

# Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 20 January 2022

## Tenant Participation and Community Engagement

Executive/Routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
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### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee is asked to:
  - 1.1.1 Agree to fund Edinburgh Tenants' Federation (ETF) for a further two years to 31 March 2024, on a maximum standstill budget of £241,083 per annum;
  - 1.1.2 Agree to fund the Neighbourhood Alliance (NA) for a further year up to 31 March 2023 on a maximum standstill budget of £67,200 per annum;
  - 1.1.3 Note that the funding for both organisations will be released in six-monthly instalments, subject to evidence of delivery against key outputs, outcomes and improvement actions as set in Service Level Agreements (SLAs); and
  - 1.1.4 Approve the approach to the Tenant Scrutiny Framework, which has been developed in conjunction with ETF and the Tenant Information Service (TIS), to support the delivery of the Tenant Participation Strategy (TPS) 2020-2023 objectives and effective scrutiny by tenants on the performance of Council services.

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## Tenant Participation and Community Engagement

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 The report seeks agreement for Edinburgh Tenants' Federation (ETF) to be funded for a further two years from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024 and the Neighbourhood Alliance (NA) for one year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 to support tenant participation and engagement.
- 2.2 The funding for both organisations will be subject to ongoing evidence being provided of delivery of the set outputs, outcomes and improvement actions. Initiatives to support the delivery of Tenant Participation Strategy (TPS) 2020-2023 objectives, areas of improvement and specific actions relevant to each organisation are set out in separate Service Level Agreements (SLAs). The SLAs will be closely monitored and reviewed on a six-monthly basis.
- 2.3 A revised Tenant Scrutiny Framework has been developed in consultation with ETF, local tenant and resident groups, and with independent support from the Tenant Information Service (TIS), to ensure that tenants can continue to participate and scrutinise Council services effectively.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) requires social landlords to 'consult tenants on proposals that affect them and take account of their views'. All social landlords must also have a TPS which sets out the support, resources and actions to enable tenants to participate. The current TPS for the period 2020-2023 was approved by Committee on [20 January 2020](#).
- 3.2 The [Scottish Housing Regulator](#) monitors tenant participation, emphasising the importance of tenants and social landlords scrutinising services together to improve performance and ensure value for money. This now also forms part of the Annual Assurance Statement for the Housing Service.
- 3.3 Also, within the report on 20 January 2020, Committee agreed to fund ETF up to 31 March 2022. Agreement to fund the NA for one year up to the 31 March 2021 was approved by the Leadership Advisory Panel on [31 March 2020](#). As per the recommendations in this report the funding was subject to delivery against priorities and outcomes set in SLAs.

## 4. Main report

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### Edinburgh Tenants Federation

- 4.1 ETF plays an important role in representing tenants and supporting local residents and Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) to participate and influence decisions. The current funding for ETF was approved for a two-year period up until 31 March 2022. The aim of providing funding over the longer period was to provide more stability for the organisation and to ensure tenants views could continue to be considered in shaping the priorities and changes being implemented through the Housing Service Improvement Programme (HSIP).
- 4.2 The provision of funding was, and will continue to be, subject to delivery of initiatives and areas for improvement that are jointly developed and agreed with ETF and set in an SLA. The SLA is covered by the standard Council terms and conditions and sets out expected outputs and the long-term outcomes.
- 4.3 Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, ETF have adapted their ways of working to continue to support tenants and ensure they were still able to participate and share their views. They also worked flexibly with Council officers in order to overcome the unique challenges of the pandemic and to continue to deliver against the SLA outcomes where practicable and safe to do so. The required six-monthly reviews were completed, with evidence provided of the progress and delivery against the agreed SLA.
- 4.4 Areas of work taken forward by ETF during the Covid-19 pandemic and as set in the SLA include:
  - 4.4.1 Supporting RTOs facing challenges as a result of the pandemic. ETF have continued to maintain strong links to groups, making sure they have the skills, knowledge and resources to provide a local voice for tenants;
  - 4.4.2 Working to encourage new members and potential groups and they have also been able to elect a new member on to their Executive Committee;
  - 4.4.3 Increasing digital engagement, which was a key outcome set in the SLA. ETF utilised opportunities arising from the Covid pandemic to encourage and support tenants to engage digitally. They have continued to operate effectively through on-line meetings with their members, the Council and have also held their last two Annual General Meetings, required under their constitution, as online events; and
  - 4.4.4 Securing additional funding to provide mobile devices to local groups and individual tenant members. They have also shared their learning to help tenants get online and utilise new ways of engaging with the Council and their local communities.
- 4.5 ETF have continued to engage TIS to help them complete the improvements agreed in the SLA around strengthening the governance and conduct practices of members within the organisation. TIS have helped them resolve some challenging issues and embed best practice in tenant participation and engagement. As an

independent organisation TIS have also facilitated the work taken forward to develop the revised scrutiny framework. TIS will continue to provide support to ETFs volunteer members in staff management and development and to help ETF to continue adapt as an organisation to deliver the priorities for the organisation and the SLA requirements.

### **Tenant Scrutiny Framework**

- 4.6 Tenant scrutiny aligns with and builds on other forms of tenant participation and is an important element of improving performance and the standard of services being delivered to tenants. The development of a revised Tenant Scrutiny Framework was agreed as a priority in the last ETF SLA.
- 4.7 Officers from the Council's housing service, ETF and local tenant/resident groups worked together with independent support from TIS to review the established arrangements for tenant participation and scrutiny. The revised framework will continue to cover the service areas that are a priority for tenants and will set out a streamlined governance structure of groups so that tenants can continue to participate and provide scrutiny effectively. Standard principles/codes of conduct will be in place for groups, remits agreed by the group members and clear routes in place to escalate any concerns and to make recommendations. The effectiveness of the framework will be monitored on an ongoing basis and will be adapted as required.
- 4.8 The NA role and the work they undertake on local community engagement is included within the scrutiny framework, but it is noted that their role is focused in the North East Locality.
- 4.9 An overview of the revised Tenant Scrutiny Framework is included in Appendix 1.

### **Neighbourhood Alliance**

- 4.10 The NA continues to provide a range of advocacy support for tenants and community groups/initiatives in the North East Locality. The focus historically and currently remains to support community engagement and influence in relation to the ongoing regeneration of Craigmillar Town Centre and more recent developments such as the estates management investment project in the Magdalene area.
- 4.11 The NA capacity to deliver on the areas covered in the last SLA were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Some changes have been made to the governance of the organisation, which has now merged with the Community Alliance Trust (CAT) in the Niddrie Craigmillar area. NA are continuing to focus on community engagement but are also providing project support to CAT. This is expected to ensure maximum benefit for the local community from the funding available.
- 4.12 The SLA for the NA is being finalised and, as well as supporting the TPS objectives, it also includes outputs and outcomes that focus on current activities in the local community and actions to finalise the changing governance arrangements for the NA Management Committee and the CAT Board. With the changing landscape for community engagement, another key focus for the current SLA will be for the NA to look at innovative ways to engage with tenants and increase local involvement

including through digital channels. The provision of the funding will be subject to evidence of progress against the agreed SLA.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 The ETF SLA for 2022/23 will be finalised based around the TPS objectives, the priorities in ETFs workplan agreed with members and HSIP and to build on the progress that has been made on actions during the period of the previous SLA. An updated SLA will be agreed in due course for the subsequent years funding.
- 5.2 The NA SLA for 2022/23 will also support the TPS objectives but will also focus on areas of action to formalise some of the recent changes in governance and to increase local tenant and resident involvement in ongoing community development and regeneration.
- 5.3 Funding for both ETF and NA will be transferred in six monthly blocks and, subject to delivery against their individual SLAs, evidence of the organisation's spend each period and copies of annual accounts being provided.
- 5.4 The revised Tenant Scrutiny Framework will be implemented.
- 5.5 The Tenant and Resident Services Manager will meet regularly with ETF and NA to ensure that the requirements of the SLAs are being delivered and the required evidence of progress, spend and the six-monthly reviews are provided.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 The cost to the HRA of extending ETF funding from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024 would be £482,166 (£241,083 per annum). The cost of funding to the NA from 1 April 2022 up to 31 March 2023 would be £67,200. Payments will be released in six-monthly blocks with both organisations required to provide thorough six-monthly reports on spend and annual accounts for review.
- 6.2 Social landlords are required to make resources available to support tenant participation and engagement. Provision for the funding being recommended of £549,366 is included within the HRA Business Plan.
- 6.3 Funding for tenant participation and engagement ensures that tenants' views continue to inform and influence the Council's approach to delivering services and the work being taken forward through the HSIP and to support ongoing development and regeneration.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 This report has been informed by ongoing discussions with stakeholders and the services involved to ensure that the approach taken by the organisations through these SLAs supports the implementation of the TP Strategy, the revised Tenant Scrutiny Framework, the HSIP and ensures effective community engagement in areas of the city where there is ongoing development and regeneration.

- 7.2 The revised Tenant Scrutiny Framework sets out the range of ways the housing services works with tenants and provides a structure to enable them to share their views and influence decisions on the services they receive.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 [Tenant Participation and Community Engagement](#)
- 8.2 [Neighbourhood Alliance- Grant Funding Payment](#)

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 Appendix 1 –Tenant Scrutiny Framework Overview.

## APPENDIX 1

### City of Edinburgh Council – Tenant Scrutiny Framework Overview

The Council consults and engages with tenants to make sure that services are scrutinised and to support the Tenant Participation Strategy. Working with Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF), Neighbourhood Alliance (NA), Tenant Groups (RTOs) and individual tenants, a range of methods of engagement are used, such as working groups, Tenant Led inspections (TLIs), consultations and surveys.

The tenant scrutiny framework sets out the range of participation, engagement and independent scrutiny activities and how these activities enable tenants to influence decisions and service improvements.

#### Governance

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee has executive responsibility for approval of funding, strategy and regulatory assurance that covers tenant participation and engagement. Operational governance of the approved funding is monitored on an ongoing basis, with six-monthly evidence-based reviews of delivery against the service level agreements for ETF and NA and as part of grant funding for RTOs.

#### Tenant Scrutiny Activities

Tenant participation and scrutiny structures cover the range of activities and groups that are in place to involve tenants. This includes;

- City wide Council and ETF meetings on key areas of service;
- Locality based tenant participation, projects and community engagement activity including the NA in the North East locality;
- Specific participation and scrutiny approaches such as TLIs and focus groups;
- Direct engagement with tenants, such as the annual budget consultation, tenant surveys and through individual interested tenants on the Tenant Panel; and
- Regular communications between the Council and tenants.

The recent review identified how the scrutiny structures were working and made recommendations on a revised approach to groups/meetings. An independent scrutiny panel is also now included in the framework. This will help to improve accountability, effectiveness, and support the work being taken forward on Housing Service Improvement.

#### Core Principles and Objectives

- Consistency - remits and member codes of conduct set for groups;
- Support for city-wide groups to be clearly identified e.g. Council, ETF, Tenant Information Service (TIS) development workers;
- Clear lines for reporting, making recommendations and escalation of issues between groups;
- Evidence based assessments and recommendations;
- Focus on influencing decisions for tenants not individual interests and priorities;
- Continue to utilise opportunities for digital participation; and
- Reporting and transparency of activities through regular communications to tenants.

The scrutiny activities and structures have been streamlined and work is underway to complete the required review of groups in line with the revised approach and core principles.