



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

Minutes of ETF Repairs meeting

Held on Wednesday 11th June 2014 at 7 pm

In Norton Park, 57 Albion Road

- Present: Maureen Jarvis, Oxfangs Central Residents Association
Lorraine Pritchard, Top Blocks Residents Association
Madge Bold, Top Blocks Residents Association
Donald MacDonald, East Pilton Crewe Residents Group
Maureen Miller, Restalrig and Lochend House Residents Association
Keith Dyson, West Cromwell, Persevere and Citadel Court Residents Association
John MacLean Abercrombie, West Cromwell, Persevere and Citadel Court Residents Association
Walter Manclark, Gordon Street and Manderson Street Residents Association
Susan Dougal, Gordon Street and Manderson Street Residents Association
Willie Maver, Gordon Street and Manderson Street Residents Association
Harry Woodward, Maidencraig Court Residents Association
- In Attendance: Alex Burns, Asset Manager, City of Edinburgh Council
Jennifer Hunter, Acting Strategy and Investment Manager
Mark Henry, Edinburgh Tenants Federation, (minute taker)

1. Introductions and welcome

Maureen welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the guest speakers, Alex Burns, Asset Manager, City of Edinburgh Council and Jennifer Hunter, Acting Strategy and Investment Manager, City of Edinburgh Council.

2. Apologies

Paul Harrison
Maud Wylie
Lynne Tait

3. Guest Speakers: Alex Burns, Asset Manager, City of Edinburgh Council and Jennifer Hunter, Acting Strategy and Investment Manager, City of Edinburgh Council

Alex informed the meeting that the Council's Repairs Policy was revised in Autumn 2012 and was agreed in consultation with ETF. A copy was posted out to every tenant and copies of the Repairs Policy are provided to all new tenants. The categories for Repairs is as follows:

**Edinburgh Tenants Federation Norton Park 57 Albion Road Edinburgh EH7 5QY**

 **0131 475 2509**  **info@edinburghtenants.org.uk**  **www.edinburghtenants.org.uk**

- Emergency (excluding gas) – 4 hours
- Urgent repairs – 1 day
- Routine first appointments – 5 days
- Routine follow on appointment – 10 days

Estates works – 10 days (no specific appointment as access is not required).

Alex spoke about the process of getting a repair done. The tenant will phone through to Repairs Direct where they will be talked through set questions to confirm the repair required. Alex stated that the Council needs to set out realistic timescales for the work to be carried out. The tenant is then informed of the appointment time and date and text reminders are sent out 24 hours in advance of the appointment. A further text message is sent out when operatives are on route.

Alex informed the meeting that both landlords and tenants have responsibilities for repairs and improvements as a result of the Housing Scotland Act 2001. Landlords have a duty to keep homes wind and water tight and in safe condition. The Right to Repair can be used for certain qualifying repairs and the Rechargeable Repairs Policy has been in place since April 2013. Tenants are informed if these apply when they call to arrange a repair.

Alex informed the meeting that mixed tenure repairs are managed through the Tenement Management Scheme (TMS). Wind and water tight/emergency repairs are carried out and owners are billed for their share of costs, however non emergency common repairs are managed under the TMS legislation. Alex stated that owners may be required to take the lead with this work. Tenants receive the same core service for common repairs and local context may be taken into account to respond to the tenant or wider community needs.

Alex invited questions from the floor.

Susan queried if a repair is owner led when there is a hole in the roof and Alex stated that owners will take it forward if they are in the majority in blocks. The Council will take the lead if tenants are in the majority in the block. Alex stated that it is often problematic for owners to pay their share.

Keith enquired if owners receive the Council's Repairs Policy booklet and Alex stated that it is only given to tenants as the Council does not have the resources to give the booklet to every citizen in Edinburgh. Keith queried how owners can report common repairs and Alex said it can be done through the orb and website. Maureen stated that Concierges will have copies of the Repairs Policy and the orb is an internal policy.

Harry queried if it's possible to enforce repairs on owners in blocks where tenants are in the majority and Alex explained that the Council would be back in the same boat as Statutory Repairs

Madge queried if there are service charges for owners living in multi-storey blocks and Jennifer explained there is a difference between tenants and owners and the title deeds will explain what owners are responsible for. Madge stated that owners should have Service Charges.

Maureen enquired if the Council is going to bring in another Statutory Repairs Scheme and Jennifer stated that this is the Shared Repairs Service. If owners buy a property then it is their responsibility to take ownership of it. Susan queried how the Council can encourage owners to take ownership and Jennifer stated that the TMS offers protection.

Willie stated that he has an issue with the hole in the roof of the Gordon Street

property, as there are three tenants living in the block. Alex stated that it may only be a temporary problem and the Council will try to make the building wind and water tight, but owners will need to take the lead. Jennifer asked for details of the property and Susan agreed to email the information to Mark.

Keith queried who is paying the share when a Contractor completes a piece of work and Alex stated that this is part of the TMS. Alex informed the meeting that it may take anything from three to four weeks to clarify the whole situation as there could be gaps between the bill being presented and the contractor sending in the invoice.

Harry informed the meeting that an owner living in Maidencraig Court had water coming into her property which was sorted by the Block Manager. He queried how the Council will ensure if contractors are paid and Alex stated that the Council has a good track record in this field.

Madge queried if a Rechargeable Repair is charged to a tenants rent and Alex stated that this is not the case. The information is recorded against the tenant and if they leave the property and try to go back on the waiting list, then this will count against them. Alex stated that Rechargeable Repairs were never viewed as an additional income generator. Maureen noted that the Council identified 650 Rechargeable Repairs last year.

Keith noted that he has difficulty understanding Repairs Direct and as an owner, he is concerned about common repairs. Alex stated that the information is recorded on the one system and is channelled through Repairs Direct.

John informed the meeting that he received a letter stating that the lift in Citadel Court would be functioning today, but this has not happened. Alex advised John to speak to the Concierge and John agreed to do this.

Maureen Miller informed the meeting that there is a noise coming from one of the boilers in Restalrig House and this has been ongoing for a number of months. The block manager is aware of the situation too. Alex stated that there may be something wrong with the airlock as a result of pipe work in the bathrooms. Alex agreed to speak to the Block Manager Mark McHale and he will liaise with a Mechanical Engineer from EBS to arrange a visit to check the valve in the bathrooms affected.

Maureen informed the meeting that the ETF Repairs Group wrote to Michael Thain twice for clarification on Neighbourhood Discretion. At the Asset Management Working Group meeting in November 2013, tenants were informed that the Neighbourhood Manager makes the decision on how soon a repair will be carried out. Maureen believes that this does not represent good value for money for tenants as they don't have any influence on the matter. Alex stated that there is one Council Repairs Policy, there is no discretion and the Neighbourhood Managers are unable to influence Emergency Repairs as it goes through Repairs Direct. Jennifer informed the meeting that the Council doesn't apply a different Standard of Let for the different neighbourhoods. If a tenant comes into a property, the Council will offer them decoration vouchers. Jennifer also stated that the local Neighbourhoods manage their tenancies and a standard approach across all neighbourhoods should be taken. Harry stated that there should be a consistent policy and Maureen noted that Japanese Gardens are not beneficial for tenants. If tenants pay the same rent, they should expect the same service. Jennifer informed the meeting that the Council has to deliver a service and respond to individual tenants. As a result needs can be different through the various neighbourhoods.

Maureen spoke about wider community needs. New regulations have come out and she wondered if the Council has a timeline on the Housing committee papers. Tenants will be unable to pay the same levels of rent, NEPs, common repairs and the

SHQS. Jennifer stated that the new bi monthly meetings will discuss the different themes and papers.

Susan stated that one half of the drying areas in Gordon Street and Manderson Street has been done, but the other half hasn't. Thick glass stats have been broken and some partial netting has been put down to prevent birds coming in. However there is a problem with mixed tenure and some owners have not been able to get a quote. Alex stated that trying to get agreements on mixed tenure is very challenging, however if there is a risk of glass falling then this is a health and safety matter. Jennifer agreed to look back on what was agreed. Susan will send an email to Mark who will pass it onto Jennifer as Alex is on annual leave.

As there were no further questions for Alex and Jennifer, Maureen thanked them for their attendance. At this point Alex and Jennifer left the meeting.

4. Minute of previous meeting, Thursday 6th March 2014

Lorraine Pritchard's apologies were not noted. With this change, the minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record and were proposed by Madge Bold and seconded by Maureen Jarvis.

5. Matters Arising not on the agenda

Page 2. Maureen informed the meeting that ETF had still not heard anything back from Karen Allan regarding the outstanding queries from the Repairs meeting held in December. The group agreed that ETF would raise this again.

Page 2. Maureen informed the meeting that the Council is still in negotiations with the Unions regarding the working hours of employees. Carol Reid had put an article in the February edition of *Tenants Voice* stating that the Council would be able to offer evening appointments to tenants starting from 1st April 2014. However due to the reduction in staff hours, this will not be able to happen. Mark will contact Carol Reid and ask her to put an article in the next edition of *Tenants Voice* to explain the situation.

Page 3. Maureen informed the meeting that the Asset Management Working Group no longer meets and has been replaced with a bi-monthly meeting with senior managers. However representatives of ETF will meet with Alex Burns every two months to discuss the Repairs performance. Harry noted that many tenants are unsure of what the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is and how it impacts on tenants. There was an informal discussion and it was agreed that Mark will liaise with Maureen re inserting an article into the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.

Page 3. Keith enquired if the Council will be setting rent for one year or five years and Maureen stated that no decision had been made. Keith expressed concern that the Council seems to be withdrawing from supplying information to ETF and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) and Maureen stated that all Councils have to consult with tenants as per their Tenant Participation Strategy. The Council recently submitted their Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), but tenants had very little input to this.

Page 4. Lorraine informed the meeting that her door entry system had been fixed.

6. Area Reports

West Cromwell, Persevere and Citadel Court– Keith stated that he has mentioned the problems relating to the lift in Citadel Court. The cleaning standards in the building had improved as a result of an addition to the Concierge service. Furthermore Keith

is satisfied with the level of cleaning inside the building.

John noted that no one from the Council had been in touch with him regarding the leak in his spare room. Mark will contact John.

Oxgangs – Maureen informed the meeting that there had been problems with flooding in Oxgangs. Owners are reluctant to pay their share which is frustrating. British Gas had laid new pipes.

East Pilton Crewe – Donald informed the meeting that he had a new bathroom installed, but there had been problems and he contacted Alexanders. Harry enquired if someone from the local office is advising Donald and he said there is. Maureen stated that Betty attends Private Rented Sector meetings and Harry is interested in what the Council is saying about the Private Rented Services.

7. Any Other Competent Business (AOCB)

Mark reminded the meeting that the Federation's Conference and AGM will take place on Saturday 21st June in the Norton Park Conference Centre. The Conference will be discussing the Independence Referendum and two speakers from Better Together and Yes Scotland will be present as part of a panel. The deadline for booking for the Conference and AGM is this Friday (13th).

8. Date and venue of next meeting

The meeting will be held at some point in September. It will be confirmed nearer the time.

Maureen thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Mark Henry