



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

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Edinburgh's Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations

ETF response to City of Edinburgh Council Rent Consultation

1.0 Background

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) is the umbrella organisation for tenants' and residents' groups in the city of Edinburgh and a Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO). This is the response of ETF Members to the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) Rent Consultation. Views have been gathered from member groups during the consultation period and a Federation Meeting on Monday 22nd October 2018. ETF welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Rent Consultation.

2.0 ETF Members' comments

Individuals and tenant representatives were asked the questions from the rent consultation information provided by CEC. The responses have been grouped into themes where possible. Here are the responses.

2.1 Based on tenants' priorities, we plan to build 10,000 new homes over the next 10 years, invest in the condition of your homes so they are modern and energy efficient and deliver new services to help cut your cost of living.

What do you think of this plan and what we've done so far?

Building homes

- Not a lot, more affordable housing is needed;
- I think it is a great plan to make sure you deliver new services to the elderly and infirm. You are managing to upgrade houses to a liveable standard, but a lot more needs to be done;
- I am all for new homes as long as they are affordable;
- Increase the compulsory percentage from 25% to 30% for only social rented housing to be built;
- More social rented housing needs to be built;
- More social rented housing needs to be built, particularly for those who are on low incomes and can't afford to live in mid-market rented properties;
- There are still questions over what is affordable, we need more social rent homes;
- There are too many mid-market rent properties and not enough social rented housing;
- Young people are being left out especially with mid-market rents;
- The Council has failed to build the necessary new homes. The figures quoted are unrealistic and unachievable;
- The figures of new builds are unreal and unachievable;
- Need more affordable housing for young people starting out. Also there are not enough houses for tenants that come from high rise flats that are demolished;

- We need more social housing as when old buildings are pulled down (mostly High Rise), there are not sufficient amounts of new homes built to replace them and this leads to long housing lists;
- Private landlords are building 316 properties in Sighthill. Over 400 houses were lost through the demolition of the high rise blocks. However only 96 of the properties are being built for social rent;
- I haven't seen evidence of any new homes being built so far. Why is there no transparency with tenants and the public?
- Not seeing the new CEC properties, shouldn't be 'wee pockets';
- This plan should have been acted on ten years ago. Though there is much evidence of modernisation works, there is little evidence of affordable housing being built;
- CEC has been repeating the build statement for the last five years;
- More new homes are needed as there is a large Edindex list. However there are still a lot of older homes which need updating;
- It is not clear if this includes student accommodation.

Maintaining homes

- Current properties need to be renovated before new properties are built;
- CEC should be modernising older homes when they become empty;
- More new homes are needed as there is a large Edindex list. However there are still a lot of older homes which need updating.

Rent Affordability

- £2 per week rent increase is not benefitting tenants in current properties;
- Great plan if it works but be realistic with rents;
- I think the plan is good, however it would be an idea to give Council tenants a two year rent freeze now. The Scottish Government should provide help to the City of Edinburgh Council and ETF on certain issues;
- Too much use of sub-contractors which increases rent costs.

Communication

- Sounds good on paper but would like to know what new services will be delivered to the area;
- More forward planning will be needed as sometimes the information given regarding areas is sketchy at best;
- Community benefit money not being advertised (section 75 clause);
- Don't use jargon; Information should be presented in plain English.

Repairs

- Need to invest more in repairs;
- Repairs must be carried out without increasing rents;
- Current properties are being neglected. CEC Repairs section is not efficient.

Energy Efficiency

- Energy Efficiency for Council homes is not working and needs to be improved.

Sheltered housing services

- Sheltered housing cords need to be changed.

CEC staff

- Housing Officers need to be out and about in their respective patches and seeing the void properties and what repairs are needed;
- Housing Officers need to be visiting the tenants in their patches more;
- Previous CEC staff have left and have never been replaced.

Others

- I'm not impressed;
- Not a lot, as I have not seen any benefits so far;
- So far so good;
- Very good work that has been done so far;
- It depends on the timescales;
- The plans are ok, however the CEC contractors are rubbish;
- Scottish Government should be giving more funds to Councils;
- The Council has a legal responsibility for maintaining properties that they rent out.

2.2 *We plan to deliver all this at a below inflationary rent increase (around £2 a week). Based on the quality of your home, neighbourhood and the services you receive from the Council do you think your rent is value for money?*

Yes**Maintaining homes**

- CEC have spent more money investing in properties;
- We have a concierge service and washing facilities. In addition new doors, kitchens and bathrooms have been fitted;
- Even though rent on a single bedroom flat has increased by £35 per week since 2008, the Council has spent a fair amount on modernisation works. That said I would not like to see further annual increases in rent justified with the promise of endless renovations.

Building homes

- I believe building social housing is cheaper than renting from the private sector.

Value for money

- My rent is value for money and my patch officer is very helpful. The services I receive from the Council are very good;
- My Housing Officer does a lot of good work for my area. The refuse collectors are very good at what they do too.

No**Rent Affordability**

- CEC tenants need a rent freeze;
- CEC tenants need a rent freeze. More than half a month's wage of £1000 is spent on rent and Council tax leaving little for food and utilities;
- Income is limited for many tenants. Social protection has only increased 0.01% in 10 years. Inflation on day to day costs has risen to 4.11%;
- People can't afford a rent increase of £2 per week;
- There should not be a rent increase;

- People can't afford a rent increase, as earnings have not increased, but cost of living has risen sharply, especially if you have food allergies;
- Not acceptable, people can't afford a rent increase as they can't eat or heat their homes as it is;
- A lot of tenants will struggle with a rent increase;
- This will put so many more people in arrears. Does nobody think about what this will be like for tenants? What a worry!

Maintaining homes

- CEC don't maintain current properties;
- Missed kitchen and bathroom properties are not being picked up on an ad hoc basis by CEC;
- The programme of kitchens and bathrooms needs to be better planned;
- CEC homes are not well maintained, so how does this justify £2 per week rent increase? Upgrades are rolling out in some areas but could be improved;
- I do not see maintenance on existing properties i.e. guttering cleaned once a year;
- The new heaters in high rises are not good.

Value for money

- What CEC is proposing is not value for money;
- It's a waste of time and money.

Others

- Living on the outskirts of the city there tends to be a stigma of 'oh it's ok they are outside the city so we can just ignore them and concentrate on the inner city.' We pay the same rent and Council tax and get nothing;
- Difficult one to answer. There are so many cut backs which affect older homes as far as insulation, heating etc....
- We live in a small village on the outskirts of the town and we get nothing done. We are forgotten about!

2.3 Please tell us what you would like us to do more of and what can we do better?

Rent affordability

- Lower the rents to bring them into par with other Councils across Scotland;
- Think long and hard about the consequences a 2% rent increase will have on vulnerable tenants;
- Freeze rents for at least one year.

Repairs

- There should be rechargeable repairs to owners;
- CEC Repairs Service needs to be overhauled;
- CEC Repairs Service needs improved urgently;
- If there is a joint issue, one repair report should be enough, not having to get neighbour to report it as well;
- Sort out the CEC Repairs Service as jobs take too long to complete.

CEC staff

- Get rid of 'all the cooks as they spoil the broth.' Invest in staff at grassroots level. Only one manager per department and not two or three supervisors;

- There should be less middle managers in CEC.

Maintaining properties

- CEC homes need to be kept fit for purpose;
- Maintenance Team in each locality, invest in existing properties rather than build new homes;
- Do more to upkeep existing CEC stock;
- There needs to be a better upkeep of existing properties;
- Maintain CEC properties and this will benefit tenants. Then build more social rented homes;
- Concentrate on current stock renovation first and then build new homes;
- There needs to be an upkeep of existing properties, including having all high rise pipes and main stacks checked. They've never been done since they were built;
- Make homes more energy efficient;
- The stair walls in mixed tenure stairs could be painted where possible. Write letters to private tenants in stairs asking them to sign up to the stair cleaning service. Keep involving younger tenants.

Communal areas

- Common areas get very little work done and must be improved;
- Upkeep of communal gardens, grass cut and left lying in heaps. Bushes and hedges are very seldom cut and are very messy.

Building homes

- Build more homes for social rent. Have a maintenance team to cover localities.

Transparency

- More openness on budget details.

Others

- I would like to see CEC help the elderly a lot more than they do. Adaptations needs more money to help the disabled;
- CEC should give clear and precise answers to our questions;
- Stop telling us one thing and then doing something different;
- Stop renting out bed and breakfast properties to the homeless;
- Tenant participation should be apparent in all areas of housing in Edinburgh.

3.0 Conclusion

ETF welcomes the chance to contribute to CEC's rent consultation and this paper has been shared by the Federation's Executive Committee. ETF will work with CEC representatives to address the issues raised in this paper.

Appendix One: Feedback from the ETF Meeting on 22nd October 2018

Table 1: Contributors to ETF Meeting on 22nd October 2018

23 people attended; representing 9 ETF Member Groups with 12 individual tenants in attendance.

Tenants and Residents Groups Represented
Birnies Court Tenants and Residents Association
Gateside Tenants and Residents Association
Hailesland Park Neighbourhood Council
Laichfield Community Association
Maidencraig Court Residents Association
North Sighthill Residents Association
Ratho Station Residents Association
West Cromwell, Persevere & Citadel Court Residents Association
Willowbrae and Duddingston Residents Association
TOTAL: 9