



EDINBURGH TENANTS FEDERATION

Edinburgh's Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations

Progress Report

October-December 2011

Introduction

This is the second 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 October and December to tackle these priorities.

Report

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

Asset Management

The ETF Repairs group held a meeting with Mark Francis, Contact Centre Manager as the guest speaker. Mark gave an update on some of the work that the Contact Centre is currently involved in and the members in attendance spoke about the repairs issues in their respective areas.

A group of tenants visited the Contact Centre. The aim of the visit was for the tenants to gain a better understanding of the process that takes place once a repair is reported. The tenants received an update on the work that the Council would be carrying out throughout the winter months.

The Asset Management Working Group met during this period. The Council will shortly be implementing a tree survey pilot in the east area, as it has a legal obligation to ensure that all trees are healthy and not a danger to the public. The east office will work in partnership with Greenspace on this pilot. The group spoke about the Neighbourhood Environment Programme and the fact that in some cases tenants' money is being spent on aspects which are not in the Housing Revenue Account. This will be discussed in more detail at future meetings.

The first meeting of the Right to Repair Working Group took place in December. Some of the papers were circulated one day before the meeting and others were given to us at the meeting. This meant we were not given sufficient time to prepare for the meeting. The Council's refreshed Repairs Policy is being put into plain English and most of the repetition from the previous policy has been taken out. Furthermore the Council is looking at introducing a Rechargeable Repairs Policy, which had originally been drafted in 2004, but was not taken forward. Between August and October 2011, the Council carried out a Right to Repair pilot and 51 jobs were raised incorrectly. More staff training needs to be carried out to ensure that the results improve in the future. The Council will continue with the Right to Repair pilot as the three month period was not enough time to carry out a comprehensive evaluation.

High Flats

At the meeting of the Multi Storey Working Group, there was a discussion on High Rise Fuel Poverty with the Council already having written a draft report on this matter. The Government will be producing a green deal paper and the Council will look at incorporating certain aspects of this into their final report. It is hoped that this piece of work will be completed towards the end of 2012. The group will receive updates on this matter at future meetings.

Notices have yet to be inserted in many blocks across the city regarding what items should be placed in the chutes. It was agreed that there is still a need to educate some tenants on this matter.

Stair Cleaning

The group was supposed to meet during this period; however the meeting was rescheduled until January. The Council has circulated a draft copy of the Key Performance Indicators which contractors will have to meet, ETF has a number of queries and concerns relating to this and they will be discussed in more detail at the meeting in January.

Tenants Conference

Edinburgh Tenants Federation in conjunction with the Council held a Tenant's Conference in October. The key issues discussed at the Conference were new and better homes, a new Tenant Participation Strategy, the Scottish Social Housing Charter and rents. This was a great opportunity for tenants to network and feedback from the conference has been very positive.

Investment and Regeneration

Edinburgh Tenants Federation met twice with the Council's Investment and Regeneration group. The first meeting was relatively short and we were provided with an update on how works are progressing in each of the areas. Work will soon begin on upgrading the kitchens and bathrooms in Hamilton Wynd.

At the November meeting there were three different presentations; street naming, Private Sector Leasing and the Strategic Housing Investment Plan. There was also a discussion around the priority to return; the Council staff member informed us that they would not be implementing the priority to return. This left everyone quite bemused and our Outreach Worker did some digging

around to find the full Council Committee papers that had this agreement. We will be monitoring who the new tenants are to ensure that previous tenants to the areas will be getting a chance to live in one of these new Council houses.

Liaison Group

The group met once during this period. There was a discussion on the review of the Council's draft Tenant Participation Strategy which was out for consultation and the progress which has been made so far. The closing date for responses was Friday 9th December.

There was an informal discussion on the Tenants Conference which took place in October at the Norton Park Conference Centre. There was general agreement that it was a productive day and the workshops were very interesting.

There was a discussion on the new Private Tenants Group which has been set up. ETF will liaise with the Council in terms of registering the Private Tenants Group.

Tenant Participation Working Group

The group met once during this period. There was a discussion on how tenants' groups are involved in Neighbourhood Partnerships and the need to promote tenant involvement in Neighbourhood Partnerships across the city as there is inconsistency across areas.

There were discussions on the review of the Tenant Participation Strategy. It was noted that the response rate had been relatively poor and there was a need to encourage more tenants, staff and Councillors to complete the survey before the closing date.

Housing Management Working Group

One meeting of the group has taken place during this period. Shirley McLaren gave an update on the monitoring of the Council's Antisocial Behaviour Strategy. The Council has implemented two sub groups to tackle Antisocial Behaviour. The first group will look at environmental issues relating to Antisocial Behaviour and the second group will look at young people and alcohol. There were discussions and it was agreed that there would be one more meeting of the Federation sub group before it is incorporated into the Housing Management Working Group.

The Council will be retendering the Staircleaning contract and this time it will be for a single contractor to complete the work citywide rather than two. ETF had a number of questions relating to the Key Performance Indicators and Jennifer Hunter will respond to these. The Council hope to have the new contractor in place by June 2012; however ETF had raised concerns about the tight timescales to complete the work. This includes shortlisting and interviewing the contractors.

The meeting was informed that the Council will struggle to meet the 2012 Homelessness target. The meeting discussed the amount of starter and mover properties that are advertised by the Council and the rationale behind allocating these properties. The amount of homeless presentations far outstrips the amount of properties that the Council lets each month.

Michael Thain gave an update on the Council's HRA Business Plan for 2011/2012. The Council will have further discussions with ETF on this matter in the coming weeks.

Mental Health Awareness Group

No meetings have taken place during this period; however Betty and Maureen attended a conference at the John McIntyre Centre, which looked at a new strategy approach to mental health in Scotland. Betty and Maureen continue to work tirelessly to ensure that front line Council staff have received the appropriate training and will continue to work alongside the Council to improve the lives of tenants who suffer from mental health difficulties.

Antisocial Behaviour

The group was supposed to meet in December; however this meeting was postponed due to the bad weather. At the next meeting in January, ETF will be making some suggestions for questions to be included in next year's Antisocial Behaviour questionnaire. This will be the final meeting of the sub group before it is incorporated as part of the Housing Management Working Group.

Working with Registered Social Landlords and their tenants

The Housing Association Tenants Sub Committee has continued to be suspended whilst an internal investigation takes place.

ETF received an inquiry from Dunedin Canmore Housing Association asking to do some work relating to their Allocations and Tenant Participation Strategies. However due to the tight timescales and the lack of staff resources, ETF was unable to complete these pieces of work.

Tenant Led Inspections

The Council received a copy of the final Tenant Led Inspection report. ETF had hoped to receive a copy of the Council's draft action plan by 8th December, however due to staffing issues in the Council; this will be issued towards the end of January.

A progress meeting was held between the Tenant Led Inspectors and staff from Dunedin Canmore Housing Association. The landlord has produced a draft booklet for tenants highlighting some of the issues from the report and the inspectors have met to discuss the contents of the booklet and any improvements that can be made. A meeting will take place in the New Year to discuss the booklet in more detail.

The Convenor of the Tenant Led Inspection group and the Development Worker spoke at the CIH Self-Assessment Conferences in Glasgow and Edinburgh highlighting the work that the Tenant Led Inspectors have carried out over the past few years. As a result of the Conference in Edinburgh, a group of tenants and staff from Aberdeen visited ETF as part of a study visit to find out more about the Tenant Led Inspections and the work that ETF is carrying out in Edinburgh.

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. There have been two meetings held during this period, with discussions taking place on the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the Scottish Housing Regulator consultation and

BEEM provided responses to the Scottish Government on both these consultations.

National consultations

The Federation responded to the Scottish Housing Regulator consultation in this period.

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

Outreach

Our Outreach Worker has continued to meet with a number of RTO's throughout the city. Cables Wynd House Residents Association has met a number of times to highlight issues they have been having with the refurbishment programme and the new community heating system that has been installed. They will continue to meet regularly with the Council for updates on how this is progressing. Work has also been done with a number of groups to try and attract new members and public meetings will be held for these groups in the New Year where priorities for the groups will also be set.

We were informed that a new group has been set up to represent Private Tenants in the city; the aims of the group are to campaign for decent and affordable housing; organise a strong and vibrant private tenants' movement in Edinburgh; campaign for an effective and better enforced legislation of the private rented sector; promote private tenants issues amongst residents; build links between private tenants, trade unions and community groups and encourage the development of social housing.

Regeneration Areas

The first tenants of the new 21st Century Council homes will move in in January; these houses will be available in stages throughout 2012. ETF representatives to the Investment and Regeneration group have been asking to view these houses and we hope this will take place in the New Year.

There has not been a meeting of the North Sighthill Development Group for a while although the North Sighthill Residents Association has continued to meet to discuss their vision for the site.

The first meeting of the Fort House Development Group was held on 20th December 2011. In 2012, the Council will be building on this site in partnership with Port of Leith Housing Association. The Council will be building 37 houses for rent and Port of Leith are building 65 houses for mid market rent. Demolition will begin in March 2012.

Neighbourhood Partnership Convenors meeting

Betty Stevenson, ETF's Convenor spoke at the Neighbourhood Partnership Convenors meeting in November. There was a discussion about the review of the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy and the Councillors in attendance were encouraged to complete the Tenant Participation survey. There was a discussion about the role of the Registered Tenant Organisation contact officer and how they, along with the Federation can better promote the work of the

Neighbourhood Partnerships. The Councillors were informed that a Private Tenants' Group has been set up and they will receive updates on this at future meetings.

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. The last meeting of the Federation's Information and Publicity Group had to be postponed due to the bad weather; however the 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.

Evaluation and Monitoring

This is the second 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.

December 2011