership and remain on our mailing list.

If you would like to continue to

## Something to think about:

“Some people make things happen, some watch things happen, while others wonder what has happened.”

**Proverb**

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

**George Bernard Shaw**



## Copy Deadline

Tenants Voice is usually published four times a year and is distributed to tenants, residents, decision-makers and other interested individuals throughout Edinburgh. We always welcome contributions from our readers, though we stress that material included in Tenants Voice does not always represent the opinions of Edinburgh Tenants Federation. Articles and photos etc for inclusion in the next issue of Tenants Voice should be sent to the Federation office by 17th November 2006.



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