

# Tenants Voice



EDINBURGH TENANTS  
FEDERATION

Issue 97 - February 2016

## Housing, Health and Haggis!

Discussions on how the housing sector is helping to improve health and well-being, followed by Burns songs and a helping of haggis, neeps and tatties. These were just some of the ingredients at our very successful Federation Meeting held in the Victoria Park Hotel at the end of January.

The topic for the meeting was 'Housing and Health: Working Together.' ETF Members discussed:

- Health and social care integration - the challenges and opportunities;
- The role of the housing sector in improving health and well-being.

The guest speakers were Fanchea Kelly, Chief Executive of Blackwood Group, Gillian Donohoe, Senior Project Manager, Strategy, City of Edinburgh Council and Marna Green, Interim Locality Manager North West who shared their ideas on how housing and health partners can work with communities to help improve services at a local level.



*Our guest speakers with Betty Stevenson, ETF Convenor*

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After a very interesting question and answer session, groups chatted about the following questions:

1. What examples do you have about housing and health working well together in your community?
2. In what ways can housing help improve health (physical and/or mental health)?
3. What role can local communities/groups have in addressing health inequalities/improving health?
4. What ideas do you have about how housing and health and social care could work better together?

There were a number of excellent suggestions from the tenants who attended which will contribute to the future plans in health and social care. Fanchea Kelly, Chief Executive of Blackwood Group commented, "I was pleased to be invited along with my colleagues from the Council to speak to ETF on this important topic. Betty left us in no doubt about the value of tenants being involved in their local communities to help others who are vulnerable because of physical or mental health issues. The discussion was very positive and good suggestions were put forward for us to take into account as the Strategic Plan is finalised for Edinburgh.'



*Discussions taking place in small groups*

It was after the meeting that the real fun could begin. Our Development Worker, Mark Henry delivered the "Address to the Haggis" and the "Toast to the Lassies".



*The 'Address To the Haggis'*

The reply was delivered by our Outreach Worker Justine Bradd. Leanne Miller, great granddaughter of ETF's Convenor Betty Stevenson gave a fantastic rendition of "To a Moose".

Members also had the opportunity to sing along to old Scottish songs which were provided by our EC member, Sheila Rutherford-McCallum. The haggis, neeps and tatties were delicious and it was great to see some new faces. Thanks to all who made it a memorable night!



*Leanne performing 'To a Moose'*

**Mark Henry, ETF Development Worker**

# Communities United: what role for community workers and representatives?

## Seminars by Alan Twelvetrees

In early February, ETF was delighted to welcome Alan Twelvetrees to Edinburgh to present two interactive seminars. Alan is a well known academic and practitioner in community development in Wales, who offered to support ETF rethink ideas as part of our 25th Anniversary celebrations. The seminars were received very positively from all those who attended. Alan's seminars brought community representatives, students and paid workers together to learn about the nature of tenants' and community associations, the issues that they currently face and how they can be assisted to work more effectively.

Key themes that were noted over the two days were:

- The funding cuts to community services;
- The lack of communication between officials and community groups; and
- The importance of having paid community development workers.

After the seminars, Alan said "We had a turnout of 45 people over both seminars who participated actively in the group discussions. Together they came up with about 50 different conclusions that ETF can take forward for further consideration. It was also impressive to see the commitment, knowledge and ability of all those involved from the inexperienced activists, through to the 'old hands'. Good luck with your future work and I hope to come back in the near future."



*Alan presenting at one of the Communities United seminars*

ETF would like to specially thank Trust Housing Association for their role in the seminar and Alan Twelvetrees for voluntarily giving his time to plan and present the seminars.

ETF will be pulling together all the feedback and will report on the findings from the seminars, so watch this space for further details.



*Discussions taking place at the Communities United seminars*



**Emma Sangster, ETF Student**

# Human Rights Update

Professor Alan Miller steps down as Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) when his term of office comes to an end in March. Alan has worked closely with ETF over the years, and especially so in the last six months as ETF has developed a project with the Commission to support tenants to use international human rights law to improve housing conditions. During the project, tenants will identify their issues and using a human rights perspective, present these to public bodies. The project also aims to improve the way public bodies meaningfully include people in decision-making processes. This is a project which is close to Alan's heart after seeing the results achieved by tenants supported by Participation in the Practice of Rights (PPR) in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Alan said: "The work we have been doing alongside tenants with ETF is just the kind of approach I would like to see being used more widely in Scotland. It places people at the centre of change and demonstrates how international human rights laws, whose protections we are all entitled to enjoy, have meaningful, practical application."



*Heather and Alan on a walkabout in Leith*

Betty Stevenson, Convenor of ETF said: "It's been a real pleasure working with Alan over the years. He supported the Federation when we said that the bedroom tax was unjust and helped us frame our petition to the European Parliament in human rights terms, and we're delighted to be taking forward this new project with the Commission."

Heather Ford from West Cromwell, Persevere and Citadel Courts Residents Association (WPCRA) said, "On behalf of WPCRA I would like to thank both Alan and ETF for the guidance they have given our community in progressing forward to making changes to our community as a whole."

We wish Alan all the best in the future and look forward to working with his successor Judith Robertson, who through her work with See Me is already a well known face for ETF.

## Clare MacGillivray, ETF Development Coordinator

### Human Rights and Tenant Participation Matters

We are very pleased to report that real progress is being made in West Cromwell Street, Persevere and Citadel Courts. The Residents' association extended the deadline for survey responses in Persevere and Citadel and there has been a fantastic response so far.

The surveying in West Cromwell Street has also been a success and a programme of works has now been announced by the Council.

Proposals include:

- Window replacements;
- Roof replacement;
- Insulation work throughout the building;
- New kitchens and bathrooms.

The results of the survey will be revealed at a meeting to be held in March. The residents' association will then look at issues through a human rights lens and decide who to contact in the Council, National Health Service and police to take forward their issues. Although the programme of works has been welcomed they have been planned with little tenant input or consultation.

### **Human Rights Innovation Forum**

ETF was delighted to be invited to Scotland's National Action Plan (SNAP) for Human Rights on 9th December 2015 along with Heather Ford, Treasurer West Cromwell Street, Persevere and Citadel Residents Association (WPCRA).

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon gave a keynote address to the meeting highlighting the importance of Human Rights and the Scottish Government's commitment to raise the bar on human rights in Scottish law and public policy.

ETF participated in a joint breakout session where delegates were offered the chance to hear about the work of the Seven Towers in Belfast and what has been happening so far in West Cromwell, Persevere and Citadel Court.

It was a truly memorable day which included ETF representatives meeting with Kavita Chetty, Head of Strategy and Legal, SHRC; Professor Alan Miller (SHRC); Christian Courtis, Human Rights Officer, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Sarah Davidson, Director General Communities, Scottish Government.

Heather Ford said "The conference was interesting and informative and it allowed us to show others what we're learning about tenant participation through a human rights perspective."

Dessie Donnelly, Director PPR said "The SNAP conference showed the impressive range of human rights work being carried out across Scotland. Heather's presentation on the work of Leith tenants using rights to hold authorities accountable to international housing standards was a perfect example of what First Minister Nicola Sturgeon referred to as bringing human rights to "neighbourhoods, schools, hospitals, workplaces". There was a lot of interest in the project from non-governmental organisations, public sector staff and management, academia, legal profession and political representatives among others. Keeping everybody informed of progress and challenges, and working alongside them, will be important to ensure that the excellent work being done by the tenants' results in concrete and sustainable changes for people experiencing chronic housing problems."



*Delegates including ETF representatives reflecting on a very successful conference*

# Tenant Led Inspections: Would you like to Know More?



Are you interested in getting behind the scenes to find out more about how your housing services are delivered by the City of Edinburgh Council? Why not join us to find out how you can take part in checking Council services? Tenant led inspections are where tenants take the lead in finding out how services really work and then report back their suggestions for improvement. Edinburgh Tenants Federation has completed four successful inspections already and is now inviting more tenants to get involved in future inspections. This is an exciting opportunity for City of Edinburgh Council tenants.

You don't need any specialist knowledge, you just have to be a Council tenant with a willingness to find out how things work with a view to making suggestions for improvements. To find out more, please contact Mark Henry, ETF on 0131 475 2509 or email [mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

**Heather Ford, Convenor, ETF Tenant Led Inspection Group**

## ETF Joins Stick Your Labels Campaign



ETF has recently signed up to the Poverty Alliance's Stick Your Labels Campaign. The campaign aims to reduce the stigma of poverty by challenging negative stereotypes of people living in poverty and highlighting that poverty is not inevitable. It's a campaign the ETF Executive Committee was keen to support. Betty Stevenson, Convenor of ETF explains, "For too long we've heard people being blamed for poverty. There are negative stories in the press all the time about so called "areas of deprivation" and people who live in poverty. This is completely unacceptable. Poverty is not inevitable. Nor is it the fault of the people who have to deal with it. We need to stand against such language being used. We hope that by ETF signing up to this campaign we'll send a message that we stand against poverty."



*EC members with the Stick Your Labels Campaign Pledge*

Peter Kelly, Director of the Poverty Alliance, said: “We are delighted that Edinburgh Tenants Federation have joined the Stick Your Labels campaign and pledged to tackle the stigma of poverty. The Stick Your Labels campaign is important because we need to tackle the myths around poverty and the negative judgements that people make as a result of these. A number of organisations from across the voluntary and public sectors have already signed up and we hope that more will follow their lead in the coming weeks and months. Stigma and negative attitudes are things that people experiencing poverty tell us about every day, it is time for us to take action to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.”

To find out more about the campaign please contact Carla McCormack at the Poverty Alliance by email [carla.mccormack@povertyalliance.org](mailto:carla.mccormack@povertyalliance.org) or phone 0141 353 0440.

**Clare MacGillivray, ETF Development Coordinator**

## Council Rent Consultation

The City of Edinburgh Council voted in January 2016 to increase Council tenants' rents by 2% in order to fund a host of investment measures and potential new services aimed at reducing tenants' costs. From the Council's rent consultation, tenants voted the following their three top priorities for investment:

1. More Council homes (87%);
2. Cheaper Energy (80%);
3. Energy Efficient Homes (76%).

These were very similar to the priorities set out by Federation Members at a range of meetings.

The Council will now prioritise these proposals and will invest:

- £80million to build 8000 new homes;
- £60million in making homes more energy efficient (including new heating systems, new windows and doors and insulation);
- In a partnership with Our Power to deliver low cost energy.

Other ideas considered in the consultation that will be developed along with tenants in the coming years include:

- Expanding the range of partners and suppliers supporting the tenant discount card;
- Expanding the network of tenant allotments and community gardens developed on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land;
- Providing digital services at no or little cost to tenants;
- Offering loans to home owners to progress mixed tenure improvements.

The ETF Rents Group met in December and January to consider the consultation and wrote to the Council to highlight that tenants are seeking greater involvement in scrutinising the HRA, in checking that services are value for money and that rents are affordable for tenants (particularly for tenants who get partial or no help with housing costs). ETF remains concerned that the Council has the highest Local Authority rents in Scotland and tenants need to be sure that rents are value for money. ETF will continue to work closely with the Council to work on scrutinising the Housing Revenue Account and planning next year's rent consultation.

**Clare MacGillivray, ETF Development Coordinator**

# City of Edinburgh Council Tenants' Conference

Save the Date!

Please join us on Saturday 23rd April 2016 in the Council's Headquarters, Waverley Court, 4 East Market Street. This will be an opportunity to find out more about your housing services and take part in discussions that will inform future decision-making.

To register your interest in attending, please email [tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk) or ring 0131 529 7805.



**Sam Reeves, Senior Tenant Participation Officer, City of Edinburgh Council**

## Coming soon ... City of Edinburgh Council Allocations Review

ETF representatives met with Karen Allan, Access to Housing and Customer Strategy Manager, City of Edinburgh Council at the end of last year to discuss the upcoming allocations review of Council tenancies.

### Currently the Council has priority groups for the following:

- Urgent Gold - For those coming out of hospital who cannot return to their own home as they have a specific need;
- Gold - For those requiring a ground floor property whose current home is unsuitable for their housing needs;
- Silver - This is split into further categories of
  - Homelessness;
  - Under-occupation;
  - Over-crowding;
  - Demolition;
  - Exceptional need.

### Discussions of the review could include:

- Introducing auto-bidding – The system would be set up to recognise an applicant's needs and submit bids on their behalf;
- Consideration of penalties for repeat refusals and limiting the number of refusals;
- Making all properties available for every applicant by removing the Starter/Mover categories;
- Reviewing the Local Lettings Policy;
- Reviewing the option to return for applicants affected by demolition.

### What happens next?

The Council is compiling a report that will be presented to the Health, Social Care and Housing Committee in April. If approved, the proposals will then go out to consultation. ETF representatives hope to meet with Council Officers again before the report goes to the Committee meeting.

**Justine Bradd, ETF Outreach Worker**



# Development Programme for Edinburgh

The City of Edinburgh Council's Finance and Resources Committee agreed on 2nd February 2016 to progress the redevelopment of seven small sites across the city for affordable housing. The sites are:

- Former Sighthill Care Home, Calder Gardens;
- Former Clermiston Care Home, Parkgrove Terrace;
- Former EBS Depot, Crewe Road Gardens;
- Former Dumbryden Primary School, Dumbryden Drive;
- Former Dove Centre, Hailesland Place;
- Former Royston Primary School, Boswall Parkway;
- Former Children's Centre, West Pilton Grove.

The development programme is based on when sites will be vacant and ready for development. It is estimated the programme will take a minimum of three years to deliver. Development of the sites is subject to Planning and other statutory consents. The current assumption is that the sites at Calder Gardens and West Pilton Grove will form the first phase of the development programme.

Consultation briefings have already taken place with Councillors, Community Councils and ETF. Further consultation will take place with communities regarding the proposals for each site as detailed plans are developed, prior to the submission of planning applications.

**Sam Verner, Senior Project Manager, City of Edinburgh Council**

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Are there any exciting initiatives happening in your area?

Are there any issues in your area that are of concern?

Would you like to share your views on any subjects?

## Calling all RTOs

Would you simply like to give an update on what is happening in your RTO?

Would you like to share any examples of good practice?

### If so, we want to hear from you.

ETF would love to highlight the fabulous work that our RTOs are doing throughout the city and could include this in our next edition of *Tenants Voice*. If your RTO would be interested in doing this, please submit your article by Monday 4th April 2016. If you would like to discuss this further or require assistance to write an article, please contact me on 0131 475 2509 or email [mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

**Mark Henry, ETF Development Worker**

# Will budget cuts impact on Community Groups?

After a recent meeting of the City of Edinburgh Council's Finance Committee, there appears to be an indication that voluntary and community groups could be at risk of cuts to their funding.

A numbers of community groups in my area of Redbraes, that have contributed to issues such as the environment, housing and planning could see their efforts diluted by lack of funding. The functions of these group are numerous but the focus remains the same - from improving our surroundings to fuel poverty, housing standards to availability of accommodation, anti-social behaviour to local planning issues...the list is endless but their input is essential to the residents of Edinburgh.

From groups who give up their time to developing waste land for community benefit, to others who volunteer their time supporting the various elderly groups and the homeless and vulnerable. The list is extensive but is a valuable tool in what the Scottish Parliament promote as Community Engagement.

The City of Edinburgh Council should reconsider their decision until there has been a proper review of the work done by those within the voluntary sector...before it's too late to evaluate their efforts.

**Davie Thomson, Redbraes Residents Association**

## OneCity Trust open For Grant Applications



Edinburgh

The **OneCity Trust** is pleased to announce that its main grant programme is now open for applications. Registered charities and constituted groups based in Edinburgh with an annual income of less than £200,000 and focussing their work in the city are invited to apply for funding for social inclusion projects meeting **one or more** of the priorities of

- Community Connectedness;
- Cultural Bridging;
- Civic Inclusion.

New this year is a partnership with Travis Perkins Managed Services and the City of Edinburgh Council. A Community Benefit fund offered to the Council by Travis Perkins as part of a major contract will be allocated through the OneCity Trust. Applications for this funding will be considered from organisations that involve City of Edinburgh Council tenants, or from other organisations aiming to benefit geographical areas with a high proportion of Council homes. The themes will be the same: Community Connectedness, Cultural Bridging and Civic Inclusion.

Overall, the Trust intends to make up to eight grants, each at the level of £5,000 to £10,000.

An information session for Registered Tenant Organisations will be held on Thursday 17th March 2016 at 7.00pm in the Dunedin Room, City Chambers, High Street. Please book through ETF on 0131 475 2509, email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk) or online at [www.edinburghtenants.org.uk](http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk).

For further information and to request an application form, please see [www.onecity.org.uk](http://www.onecity.org.uk). If you'd prefer to speak to someone, please telephone Susan Shippey on 0131 469 3874 or e-mail [1617applications@onecity.org.uk](mailto:1617applications@onecity.org.uk). Please note that the Trust is supported by the Council on a part-time basis.

The deadline for applications is 29th April 2016, and projects should commence on 1st July 2016 and run for up to one year.



**Susan Shippey, Policy Consultant, City of Edinburgh Council**

# Take Small Steps to Stay On Your Feet



## Take small steps to stay on your feet

Five easy tips to prevent falls and fractures

Did you know that more than 30% of people over 65 will have a fall every year? As well as physically hurting yourself, having a fall can knock your confidence and leave you less likely to want to get out and about.

The good news is that there are lots of simple things you can do to decrease the risk of falling and you can start at any age! The City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian have produced a handy guide which highlights small changes that will make you stronger, steadier on your feet and less likely to trip or fall.

'Take Small Steps to Stay on your Feet' gives you five easy tips to try and prevent falls and also information about what to do if you do fall over.

- Get checked out top to toe – have your eyes and hearing tested regularly, wear shoes and slippers that are comfortable and fit properly and get your GP to regularly review your prescription medications;
- Calcium keeps bones strong – eat a well-balanced diet that contains calcium rich foods like dairy products, green leafy vegetables, bread and fish;
- Get enough Vitamin D – this helps keep your bones strong. You get vitamin D from sunlight, but if it is difficult for you to get out and about you can take a supplement;
- Stay active – exercise such as walking, gardening and dancing can strengthen muscles, bones and improve balance;
- Clear your way at home – make sure there's nothing that you might trip over or bump into such as rugs, loose carpets and items lying on the floor. You should also make sure your home is properly lit so you can see where you're going.

If you have a fall and you can't get up without help or you are hurt:

- Call for help. Use your alarm if you have one, or shout and bang on the wall to get a neighbour's attention. If you can, use a mobile or crawl to a telephone and dial 999;
- Move to a soft surface. If you land on a hard surface like a bathroom floor, try to move on to a carpet. This will help to keep you warm;
- Keep warm. Try to reach for anything nearby which will keep you warm. This could be a duvet or clothing. If you are in a draught try to move out of the way of it;
- Keep moving. Try to rock from side to side, but keep the injured part of you still. If you lie still for too long you will become stiff and cold.

If you have a fall and feel you can get up, first of all check that no part of you is injured. Everyone is different so there is no set way to get up after a fall, but remember to be careful and take your time. You can use a piece of sturdy furniture to support you when you get up.

You can get more information about 'Take Small Steps to Stay on your Feet' at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/fiveeasysteps](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/fiveeasysteps) or [www.nhsinform.co.uk/falls](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/falls). Alternatively phone NHS Inform on 0800 22 44 88 (text phone 18001 0800 22 44 88).

**Rachel Howe, Communications/Information Officer, City of Edinburgh Council**

# ETF Representatives meet with Susan Mooney and Paul Lawrence

A group of ETF Executive Committee (EC) members were delighted to meet the Council's new Executive Director for Place Paul Lawrence and the new Head of Housing and Regeneration, Susan Mooney. We look forward to working more with Paul and Susan over the coming years. The EC also took part in an induction with the City of Edinburgh Council Senior Managers Team and a study visit to the South West Office to find out how local offices operate behind the scenes. Thanks to all those involved in planning these great events.



*EC members with Paul and Susan*

## EC Review Day

The Federation's Executive Committee (EC) held their six month Review Day in February. The purpose of the day was to:

- Review progress in delivering the work plan set at the Annual General Meeting in June 2015;
- Identify any gaps and action points to address these;
- Identify future priorities for ETF.



*Identifying priorities for ETF at the EC Review Day*

**Mark Henry, ETF Development Worker**

There were plenty of discussions and a report from the day will be approved at a future meeting of the Federation's Executive Committee.

A Work Plan for 2016-2017 will be approved at our Annual General Meeting on Saturday 18th June 2016. So come along to have your say on the future work of the Federation.

## Getting into a tangle with your Landlord?

Edinburgh tenants are able to access mediation when there is an issue between themselves and their landlord or agent. Cyrenians' Mediation is free which means that no-one needs to worry that they will get a bill at the end of it.



Usually, people will call us to have a chat about whatever the tangle might be and to see if mediation is right for them; we discuss what has happened and ask a few questions. If we can help we'll follow up with a visit at your home or you can come to our office if you prefer. We'll then contact your landlord, housing officer or agent and speak with them.

From here, our hope is that we can get to a point where, all being well, and if you are willing, we set up a meeting with both yourself and the landlord to help with a conversation aimed at straightening things out for everyone.

Sometimes, people don't want to meet up or go ahead with things. That doesn't have to mean it's all over though as we can still offer "shuttle" mediation. This is when the people arguing don't actually meet and the Mediator is responsible for sharing information and points of view between the tenant and landlord. This can still be a really quick and efficient way of getting to a useful conclusion.

Since Citywide Mediation and Support started in October 2014, our Mediator, Liz Law, has carried out 49 landlord/tenant mediations not including inquiries.

Don't Hold Back - Get in touch - **0131 475 2493** - to talk it through!

Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5QY.

Email: [conflictresolution@cyrenians.org.uk](mailto:conflictresolution@cyrenians.org.uk) Website: [www.cyrenians.scot](http://www.cyrenians.scot)

### People who have used mediation said:

*"Everything was sorted. We needed a third party to assess and to resolve the issues."* Landlord

*"Liz (Mediator) was good she helped as the landlord wasn't returning calls. She got through to them and met up with the Landlord."* Clients' Mother

*"I respect your service and support it completely."* Letting Agent

**Liz Law, Landlord/Tenant Mediator, Cyrenians**

## TalkTime - A Unique Charity for Young Disabled People in Edinburgh

A brand new and unique charity which offers free one-to-one counselling to young people with physical disabilities aged 12-25 has opened its doors in Edinburgh. It is called TalkTime and has been set up by a young man with cerebral palsy, Joshua Hepple, who grew up in Trinity and is now training to be a solicitor in London. It is believed to be the only service of its kind in the whole of the UK.

Joshua started this charity with the help of his mother, Seonaid Cooke who lives in Trinity, as he believes that the emotional and mental well-being of young people with disabilities can be overlooked with the main focus being on supporting their physical needs. As Joshua says "It is essential for people to feel they can talk about what's going on. Disabled young people in schools are often isolated and find it difficult to fit in." The stated aim of the charity is to help physically disabled young people to reach their potential and to improve their mental well-being and that of their families.



*Joshua and his mother Seonaid Cooke*

Setting up TalkTime has been a natural progression for Joshua who has been actively involved in campaigning for disability equality rights for the last seven years, representing all disabled students at a national level with National Union of Students Scotland and regularly delivering disability equality training at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe to theatre company staff working with the general public. One of the charity's recent clients has commented: "Counselling has given me the time and space to explore personal issues and begin to rebuild my mental resilience."

The charity is totally reliant on donations for its running costs and all money received goes directly towards the hire of rooms and the payment of counsellors. If you would like more information, please contact TalkTime Edinburgh directly at [www.talktimeedinburgh.co.uk](http://www.talktimeedinburgh.co.uk), email [talktimeedinburgh@gmail.com](mailto:talktimeedinburgh@gmail.com) or phone 07774 210104.

**Seonaid Cooke, Founder and Trustee, TalkTime Edinburgh**

# Update from Councillor Day

Vice Convenor Health, Social Care and Housing Committee,  
City of Edinburgh Council



## Tenants' Views Shape the Housing Budget

On 21st January we as elected members met to debate and agree the Council's budget for the year ahead. This year I'm pleased to say that the housing budget strategy was unanimously agreed, with all Councillors supporting a focus on investing in housing to reduce tenants' living costs.

A huge part of this was down to all of you who took part in the consultation this year. We had a record number of responses, gathered through a range of different methods. I'd like to thank those who gave their opinion – and also those of you who worked with officers to design the consultation. With your input, it's easier for us to make decisions as we know we're focusing on your priorities.

## Joint Commitment to 16,000 Homes

We all know that we have a real shortage of affordable housing in Edinburgh – that's why tenants put it as their top priority during the budget consultation and why the Council agreed to expand its house building programme to 8,000 new homes over the next ten years.



I was delighted when our housing association partners supported our strategy and came to the City Chambers to sign up to match our 8,000 homes with 8,000 of their own. 16,000 new affordable homes will have a major impact in Edinburgh and help to take off the pressure being caused by the current shortage.

I'm really proud to be a part of this strategy that will make a difference to the lives of individuals and families on low incomes who are really struggling to cope.



## Investing to Save Tenants Money

We know that Council tenants are among the most hard pressed financially and that's why the focus of the budget strategy and consultation centred on what we could do to help substantially reduce your cost of living.

Your consultation responses showed that increased house building was your top priority, followed closely by investment to reduce energy costs through replacement heating, cheaper energy and better advice services.

Other things you suggested which would reduce your cost of living included cheaper broadband, discount cards and making land available to allow tenants to grow fruit and vegetables to reduce their food bills. The details on these other proposals have still to be worked out and officers will be looking to discuss these ideas with tenants soon.

If you'd like to be a part of the discussions, please give officers a call on 0131 529 7805 or email [tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk).

All this will be achieved through a combination of making the housing service leaner; making efficiencies in service delivery and through a modest rent increase of 2%, ensuring that we keep your rents affordable, whilst delivering your priorities.

# ETF Annual General Meeting



Members at ETF's AGM in June 2015

This year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place on Saturday 18th June 2016 and will be part of an exciting day's events. The planning of the day is underway and we will keep you updated as ideas come together. But meanwhile please mark this event in your diaries as it's not one to miss!

## Convenors Report



Welcome to the first Convenor's report of the year and it certainly has been a very busy start to 2016. Throughout the year ETF will be holding a number of meetings and events and it would be good to see as many tenants' groups as possible there. This will allow us to continue to represent your views and ensure that we are doing this effectively.

Recently myself and other members of the Executive Committee (EC) met with Paul Lawrence, Executive Director, Place and Susan Mooney, Head of Housing and Regeneration, City of Edinburgh Council. Both Paul and Susan have only recently started in their respective jobs, so it was a good opportunity for them to meet with the EC and discuss how ETF and the Council can continue to work together.

Our Tenant Led Inspection Team is in the process of recruiting inspectors for the next inspection. You can read more about this elsewhere in *Tenants Voice*.

We are pleased to report that ETF's work with the Scottish Human Rights Commission continues to go from strength to strength. We're delighted the Council has secured commitment to build 8000 Council and 8000 affordable homes in Edinburgh. This is fantastic news for tenants in the city and we look forward to working with the Council in supporting this initiative.

We would like to pay tribute to ETF's student Emma Sangster who will shortly be finishing her placement with ETF. Emma has been a tremendous support for ETF and we would like to thank her for the work she has done for us and wish her all the best in the future.

I would like to thank every one of our members, supporters, tenant representatives, Executive Committee members and staff for their hard work and dedication - we couldn't do it without you!

**Betty Stevenson**  
Convenor, Edinburgh Tenants Federation

# Dates for your diary

## One City Trust Information Session

Thursday 17th March 2016, 7.00pm-8.30pm, Dunedin Room, City Chambers, High Street

## The Federation office will be closed on the following public holidays

Friday 25th March 2016

Monday 28th March 2016

Monday 18th April 2016

Monday 2nd May 2016

Monday 23rd May 2016

## City Of Edinburgh Council Conference

Saturday 23rd April 2016, Waverley Court, 4 East Market Street, time to be confirmed

## Federation Meeting

Wednesday 11th May 2016, 7.00pm-9.00pm, venue to be confirmed

## ETF Annual General Meeting and Conference

Saturday 18th June 2016, venue and time to be confirmed

## Comments, compliments, complaints

Please give us feedback on this publication. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints we would like to know. Just contact us at the ETF office.

## About Edinburgh Tenants Federation

Edinburgh Tenants Federation is the umbrella organisation for tenants' and residents' groups in Edinburgh and a Registered Tenant Organisation. Tenants' and residents' groups can become members of ETF and individuals can become Associate Members. Just contact the ETF office on 0131 475 2509 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk) for more information.

## Thoughtful Quote

*'If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door.'*

*Dalai Lama*

## Copy Deadline



*Tenants Voice* is usually published four times a year and is distributed to nearly 4,000 tenants, residents, decision makers and other interested individuals throughout Edinburgh. We always welcome contributions from our readers, though we stress that material included in *Tenants Voice* does not always represent the opinions of Edinburgh Tenants Federation. If you would like to contribute an article, please do so by the following deadline:

**May 2016 edition:**

Monday 4th April 2016



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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ETF.

