

Tenants Voice

Issue 112 - March 2021



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

Rent and Council Tax Freeze

ETF representatives are pleased that City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) has agreed a city-wide freeze on council tax payments and a rent freeze for tenants in 2021–2022. We are sure everyone will agree that this is a fair and positive decision in light of the extremely challenging year we have all experienced. In previous years, ETF representatives have taken, in person, a deputation to the full Council regarding proposed rent increases, but this year's deputation was submitted in written format due to the current circumstances.

Points raised in ETF's written deputation included:

- ETF representatives would like to see CEC try to recoup the rent arrears from tenants which have built up during the pandemic rather than increase the rents;
- Rents should be made affordable as CEC tenants already pay the highest rents in Scotland;
- Many tenants are on low wages and at this time of year have to decide on whether to heat their homes or feed their families as they can't afford to do both;
- Tenants need to be able to afford to live in their homes;
- Research by the Poverty Commission demonstrated that more than 77,000 Edinburgh residents live in poverty—about 15% of the total population, including one in every five children. The research highlighted the housing crisis was a *"distinctively Edinburgh challenge because so many families are only dragged below the poverty line by an unaffordable rent"*.

ETF's Convenor Betty Stone commented, *"It's great news that CEC rents and council tax have been frozen. The last year, has been like no other in terms of the financial pressures tenants and other people have endured as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to continuing to work with CEC Officers and Councillors from all the political parties to ensure rents remain affordable."*

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.

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ETF Goes Virtual for Annual General Meeting

ETF's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is an event which everyone looks forward to, as we get the opportunity to celebrate the work done by the Federation during the year. This time however the current pandemic meant, like many organisations, things at ETF have been a bit different, resulting in our first online AGM held on Friday 27th November 2020, which was hailed a huge success by everyone who came along. Attendees were able to hear first-hand about all the innovative work that ETF has carried out throughout the year and we welcomed both familiar and new faces to the meeting.



Thanks to everyone who attended our first online AGM

Highlights included:

- An update on the work of CEC throughout the year from the Council's Chief Executive Andrew Kerr, followed by a question-and-answer session;
- Election of three new members to serve on the Federation's Executive Committee (EC): Damian May, West Cromwell, Persevere and Citadel Residents Association, Paul Vaughan, Gateside Tenants and Residents Association and Irina Lazarenko, Minorities Network Residents Association;
- Unanimous approval of proposed amendments to ETF's constitution;
- ETF's Annual Report and
- A fun quiz, which everyone enjoyed.

ETF's Convenor Betty Stone commented, *"I would like to thank everyone who attended our first hugely successful online AGM. I give my thanks to Andrew Kerr for attending and updating us on what CEC has been doing during this challenging time. I want to thank our EC and all the staff for their great work throughout the year. We seem to be doing more work than ever so a huge thank you to everyone who has helped make this a successful year despite the difficult circumstances."*

ETF Update on Office Closure

If you have been following ETF's work, you will know the Federation Office has been closed since we moved into lockdown in March 2020 and that staff continue to work from home to ensure the continued protection of both staff and service users from COVID-19. Despite these restrictions, ETF continues to operate effectively and staff can be contacted via email at info@edinburghtenants.org.uk or phone 0131 475 2509 and they will do their best to assist you.



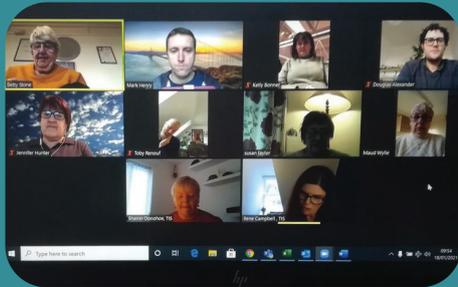
The Albion Trust continues to liaise with the Scottish Government, other Norton Park service users and ourselves and we will let you know when it is safe for Norton Park to re-open. In the meantime, stay safe and take care.

Working Online

In our last edition of *Tenants Voice*, (issue 111), we reported that due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, we have changed our approach to working by holding meetings online. This included upskilling our EC members and volunteers. Fast forward a few months and digital working and training remain top priorities for the Federation. If you would like to take part in the meetings, but are unsure about how to access them, don't worry as ETF will be able to offer the necessary support you may need. If you have a tablet, computer or smartphone and would like to know more or take part, please email mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk or phone 07918 742468.



Online EC Meeting



Online Tenant Participation and Scrutiny Framework Meeting



Online meeting with Convenor and Vice Convenor of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

ETF is very proud to say that we have continued to take part in online meetings over the past few months including:

- EC Meetings;
- ETF's AGM;
- Meetings with Councillors Campbell and Watt (Convenor and Vice Convenor of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee);
- Housing Service Improvement Plan Meetings;
- Repairs and Performance Meetings;
- Stair Cleaning Meetings;
- Tenant Participation and Scrutiny Framework Meetings.

There will be a further update in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.



IT / Digital Equipment

The University of Edinburgh IT Re-Use Project is back up and running after the first lockdown and is keen to donate more desktops, laptops, phones and tablets to local community organisations.

If you are interested or would like to find out more, please email SRS.Department@ed.ac.uk, phone 0131 651 3000 or visit <https://www.ed.ac.uk/sustainability/news/2020/it-reuse-project>.



Aid & Action

We, the Tollcross Community Action Network (TCAN), have long admired ETF, individually and as an organisation, so we are very grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this issue of *Tenants Voice*. We'd like to utilise this space to share a little about ourselves and outline the support we can offer to readers. If there's anything we can do or you'd like to become involved with our work, we're available via email at contactTCAN@gmail.com or by phoning 07871 258655.

Our team consists of:

- Luke Ray Campbell (Lead Development Worker);
- Rachel McCoubry (Co-Development Worker);
- Colette Wee (Co-Development Worker).

Between February 2017 and March 2020, TCAN provided a social space in partnership with the Tollcross Foodbank (a division of the Edinburgh Food Project), offering social and emotional support, assistance with arranging medical appointments, and general company over coffee, fresh snacks, and games of dominos. For some eighteen months, we also had an on-site Citizens Advice Worker, who along with our team of volunteers spent time building trusting and caring relationships and "supported-person-led" provision, primarily with those experiencing food poverty, long term precarity with their living situations and others with long term disabilities. The positive nature of our interactions led to several of our regular attendees describing the Community Hub as 'a fixture' in their week with many returning as and when they can, even if they are no longer experiencing food poverty. We miss those interactions now as people are no longer allowed to use the space offered to us by Central Halls.

Since the commencement of the social distancing guidelines last Spring, our practice has changed dramatically, but, as difficult as that has been for us, the circumstances many of those we support face have been a mixed bag, to say the least.

Whilst we have had testimonies chronicling the experiences of those who had been rough sleeping around Edinburgh, detailing the harassment they faced from police for being on the streets when they were advised to remain in their homes. Others were offered temporary spaces in the privately-run hotels that partnered with various charities and the Scottish Government. The nature of these changes has resulted in the cessation of our social space, though we have endeavoured to provide alternative forms of support with the assistance of a rapidly expanding team of volunteers, many of whom are working reduced hours, on furlough, or facing unemployment for the first time in their lives.

What we have managed to achieve over the last year, however, has included forming our own high demand Clothes bank - with donations coming from a wealth of local residents involved in Facebook Groups and community organisations and expanding our free book, CD, and DVD libraries. Though several of those we know who were previously in those precarious and temporary forms of housing have returned to the street, we are working to expand our provision based on expressed needs. Working with the Foodbank, we're able to signpost folk to an independent Welfare Advisor, whilst (dependent on the success of a range of funding applications and the ongoing capacity of our team) we hope to introduce a Telefriending service to replicate aspects of those weekly catchups with supported people until we can meet again; as well as an Energy Advice team who will assist people in reducing their energy bills.

Luke Campbell, Lead Development Worker, TCAN



Dealing with Debt and Help Available

One issue of concern for many tenants when the current 'lockdown' is over is the matter of debt. From rent and fuel to Council Tax, quite a few of us will be faced with the problem of not being able to manage the accumulation of unpaid bills. Whilst some tenants have been able to cope in the current situation, many others have accumulated debt through no fault of their own. This could be because of a lack of income due to being on furlough, reduced hours or loss of their current job. However, whatever the problem there is a solution and all it needs is taking the first step to seek help and support in resolving any issues. Help is available but you need to contact the appropriate person or department.



Once the current lockdown measures are lifted and if you are a CEC tenant, go along to your local Housing Offices or Hub and ask for the Housing Officer or a member of staff for assistance. All your discussions will be in confidence and you will find the staff very understanding and supportive. CEC also has an Income Maximisation Team that can help tenants struggling to cope with debt or any related problems. They provide positive action and support to enable you to get on a more even platform and reduce the worries associated with debt problems. They can be contacted on 0131 529 7905 or emailed at IncomeMaximisation@edinburgh.gov.uk.

DON'T DELAY.....GET HELP TODAY.

Davie Thomson, ETF EC member and Redbraes Residents Association

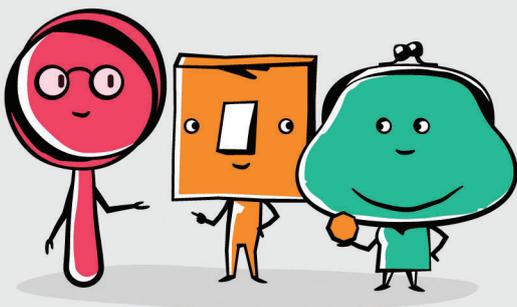
Addressing Fuel Poverty in Edinburgh

In November 2020, I had the opportunity to attend an online event which discussed ways to tackle fuel poverty as a result of the current pandemic. The event was chaired by Andy MacIver from Method Matters and the guest speakers included Phillipa Brown, Smart Energy, Gemma Shields, Hillcrest Housing Association and Lawrie Morgan Klein, Step Change.

The main topic of conversation was smart meters, and we were informed that they are a possible solution in dealing with fuel poverty. One benefit is that landlords can put money into tenants' smart meter accounts very quickly. I had the opportunity to ask a couple of questions, including:

- Who pays for the smart meter?
- Is the tenant tied to the supplier who installs the smart meter?

I was informed that the supplier pays for the smart meter the tenant is using. Furthermore, the meter is universal and will work with any energy company.



There was a general feeling from those in attendance that smart meters are helping to tackle fuel poverty, so perhaps this is the way forward, as many families living in Edinburgh often have to make the difficult decision about whether to heat their homes or feed their families during Winter as they can't afford to do both. I'm sure you will agree, anything that can help struggling families should be welcomed. Overall, it was a very useful and informative meeting.

Sue Taylor, ETF EC member and Chair of Willowbrae and Duddingston Residents Association

Locality Teams and Local Group Updates

As you will have read elsewhere in *Tenants Voice*, the COVID-19 pandemic has seen all face to face meetings suspended and replaced with Zoom and Microsoft Teams Meetings. These enable participants to stay at home or elsewhere and communicate via their tablets/phones/computers. ETF staff have worked hard to train up our volunteers to be more comfortable and familiar with these new methods.

Here is an update on what ETF's EC members and local groups have been involved in over the past few months.

North West Locality Report - Birnies Court

Here in Birnies Court we are all just trying our best to get on with what we can do. I class myself as one of the lucky ones who can still have lots of contact with both tenants and CEC staff. I have online meetings with CEC staff as well as face to face discussions with both the Concierge and Police at the recommended two-metre distance rule. We are still waiting on the Scottish Government giving the go ahead for the refurbishment of both Gunnet and May Courts because so much of the work will take place inside tenants' homes and we need to wait for permission for workers to be able to enter these premises. I have nothing but praise for Concierge staff as they have been out everyday cleaning and making sure the blocks are kept up to scratch and not one shift has been missed, so well done to everyone involved.



Betty Stone

North East Locality Report - Magdalene and Willowbrae

Our meetings with the Housing Locality Manager Libby Strong are going well. Due to the current lockdown, we are not able to hold discussions in person and can only meet on Microsoft Teams.



Libby thanked us for staying active and involved during this difficult time. Libby updated us on how the North East locality office is working with a skeleton staff who are on a rota only for emergencies like homelessness. Repairs had started up again slowly before this 2nd lockdown but are back to emergency only. Viewings of void housing had started but also had to be halted. We are awaiting an update on the Neighbourhood Environmental Projects as there are a lot of initiatives still waiting for the go ahead. There has been a lot of vandalism within Magdalene and Bingham, which includes the paladin bins being set on fire in

Magdalene and the bollards taken away between the Bingham and Niddrie Tunnel. This allowed cars to drive on the path, but the matter is being dealt with.

Libby wants to personally thank the Federation for allowing us to still have monthly meetings with her and it demonstrates that communication is still on the agenda despite the lock-down.

Nicol Johnstone and Sue Taylor

Willowbrae and Duddingston Residents Association

As you all know, here at Willowbrae, we got our lovely new summerhouse erected April last year. Unfortunately, social distancing measures meant we couldn't hold any events in the Summerhouse. We are planning ahead for when we can use it for bingo twice a week, a domino day, playing cards and hopefully in the summer we can have a barbeque.



We are very grateful to Ideal Flooring in Musselburgh for providing and laying flooring free of charge.

Sue Taylor

Hailesland Park Neighbourhood Council

Whilst there is the issue of COVID-19 affecting meetings etc, there has been a lot of goodwill and spirit within the area. Sadly, two stalwarts of the community, Ian Herschel and Betty Buchan passed away



recently. Ian was a great supporter of our work in the area and was always first in line to offer his assistance should there be a problem. Betty was Vice Chair of the Hailesland Park Neighbourhood Council and was also very active in the local area. Betty is survived by her husband John. Both Ian and Betty will be very sadly missed and we all offer our sympathy and condolences to both families at this difficult time.

Maud Wylie

West Cromwell, Persevere and Citadel Court Residents Association

Although present restrictions have meant that meetings between the Association and CEC have been reduced, contact has been maintained and practical progress made.

Community efforts have enabled the garden to take shape and when the better weather arrives, it will provide tenants with a pleasant space in which they can enjoy some fresh air, gardening or simply relax in. We have applied to CEC for grant funding to develop the space even more.

In terms of homes, fitting of the new upgraded fire doors is ongoing and discussion of other larger projects, such as the installation of the new windows continue. Hopefully, this will improve with the additional use of more Zoom meetings to maintain both transparency and momentum in all areas of tenant / CEC relations.



Damien May

Wharton Square Residents Group

As a member of the Regional Network of Tenants and Residents Groups which covers the whole of Scotland, we have been involved in drafting a letter to the Housing Minister, Kevin Stewart MSP. The letter advised that after an affordability questionnaire to all members of the Network, tenants need a rent freeze, because household incomes have been hit very hard by the Pandemic and that any rent increase will only increase the debt and hardship faced by thousands of families.

It's worth noting that so far seven Housing Associations have frozen rents for 2021/22. We are also having discussions with our Landlord Hillcrest Housing Association to give us use of a space which has lain empty for the last seven years; where tenants can meet up and socialise; dependent on current restrictions being lifted.

Terry Kirby

Gateside Tenants and Residents Association

We were struggling to achieve our goal in getting running water and drains put into the Community Hub, but I'm pleased to say we have moved a stage closer as the paperwork is now in order. We are scheduled to have a meeting with Scottish Water to go over the plans on site. We still haven't got a date when the work is due to be carried out, but we can now see the light at the end of the tunnel.



Over the last year I have received hundreds of complaints from residents and homeowners regarding the service Gateside receives from CEC. This includes repairs needing to be carried out in homes, potholes in roads and refuse collections not being done. We understand how difficult it has been due to the pandemic, but CEC still have to maintain their homes to a certain standard. Tenants have waited months on urgent repairs being carried out, but it's hard to even contact people just to make a complaint.



We managed to secure funding from the OneCity Trust to carry out external work on the Community Hub. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic it's been very hard to carry out most of the work. The planters and the concrete at the front are complete but work on the decking at the rear has stopped. This is due to

our insurance not going to cover us to carry out any other work until the pandemic lockdown is lifted, which we hope will be soon. We have also struggled to have materials on site as even timber companies were having difficulties in getting supplies. I'm hoping that within the next couple of weeks we will be allowed to complete the project, but it all depends on Scottish Government restrictions being lifted.

We hope to have an open day in the summer, so watch this space for further details.

Paul Vaughan

Thoughtful Quotes

'The quality of friendships is more important than the quantity of friends.'
- Anthony Douglas Williams

'There is no passion to be found in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.' - Nelson Mandela

'To thine own self be true.'
- William Shakespeare

News from CEC

Housing Service Improvement Group

Over the last couple of months, members of ETF have been working with CEC officers to develop a new tenant working group focusing on Housing Service improvement. The new Housing Service Improvement Group joins together two previous tenant working groups, Rent Matters Working Group and the Housing Revenue Account Scrutiny Group. The group will play an important role in supporting the delivery, and helping to monitor progress, of CEC's Housing Service Improvement Plan, which has been set up to improve performance, increase tenant satisfaction and reduce costs.

The work of the group will include:

- Considering regular updates on service improvement and providing feedback on proposals;
- Encouraging other tenants to take part in Housing Service Improvements;
- Helping to plan, promote and deliver the annual rent consultation;
- Helping with testing and reviewing proposed service improvements;
- Identifying and carrying out scrutiny projects, making recommendations for improvement.

The group are currently developing their work plan for the year ahead. Look out for further updates from the group, or if you'd like to get involved or find out more please contact HSIP@edinburgh.gov.uk.

You can also contact ETF's Development Worker Mark Henry on 07918 742468 or email mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk.

Robyn Barrie, Programme Manager, Housing Service Improvement Plan

CEC Budget Consultation

The tenants' budget consultation is so important because it's the time when tenants are able to have their say on how their rent money is spent and tell us what the priorities for investment should be.

COVID-19 has changed the way we are all living and working, and this budget consultation didn't escape without having to adapt either. With no door to door visits possible due to the lockdown restrictions we had to focus on different methods of communicating. However, that didn't stop tenants responding either online, over the telephone or through the paper copy we included in the Tenants Courier. The response has been fantastic, and we've had over a thousand tenants take part this year - with 98% of tenants who responded telling us they wanted to see more money spent on existing homes and estates and on building new CEC houses.

We are hearing the messages loud and clear. While the biggest priority is still the inside of tenants' homes, it's clear that communal areas, and the wider neighbourhood are important too. You told us you wanted your homes to be energy efficient, and you want well-designed shared courtyards and outdoor space.

Over half of the tenants who took part in the survey said more investment should be made to improve common areas to create safe and modern stairwells, improve bin stores and recycling facilities, as well as access to green, open spaces and local shops. A third of tenants who responded also said they would like improved transport links, sports facilities, community meeting spaces and access to community growing spaces as priority areas.

So, we'll be focussing on the issues and priorities you told us matter the most when we set out our plans for how to invest your rent money as part of the budget process this year. Thanks so much to everyone who took part and helped shape this year's process!



Councillor Kate Campbell

Powderhall

A really important part of our budget plans, alongside investing in existing homes and estates, is building new Council housing. Powderhall is one of our larger projects and it's just reached another major milestone with the planning application by Collective Architecture submitted last week for the first phase of a new development. Collective Architecture ran an extensive public consultation with the local community whose contributions have really shaped the proposals coming forward.



This phase will include a new Early Learning and Childcare Centre with places for 128 children and 27 accessible Council homes for older people above the centre. It will be one of the first intergenerational facilities like this in Scotland and will offer health and wellbeing benefits for the older residents and new learning and social opportunities for children attending the nursery.

It will also be one of the first Passivhaus-standard buildings built by the Council, meaning that it will be very energy efficient. Furthermore, all the properties will be fully wheelchair-adapted, accessible via two lifts and will have storage for mobility scooters and bikes.

The plans also include a new civic space as an entrance to Powderhall and improvements to St Mark's Path, alongside a new outdoor educational space for Broughton Primary School.

Councillor Kate Campbell, Convenor for Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

National News

Want to Campaign for More Social Housing?

Shelter Scotland are currently undertaking a campaign to encourage more social housing to be built in Scotland. Build Scotland's Future aims to get all the major political parties standing at this year's Scottish Parliament elections in May to commit to building 37,100 social homes. Over 18,000 people have signed Shelter Scotland's petition calling for more social housing, including ETF. So, if you're passionate about social housing and would like to see more being built in Scotland, why not sign the petition?

You can sign a copy of the petition at

https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/get_involved/campaigning/build_scotlands_future.

To find out more about the petition, please email Susie Rose at Susie_Rose@shelter.org.uk or phone 0344 515 2442.



LEZ Support Fund

Low Emission Zones (LEZs) are being introduced in Scotland's four largest cities: Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, next year. LEZs are a key initiative established to protect public health by reducing levels of air pollution from road traffic.

Vehicles that do not meet the minimum emission standards will face a penalty if they enter a Low Emission Zone. Generally, petrol cars registered before 2006 and diesel cars registered before September 2015 will not be allowed to enter a Low Emission Zone area. The date of vehicle registration is only a guide. Please check with your vehicle manual or the manufacturer.

Funding has been made available to help low-income families meet these requirements via the LEZ Support Fund.

Households in receipt of particular means-tested benefits can claim up to £3,000 through the LEZ Support Fund. This includes £2,000 which can be used to dispose of an older car. The money can be used to help replace it with an LEZ-compliant car or be invested in an alternative mode of transport. Additionally, up to two £500 'Travel Better' vouchers can be claimed for use towards sustainable travel options e.g. to buy a bike or e-bike and/or to purchase a bus or train season ticket. To be eligible, applicants must live within a 20km radius of the planned LEZs in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

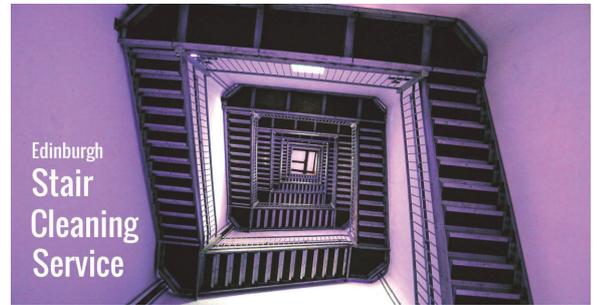
For more information on the LEZ Support Fund and to check your eligibility, please call 0808 808 2282 or visit the Energy Saving Trust website at <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/LEZ-support>.



Helping to Keep Your Stairs Clean

Tenement stairs are a unique part of Edinburgh's heritage and the stair cleaning service helps tenants and other residents to keep their stairs clean. The aim is to provide a reliable, value for money service that helps maintain the standard of the stairs and neighbourhoods for residents.

A simple Stair Cleaning survey was carried out in October 2020 to inform the approach to the next Stair Cleaning contract, which is due to start this summer. The survey was sent to more than 9000 tenants receiving the service in mainly low-rise tenement properties. 196 tenants responded, which although is too few to draw any significant conclusions, the results did provide a guide to tenant opinion and their preferred next steps. Two focus groups were also held with tenants and their feedback has also been considered.



In the survey tenants were asked to identify their preferred approach to the future stair cleaning service:

- A clear majority wanted the service to be kept as it is for the lowest price possible (with the service standard being met) (44%);
- A significant minority wanted to see fewer standard cleans with the savings made used to pay for more frequent deep cleaning (21%);
- The remaining 16% were willing to pay a little more to add in window and wall washing to a reachable height;
- (19%) of respondents did not answer this question.

Tenants were also asked how satisfied they are with the service. Responses varied widely but overall, the standard of the clean provided was the main driver for both satisfaction and dissatisfaction as follows:

- Very satisfied 11%;
- Satisfied 22%;
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 13%;
- Dissatisfied 24%;
- Very dissatisfied 26%;
- No response 4%.

Comments made by tenants satisfied with the service included references to good cleaning standards, polite / friendly / helpful staff, and regular attendance. Those dissatisfied were mainly concerned with the standard of the clean but some with work they thought should be being carried out that is not currently included in the specification (walls, windows, and railings) and others with owners not paying for the service nor taking their turn to clean them. Infrequent cleaning was also mentioned (stairs are cleaned weekly based on the number of tenants and private owners in the service, which can mean a monthly rather than a weekly clean where there are fewer tenants living in a stair).

In terms of improvements, suggestions made included:

- Ensuring the standard cleaning specification is met;
- Allowing more time for cleaning;
- Increased monitoring by CEC;
- Having CEC personnel clean rather than a contracted service;
- Pooling cleaning costs across all properties;
- Using hot soapy water rather than a spray and making sure mops are clean;
- Encouraging owners in mixed tenure stairs to join and pay for the service or take their turn to clean the stair;
- Displaying posters in all stairs to encourage a tidy stair and safe rubbish disposal;
- Providing recycling bags to tenants;
- Monthly deep cleaning, including walls and windows;
- Arranging for the stairwell and walls to be painted and upgrading cleaning products.

The information tenants provided is being used to inform the approach to the new Stair Cleaning contract. Thank you to everyone who took part. For further information on the stair cleaning service, email Stair.Cleaning2@edinburgh.gov.uk, call 0131 529 6695 or visit www.edinburgh.gov.uk/staircleaning. For an emergency clean on a public holiday, weekend or outwith office hours call 0131 200 2000 or 0800 0325968.

Sam Reeves, Senior Housing Development Officer, CEC

Convenor's Report



Welcome to my first Convenor's Report of 2021. Unfortunately, due to the current circumstances, the Federation office remains closed and staff continue to work from home. This means we are still holding meetings online and will continue to do so for the next few months at least. It has been particularly frustrating not being able to hold face to face meetings, but we are still delivering on our work and it has been a very busy period for the Federation. We held our ETF High Flats, Repairs and Federation Meetings in the past couple of months and I have been impressed with the level of discussions that have been taking place.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Damian May, Paul Vaughan and Irina Lazarenko to our Executive Committee (EC). They were all elected at our AGM, held in November. They have already struck up a good working relationship with other EC members and staff and it's great to have them on board. Other EC members have continued to hold online meetings with senior City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) housing staff in their respective localities.

I have been very actively involved over the past few months. I have attended meetings of the Every Life Counts Group and I hold meetings with senior CEC staff in my locality. I spent the early part of the year talking to the Councillors from each of the political groups on the Council to ask for a rent freeze for CEC tenants. Normally, I would take a deputation to Councillors, but I was unable to do so this year, therefore I had to submit a written paper. I am delighted that a rent and council tax freeze has been granted for one year.

I would like to ask everyone to continue to stay safe during these difficult and uncertain times. I know it's been a very difficult 12 months for everyone, but hopefully we are beginning to see a light at the end of the tunnel. We continue to work with CEC Officers and Councillors to ensure those that are suffering have the necessary help and support. If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us and we will do our best to help you.

Dates for your diary

The Federation Office will be closed for the following Public Holidays:

Friday 2nd April 2021 (Good Friday)

Monday 19th April 2021 (Spring Holiday)

Monday 24th May 2021 (Victoria Day)

Monday 5th April 2021 (Easter Monday)

Monday 3rd May 2021 (May Day)

Repairs Group Meeting

Wednesday 19th May 2021,

Zoom, time to be confirmed

High Flats Group Meeting

Monday 7th June 2021,

Zoom, time to be confirmed

Federation Meeting

Wednesday 23rd June 2021, Zoom, time to be confirmed

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 for more information.

Tenants Voice is usually published three 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 to our next edition, please do so by the following deadline:

Copy deadline for June 2021 edition - Monday 24th May 2021

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