**Background**

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) was launched in October 1990. It is formally recognised by the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) as the citywide negotiating body for CEC tenants.

The Federation is an umbrella organisation of local associations and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) that represent tenants at a citywide and policy level. This complements and builds on the work of the associations at local and area levels dealing with day to day service delivery issues. The Federation aims to promote the improvement of the quality of life of residents and the housing conditions of all tenants of rented accommodation, in particular those at risk of exclusion. In 2018, ETF changed its legal status and became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, which brings new opportunities to ETF.

**Resources**

The Federation is a voluntary organisation with an office base inNorton Park. Much of our work is carried out by our office-bearers, Executive Committee (EC), activists, volunteers and staff. The Federation is funded by CEC through a Service Level Agreement which enables us to employ staff, run the office and support our main citywide business. We also received funding through Community Jobs Scotland to fund an Admin Assistant. There is no membership fee to join ETF. During the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic, the Federation office was closed to protect staff and service users. Staff worked from home during this time.

**Organisation and Decision Making**

The Federation is a membership-based organisation and is run by its members. Memberships are renewed on an annual basis and ETF currently has 19 tenants’ and residents’ groups in full membership.

We provide extensive opportunities for members to be involved in our work. The key to involvement and participation is information and we regularly inform members of our activities. All major policy decisions are made by our members through regular Federation Meetings, the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Special Members Meetings (where appropriate). As the workload of the organisation is considerable and expanding, the Federation follows a detailed work plan.

Our members elect the EC which meet monthly to take responsibility for the day to day running of the organisation and implementing policy. Specific city-wide groups are set up to deal with major areas of ongoing work**,** for example, repairs and high-rise flats. These are open to individual tenants and representatives of member groups from across the city and are an opportunity to undertake detailed work on behalf of the Federation with CEC. The groups report regularly to the membership and Executive Committee, to whom they are ultimately accountable.

In the last year, ETF has adapted to changes in the approach to tenant participation in Edinburgh. These changes focussed on developing a more local presence, including EC members meeting with senior housing staff in their respective localities. These meetings have enabled EC members to find out what is happening in their individual localities and for CEC staff to find out more about the work of ETF.

**Informing and Involving the Membership**

Keeping the membership well informed and up to date on developments at all levels is carried out through a variety of methods. Member groups receive a bi-monthly newsletter, *Federation Matters*; members can also sign up to our monthly E-Newsletter. Over 3000 copies of our newsletter *Tenants Voice* is distributed three times per year in paper form or downloaded from our website. We produce an Annual Report which is approved at our AGM. Our website, Twitter and Facebook pages are updated on a regular basis. Ad hoc mailings are also circulated, which include publicity forRepairs, High Flats and quarterly members’ meetings. Members receive quarterly Progress Reports on all areas of work and have an opportunity to determine future policy direction.

Each of the citywide groups, currently Repairs, High Flats and Tenant Led Inspections are in regular communication with the membership. The groups are the most successful way of involving the broadest range of the membership. They address everyday concerns and issues and provide an opportunity to participate directly with CEC and other landlords in developing and monitoring policies and new forms of service delivery that will make a difference to tenants throughout the city.

As well as formal meetings, ETF holds social and other events throughout the year to provide more informal opportunities for tenants to exchange views, advice and experience. ETF provides training on a range of topics from committee skills to negotiating with your landlord and public speaking. This can be done individually, with your RTO or as part of a wider ETF training programme. Please get in touch if you would like to take part in any ETF training activities or to find out more.

Digital work is an emerging theme for ETF as we realise the need to support tenants’ and RTOs to get online. The outbreak of COVID-19 has only exacerbated the need for tenants to increase their digital skills to overcome loneliness, isolation and improve their mental health. ETF holds regular meetings with CEC staff to discuss a range of topics and issues. These meetings were temporarily put on hold due to COVID-19. We have started holding these meetings again via zoom and Microsoft teams and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

**Outreach Work**

The Federation provides development and practical support to local people who wish to set up new RTOs and those groups already established who wish assistance with strengthening their organisation. Intervention and the provision of support at a local level is undertaken on request. This development work is primarily for CEC tenants. The Federation also works with the Neighbourhood Alliance in Craigmillar.

**Current Work**

The current workload keeps activists, volunteers and staff very busy and new activists and volunteers are always welcome. Our ongoing work includes areas such as:

* Supporting the ETF Repairs and High Flats Groups;
* Supporting tenants on the Council’s Rent Matters Working Group and Housing Revenue Account Scrutiny Group;
* Support the work of the Sheltered Housing Liaison Group (SHLG);
* Attending bi-monthly meetings with senior managers of the City of Edinburgh Council;
* EC members meetings with senior housing staff in their respective localities;
* Holding bi-monthly meetings with the Convenor and Vice Convenor of the City of Edinburgh Council’s Housing**,** Homelessness and Fair WorkCommittee;
* Keeping a close eye on the national scene, including responding to various housing related consultations where appropriate;
* Attending quarterly Stair Cleaning Project Board meetings to monitor the quality of service tenants receive from the stair cleaning contractors;
* Support to local groups, including the development of new groups;
* Holding Housing Roadshows in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council, for Council tenants to find out more about the City of Edinburgh Council housing services and raise awareness of ETF and local RTOs;
* Holding learning sessions on topics such as ‘Public Speaking: Finding Your Voice’ and ‘Finance Training: Balancing the Books’;
* Supporting tenants and tenants’ groups to get online.

We have been extremely busy already but there is a great deal more work to be done!

**Future Work**

ETF aims to work in partnership with CEC, ETF member groups, tenants and other stakeholders to develop tenant participation approaches that will enable tenants to participate safely during COVID-19 and thereafter. ETF will be responsible for carrying out a COVID-19 risk assessment of the proposed initiatives in the Work Plan before any activity takes place. Our future work includes areas such as:

* Represent and support tenants in joint strategic working groups with the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) and ensure this links into all ETF work;
* Work with CEC to develop a Tenant Scrutiny Framework;
* Carry out a review of each of CEC’s Working Groups and ETF groups;
* EC members continue to meet with senior housing staff in their respective localities;
* Assist and encourage the establishment of new tenants’ and residents’ groups in localities with CEC tenants, encouraging them to join ETF and become an RTO;
* Develop a plan to enable younger tenants to become more involved in the work of ETF;
* Continue using a human rights based approach in all our work;
* Develop a Communications Strategy, including a digital framework for ETF to engage with tenants;
* Explore other social media and communication methods;
* Ensure long-termfunding for the Federation;
* Develop a Strategic plan for ETF;
* Ensure strong governance for ETF;
* Prepare a Digital Transformation Plan for ETF office systems.