



EDINBURGH TENANTS  
FEDERATION

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Edinburgh's Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations

## Edinburgh Partnership Review and Consultation of Governance and Community Planning Arrangements September 2018

### 1.0 Background

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) is the umbrella organisation for tenants and residents' groups in Edinburgh and a Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO). ETF held a Members' Meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> September to find out their views on *Edinburgh Partnership Review and Consultation of Governance and Community Planning Arrangements*. This response represents the ETF Members' views on the questions most relevant to attendees at the event. ETF welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this discussion paper.

### 2.0 Community Participation

**2.1 Should community bodies continue to have a representative role in the new governance arrangements?** Yes. Community groups should have the final say, because they are paying for services.

**2.2 If you agree to community bodies being represented, which groups should be involved at each level, please identify and explain why?**

**Locality level.** All members of RTOs and individual tenants should be involved. Members of Community Councils should be involved too.

**Strategic/city-wide level.** All groups should be involved structurally as well.

However these groups need evidence that their involvement will make a difference in their communities. It is important that individual tenants who are not part of an RTO or a registered group be involved in the process too.

**2.3 Looking wider than a representative role, how do we ensure communities are involved and influence community planning in the city?** Participatory democracy rather than just representation. The structures have to be approachable and if anyone has any queries, it should be made clearer who they contact. All groups living in communities should be listened to.

**2.4 Do we need a community participation strategy to support the meaningful engagement in community planning?** Yes. Local people should be having a say in their respective areas. At present decisions are made "high up" that tenants don't have say in, i.e. the Council's housing infrastructure. Comments included:

- "We don't want top down hierarchy, we want participatory decision making".
- "We don't want projects suggested to us, we want to voice initiatives ourselves."

Several members in attendance stated that the current community planning structures are very complex and do not involve people at the grassroots level. The Strategy should be a bottom up approach and not top-down.

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### 3.0 Locality Level

**3.1 Do you agree there should be four locality Community Planning Partnerships?**  
Yes.

**3.2 If you agree to the establishment of Locality Community Planning Partnerships, which bodies/groups should be represented?** ETF believes the following bodies/groups should be represented:

- RTOs and tenants' groups that are not registered;
- Council tenants including individuals, vulnerable and sheltered housing tenants.

ETF had previously raised concerns about the NPs, as many only involved Community Councils and not RTOs. It was felt that that there was an unequal distribution of resources in many areas. The Locality Community Planning Partnerships should learn from the NPs and ensure that there is much more local involvement and resources are shared equally within localities.

**3.3 Thinking wider than the Locality Improvement Plans, are there other areas of responsibility the locality partnerships should oversee?**

It is important to create a clear definition of what community planning is and ensure local people know what it stands for. There needs to be more formal consultation procedures before changes are made in local areas. There needs to be more communication on the ground, in particular Housing Patch Officers should ensure tenants in their respective patches are aware of any issues and how they can become involved.

**3.4 The proposal is to no longer retain Neighbourhood Partnerships as part of the community planning governance structures, how do we ensure that all views and needs are meaningfully represented in a community planning partnership at locality level?**

It is important to involve people in the local community. ETF is concerned that that in many cases individuals can only speak at a Community Council meeting if they are a Community Councillor. It will be important to include all landlord's tenants. In many areas, community groups don't recognise social housing and there is little focus on tenants' issues. This must change under the new governance structures. There should be a bottom up approach, where the agenda is jointly set between officials, tenants and community groups.

**3.5 The existing partnerships have a traditional meeting based format, are there innovative and more accessible ways the Locality Community Planning Partnerships might work?**

Increasing digital awareness is very important in the Locality Community Planning partnerships. Can meetings/discussions be held on Skype or Zoom? If tenants had access to a tablet, they could contribute online and/or contribute to discussions from the comfort of their own home. They could even contribute to an online survey. Drop in sessions could be held in community facilities such as libraries, housing offices and community centres. ETF acknowledges that people may not want to attend meetings, particularly if they are held at night during the winter. If individuals do not have internet access, the option of a phone survey could be made available. Different levels of participation must be recognised.

**3.6 This proposal allows for the locality Community Planning Partnership to develop its own operational and engagement arrangements within the locality.**

**Do you agree the locality Community Partnership should do this? Yes.**

Although ETF broadly agrees with this, it will be important to proceed with caution. More information is needed about how local people can influence operational and engagement arrangements. It should be a bottom up approach. One of the criticisms of the Neighbourhood Partnerships is they are too fragmented and resources are being spent inadequately in areas. It will be important to acknowledge that 'one size does not fit all' and there are vast differences between localities.

**3.7 How could this new arrangement better link with the Edinburgh Partnership and its strategic partnership groups e.g. representation across the various partnerships?**

More information is needed on this. If the Community Planning Partnerships (CPP's) were to join the Edinburgh Partnership, the issues raised at the CCP may be diluted by the Edinburgh Partnership. It will be important to ensure this does not happen.

Edinburgh Tenants Federation  
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