



# EDINBURGH TENANTS FEDERATION

Edinburgh's Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations

## Progress Report

July-September 2011

### Introduction

This is the first quarterly progress report on the work plan agreed by our members at the Federation's AGM in July 2011.

The Executive Committee has outlined the following priority areas of work for the coming year:

- a) to continue to develop on-going work in influencing services;
- b) to support our members in strengthening tenant participation locally and at Neighbourhood Partnership level;
- c) to improve our communications with tenants and more widely;
- d) to develop ETF as an organisation.

This report outlines the actions that the Executive Committee has taken between July and September 2011 to tackle these priorities.

### Report

a) to continue to develop on-going work in influencing services

#### **Asset Management**

Members of the Asset Management Group met with Tim Bailey, Programme Manager and Mike Wagner, Engineering Manager to discuss the Council Asset Management Action Plan and Strategy. One of the key aspects of the action plan and strategy will be to implement recommendations as a result of the Scottish Housing Regulator Inspection report. This includes the Council achieving value for money for its services and improving its Asset Management plans.

The first meeting of the Asset Management Working Group was held in September. The aim of the meeting was to agree a number of aspects, including the role and remit of the group. There was an agreement that a short life working group would be set up to make recommendations about the Repairs Policy.

#### **High Flats**

The Federation's High Flats Group continues to meet regularly, and representatives are meeting with Councillors and Council officers through the Multi-Storey Working Group. At the last meeting of the Federation's High Flats

Group, the guest speaker was Keith Willcock, Policy Manager of the Scottish Government who gave a talk on fuel poverty.

At the meeting of the Multi-Storey Working Group, there was a discussion on some of the steps that the Council is taking with regards to ensuring that refuse chutes are not blocked. A draft poster was circulated at the meeting and, once agreed, this will be displayed in multi-storey flats across Edinburgh.

The group discussed a report outlining the Council's approach to dealing with acts of vandalism in multi-storey blocks. This includes arranging and participating in diversionary activities such as children's parties, fun days and engaging with local children.

### **Stair Cleaning**

The group met once during this period and will now come under the remit of the Housing Management Working Group.

ETF is concerned that some of the comments and postcards that are received by the Council are not classed as complaints. This will need to be looked at in more detail. The same issues regarding complaints continue to be raised at each meeting.

### **Investment and Regeneration**

The group met once during this period and regular updates continue to be provided on how the regeneration is progressing. The group were informed that Fort House is due for demolition in November; there are very few tenants left in the building and all private properties have been bought back. Housing will be built on this site and the Council is applying for funding to help towards the costs. The Council is in discussions with Port of Leith Housing Association about this development.

Rehousing has been progressing well in the low-rise properties in North Sighthill although a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for four properties was discussed at the Council's Planning Committee in August. It was requested that the procedure for a CPO be handed out as some owners were unsure of the process. The Council applied for a share of the £50million Innovation & Investment Fund (IIF) to build at Greendykes and Fort House.

### **Liaison Group**

The group met once during this period and the main discussion point was the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy. A number of draft outcomes for the Strategy were discussed and it was agreed that these need to be refined and narrowed down. The Project Plan for the Tenant Participation Strategy was discussed. An event was held in September to further develop the outcomes of the Strategy.

The meeting also focussed on the forthcoming joint CEC/ETF Tenants Conference. It was agreed that a small planning group consisting of ETF and Council staff would be responsible for co-ordinating arrangements for the Conference.

## **Tenant Participation Working Group**

The group met once during this period. The members were updated on the development of the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy. The consultation period for the Strategy will run from 31<sup>st</sup> October until 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

There was a discussion on the Council's joint working groups. It was agreed that the Liaison Group will co-ordinate all of the working groups and a report will be given to the Neighbourhood Partnership Convenors. There were discussions about implementing sub groups for the Housing Management Working Group and the Asset Management Working Group and this will continue to be reviewed at future meetings.

## **Housing Management Working Group**

The group met once during this period. It was noted that representatives from ETF had yet to visit the Repairs Contact Centre and this would need to be arranged in due course. Tenants visited the Contact Centre a number of years ago and the forthcoming visit will enable them to see how things have progressed since the last visit. Turnover of staff from the Repairs Contact Centre continues to be high as members of staff are only offered temporary contracts.

Concern was raised over the fact that there has only been one Estates Inspection Training Day and Block Walkabout Training Day so far this year. These events have proven to be very popular with tenants in the past and it is important to ensure that these continue and possible areas to visit are identified.

There has been a delay in the Staircleaning report going to the Finance and Resources committee. This will be addressed in forthcoming meetings.

There was a discussion on the Customer Satisfaction Surveys. The Council needs to adopt a consistent way of monitoring customer satisfaction and there should be a consistent set of questions.

## **Mental Health Awareness Group**

One meeting of the group has taken place. The group recapped on work which had been completed over the past year. ETF has asked for more staff training since some new members of staff have not yet received the Safe Talk training.

Two NHS groups have merged and ETF will have a seat at the table of this group which will include GPs. This is real progress since this is something that ETF has continually campaigned for.

ETF has asked for a report from the East area to find out about the impact of housing officers being more visible and out and about in their patches, speaking to tenants instead of only communicating by letter. ETF had been concerned about the lack of face to face contact that took place between housing staff and tenants.

## **Antisocial Behaviour**

The group met once during this period. The Antisocial Behaviour Noise Team has had cuts to their service and will only be in operation from Thursday through to Sunday, 6 a.m. to 4 a.m. and Monday through to Wednesday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Queries outwith these times will be dealt with by the Police. There is a slight

concern that the Council has a response time of one hour, whereas it is four hours for the Police.

There was a discussion on making changes to the questions that are asked as part of the Customer Satisfaction Surveys. This will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting in December.

### **Working with Registered Social Landlords and their tenants**

The Housing Association Tenants Sub Committee has been suspended whilst an internal investigation takes place.

ETF made a presentation to the Edinburgh Affordable Housing Partnership (which includes chief officers of Housing Associations in Edinburgh) in May 2011 requesting funding for an ETF worker to develop our work with Housing Association tenants. Unfortunately, we recently heard that this request was turned down.

Our Development Coordinator met with Dunedin Canmore Housing Association regarding ETF's ongoing relationship with Dunedin Canmore tenants. Dunedin Canmore Housing Association would like ETF's support to assist their Registered Tenant Organisation Forum to look at the Housing Association's Tenant Participation Strategy.

Dunedin Canmore Housing Association would be willing to support ETF in developing future training/information sessions for tenants. This will be discussed in more detail at future meetings.

### **Tenant Led Inspections**

The final report for Dunedin Canmore Housing Association has been agreed and staff from Dunedin Canmore have submitted an action plan, which has been agreed by all parties.

A meeting was held between the Inspectors and Council staff to discuss a draft of the Council report. As a result of the meeting a number of changes to the report were agreed by all parties and the Council received a final copy of the report. The Council will shortly implement an action plan as a result of the recommendations made.

### **BEEM (Borders, Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian) Regional Network**

BEEM is part of a Scotland wide network of elected RTO representatives who speak to the Scottish Government on all housing issues. Edinburgh now has three representatives on the BEEM committee, Sheila Rutherford McCallum, Tina Beattie and Russell Easton and they are all members of the Federation's Executive Committee.

### **National consultations**

The Federation responded to three national consultations in this period, the Scottish Government's *RSL Adaptations Budget for 2012-2013*, the *National Strategy for Housing for Older People* and the *Scottish Social Housing Charter*.

- b) To support our members in strengthening tenant participation locally and at Neighbourhood Partnership level

### **Outreach**

Our Outreach Worker has continued to support tenants' and residents' associations throughout the city. We are pleased to announce that the group at Cables Wynd House are back up and running with an immediate focus on their kitchens and bathrooms programme. The group have already set up a website and will be updating this as things progress.

A meeting took place with Debbie Herbertson, Housing and Regeneration Manager, City of Edinburgh Council to discuss tenants' participation in the South West of the city. Local surgeries were arranged for tenants to visit to find out more about rents, housing options and homelessness. All Council RTO's across the city have been allocated a contact officer. The thought behind this is so groups have a regular line of communication. Groups can decide if they would like this officer at every meeting or if they would just like them to come along to one meeting a year.

### **Regeneration Areas**

The biggest news this quarter was of course the triple blowdown of the high rise flats in North Sighthill. Glenalmond, Weir and Hermiston Courts all came crashing to the ground at the end of September. The North Sighthill Development Group will continue to meet to discuss the plans for the area.

The Gracemount site has progressed well with schedules and costs coming in on time and on budget. The Council have stepped up security on site as there have been a few problems with youths climbing on scaffolding. The Gracemount Development Group is still given updates on the progress but there was a brief discussion about whether updates should now just be given at the Gracemount Action Residents' Association meetings. It is expected that once the handover of the site is completed, the development group will no longer meet. The sale of houses on the private housing part of the site is also taking shape and nine plots have been sold already.

Members of the *Investment and Regeneration* Group were given the opportunity to visit two of Dunedin Canmore Housing Association's new sheltered housing developments in Gilmerton and Royston. A residents' association has already been set up at the Quarries development in Gilmerton and it is hoped one will be set up in Elizabeth McGinnis Court in Royston once all the flats have been let.

- c) To improve our communications with tenants and more widely

*Federation Matters* continues to be produced and distributed on a monthly basis. *Tenants Voice* was also produced and distributed and our Information and Publicity Group has started to plan the articles for our next edition of *Tenants Voice*.

We continue to use our 'fan page' on Facebook to update members and supporters on our activities, to inform them of upcoming events, and to share news and links to articles that may be of interest.

## d) to develop ETF as an organisation

We will continue to explore the possibilities of increasing opportunities for individuals to get involved with ETF, and we will look at ways of sharing the experience of members to assist and encourage newer members to become more involved.

The membership survey report was completed, and this year includes feedback from information that was collected during the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary exhibition and DVD Project work. This gives the opportunity for telling people's stories in our feedback to the Council, as well as the statistics. We need to overhaul the membership survey for next year to ensure it links with the new Service Level Agreement (SLA). We will also be working to ensure our workplan for future years is outcome-focussed and the way we report has a mix of 'stories' and numbers.

## Evaluation and Monitoring

This is the first quarterly report of our activities since the Federation's Annual General Meeting in June 2011. It will be discussed by our Executive Committee and then circulated to our members and funders, the CEC/ETF Liaison Group and the Tenant Participation Working Group.

***October 2011***