

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 3 October 2023

Tenant Participation and Community Engagement 2024/27

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
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1. Recommendations

- 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 2026, on a maximum standstill budget of £241,083 per annum; and
 - 1.1.2 Note the update on Neighbourhood Alliance (NA); and
 - 1.1.3 Note that a report will be prepared for Committee in December 2023 on funding and support for community engagement in North East locality.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Elaine Scott, Head of Housing Strategy and Development

E-mail: elaine.scott@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 2277

Tenant Participation and Community Engagement 2024/27

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report provides an update on tenant participation activities in 2023/24, the development of a new Tenant Participation Strategy (TPS) and seeks agreement of funding for Edinburgh Tenants' Federation (ETF) for a further two years from 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2026 to support tenant participation and engagement. A report on funding and support for community engagement in the North East Locality will be prepared for Committee in December 2023.

3. Background

- 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.
- 3.2 On [20 January 2022](#), Committee agreed to fund ETF up to 31 March 2024 on a maximum standstill budget of £241,083 per annum. The Neighbourhood Alliance (NA) was funded for a further year up to 31 March 2023 on a maximum standstill budget of £67,200 per annum. As per the report recommendations, the funding was subject to delivery against priorities and outcomes set in Service Level Agreements (SLAs).
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 Committee also approved the Tenant Participation Strategy 2020/23 as part of the report in January 2022. The strategy was shaped through consultation and input from tenants, resident groups and ETF. The strategy focused on making sure that tenants know the different ways they can become involved; can take part and influence decisions if they want to; have the support and resources they need to take part; and can help to develop quality services.

- 3.5 To support the delivery of the TPS, a Tenant Scrutiny Framework has been developed in consultation with ETF and tenants and with independent support from the Tenant Information Service (TIS), to ensure that tenants can continue to participate and scrutinise Council services effectively. Implementation of the framework is a priority of the current SLA.

4. Main report

Edinburgh Tenants Federation

- 4.1 ETF play 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 2024. The aim of providing funding over the longer period was to provide more stability for the organisation and financial security so recruitment could be carried out. Longer term funding will ensure that tenants' views can continue to be considered in shaping the priorities and changes being implemented through the Housing Service Improvement Programme (HSIP) and longer term budget strategies.
- 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 out in an SLA. The SLA is covered by the standard Council terms and conditions and sets out expected outputs and the long-term outcomes. Ongoing reviews and regular meetings with officers are required, with evidence provided of the progress and delivery against the agreed SLA.
- 4.3 Areas of work taken forward by ETF includes:
- 4.3.1 Building on opportunities created by the Covid-19 pandemic and developing innovative ways to engage with tenants. This included making best use of digital media to engage with more tenants and greater use of telephone/video conferencing to enable all tenants to take part. New ways of communicating and engaging with tenants are also being developed, such as the creation of a new comic which will use tenants' experiences to explore issues such as tackling stigmas and their sense of community;
- 4.3.2 Fully implementing the recommendations of the Tenant Scrutiny Framework. The Housing Repairs Scrutiny Group and Sheltered Housing Scrutiny Group have already agreed new remits and priorities for future meetings. A new Tenant Scrutiny Group, to help coordinate tenant activities and scrutiny, will be formed by the end of the year;
- 4.3.3 Supporting RTOs which may have stopped meeting as a result of the pandemic and the formation of new groups. 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. Examples of groups which have been supported include: the Calders Sheltered Housing Group, the

Craigmillar/Oxcars Regeneration Group and Hailesland Park Neighbourhood Council;

4.3.4 Supporting the development of a new TPS 2024/27;

4.3.5 Providing feedback on the new TPS and supporting engagement with tenants and RTOs so that tenants have the opportunity to set out their priorities and how they want to participate. An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) will be completed with ETF to inform the development of the strategy; and

4.3.6 Focusing on a comprehensive and innovative approach to tenant engagement, embracing traditional methods but embracing digital opportunities, video conferencing, focus groups and membership of estate improvement groups. Appendix 1 highlights early measures, actions and initiatives to support the SLA and review of the TPS. Other areas of discussion include:

- Online platforms for surveys, discussions and feedback collection;
- Ongoing schedule of clear communication to keep tenants informed, engaged and with opportunities for input;
- Inclusive events, collaborative projects and mobile alerts to gain ideas to improve shared space within HRA land assets;
- Multilingual materials to ensure all tenants can understand and engage; and
- Clear objectives that define the purpose and goals.

4.4 ETF have continued to work closely with TIS, who provide support to the ETF Board, to complete the improvements agreed in the SLA and to take on board advice on strengthening governance and conduct within the organisation. TIS will continue to provide support to ETFs volunteer members in staff management and development and to help ETF to continue to adapt as an organisation to deliver the priorities for the organisation and the SLA requirements.

4.5 Officers are satisfied that ETF has been able to evidence delivery against the SLA outcomes and recommend that Committee agrees to ETF for a further two years to 31 March 2026, on a maximum standstill budget of £241,083 per annum. Annual audited accounts provide a detailed outline of ETF's expenditure. Staffing costs, TIS support fees and operating costs, such as premise and printing costs, are the highest area of expenditure.

Neighbourhood Alliance

4.6 The NA has historically provided a range of advocacy support for tenants, residents and community groups/initiatives in the North East Locality, focusing on community engagement and influence in relation to regeneration at Craigmillar. The current funding for the NA was approved for a one-year period up until 31 March 2023.

- 4.7 An SLA was drafted, focusing on supporting the delivery of TPS objectives and for the NA to look at innovative ways to engage with tenants and increase local involvement. Actions were agreed to finalise the changing governance arrangements for the NA Management Committee and the Community Alliance Trust Board.
- 4.8 Unfortunately, 2022/23 was a particularly difficult year for the NA with the passing of four long term Directors. This left a large gap in management support, knowledge, and guidance of the service as a whole. The NA has now recruited six new Directors who have experience of local management committees and the wider community in general. The NA are in the process of employing a training consultant to support new Directors and the NA Manager has deferred retirement for the time being.
- 4.9 Due to the above difficulties, the draft SLA was not finalised, and no funding has yet been provided by the Council in 2023/24. Officers will engage with the NA to review the draft SLA, consider funding options and bring a report to next Committee on funding and support for community engagement in North East locality. Despite the difficulties experienced by the NA in the last 12 months, they have managed to re-establish the Craigmillar Regeneration Forum, continued to provide a community food hub, undertake numerous community walkabouts and supported the Bingham Growers Association. ETF also continue to support tenants across the North East locality, such as working with local tenants in relation to the development of Estate Improvement Groups and providing input from tenants from Craigmillar and Peffermill Courts to the High Flats Investment Strategy.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The SLA with ETF will be updated for 2023/24 to 2025/26 to focus on building on the progress that has been made on actions during the period of the current SLA and to support the development and delivery of the new TPS 2024/27.
- 5.2 Funding for ETF will be transferred in six monthly blocks and, subject to delivery against the SLA, evidence of the ETF'S expenditure each period and copies of annual accounts being provided.
- 5.3 A report on funding and support for community engagement in North East locality will be presented to Committee in December 2023.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The cost to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of extending ETF funding from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2026 would be £482,166 (£241,083 per annum). Grant funding covers three staff posts, a support contribution to the Tenants Information Service, pension contributions and staff training. Payments will be released in six-monthly blocks, subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 5.2.

- 6.2 Social landlords are required to make resources available to support tenant participation and engagement. Provision for the funding being recommended of £482,166 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 make sure they deliver value for money.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 ETF provide support and advice services for tenants and other RTOs. They also support the delivery of the TPS and ensure that all tenants have an opportunity to participate and influence services. Implementation of the Scrutiny Framework will ensure that tenants and social landlords are scrutinising services together to improve performance and ensure value for money.
- 7.2 An IIA will be completed at part of the development of the TPS 2024/27.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There are no adverse environmental implications arising from this report. Digital and innovative ways of engaging may reduce carbon emissions by removing unnecessary travel. Work is ongoing to support more tenants and other residents to engage actively in the development of policies and practices that support sustainable living, e.g. community gardens.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 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 SLA supports the implementation of the TPS, the revised Tenant Scrutiny Framework, the HSIP and ensures effective community engagement in areas of the city where there is ongoing development and regeneration.
- 9.2 Consultations and discussions with stakeholders will inform the development of the TPS 2024/27. An IIA will be completed as part of the development of a new strategy with the support of ETF.
- 9.3 Funding is subject to delivery against the SLA, evidence of spend each period and copies of annual accounts being provided. Regular meetings take place with ETF to ensure that the requirements of the SLA are being delivered. ETF will continue to work with TIS to strengthening the governance and conduct practices of members within the organisation.

10. Background reading/external references

10.1 Tenant Participation and Community Engagement, Monday 20 January 2020

11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1 - Initiatives and measures to support delivery of the 2023/24 SLA outcomes and the TPS 2023/27.

Appendix 1

Initiatives and measures to support delivery of 2023/24 SLA outcomes and the Tenant Participation Strategy 2023/27

Initiative	Key output measures	Long-term outcome measures
Engage with and support the Council to develop a new Tenant Participation 2024-27, including an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Input into consultation place and process to gather tenants' views. - Promote consultation with tenants and ETF members. - Evidence that ETF are involved in informing the IIA and supporting any relevant actions identified. 	Tenants are satisfied with the opportunities given to them to take part in their landlord's decision-making processes. (Tenant Survey reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator at minimum every three years).
Develop innovative ways to engage with tenants, including making best use of digital media, including greater use of telephone/video conferencing to enable all tenants to continue to be able to take part.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work plan includes a range of innovative engagement and digital initiatives. - ETF's digital platform is strengthened. - Traditional measures will be used to continue dialogue with those who are unable to take part digitally (post/phone). 	Evidence of a range of innovative engagement approaches being used indicate that tenants are satisfied with the opportunities given to them to take part in their landlord's decision-making processes. (Tenant Survey).
Tenant Scrutiny Framework to be fully implemented by CEC and ETF jointly to support the delivery of the Tenant Participation Strategy and the Housing Service Improvement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remits of the Sheltered Housing Scrutiny Group (SHSG) and Housing Repairs Scrutiny Group (HRSG) agreed by 30 June 2023. - Remit and the formation of a new Tenants Scrutiny Group (TSG) by 31 August 2023. - All groups agree standard terms and conditions. 	Tenants are satisfied with the opportunities given to them to take part in their landlord's decision-making processes. (Tenant Survey). Any negative impacts of the TPS have been mitigated.
Quarterly video conferencing meetings with senior managers to assist with prioritising work and preparatory business planning meetings as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings have taken place and actions are being progressed. - Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan regularly reviewed and updated. 	Evidence of a more streamlined and coherent approach to tenant participation and engagement work.

CEC and ETF to jointly review actions agreed following the completion of the rent collection tenant led inspection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review report produced by 30 November 2023. 	More tenants will be satisfied with services (Tenant Survey).
Progress a mini tenant led inspection of a service area to be agreed. Develop methods that can be used safely and mitigate any tenant concerns, e.g. telephone surveys.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approach developed and inspectors recruited by 30 June 2023. - Inspection completed by 30 November 2023. 	Recommendations from the tenant led inspection will be helping to improve the service provided to tenants.
Continue with proactive work in the localities on housing and with other key service areas such as the Contact Centre to inform and improve the front facing customer service that tenants experience. This may be digital/telephone/socially distant contact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ETF will update on EC member liaison in each of the localities by 30 September 2023. - Joint actions agreed with each locality and updates will continue to be reported to regular ETF meeting with CEC senior Managers 	More tenants will be satisfied with services (Tenant Survey)
Support ongoing tenant participation in a range of policy initiatives, including, rents, allocations and other strategic work such as the Housing service Improvement Plan (HSIP), e.g. repairs, tenant participation, stair-cleaning and work on mixed tenure initiatives (ongoing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence that ETF is supporting tenants on the Housing Service Improvement Group (HSIG). - Evidence that ETF is supporting a wide range of tenants to take part in ongoing strategic work 	Tenants will be satisfied with their opportunities to take part (Tenants' Survey). Assessed as part of ongoing joint evaluation of initiatives and the annual review and impact assessment
Jointly with the housing service, promote the Neighbourhood Networks to tenants to strengthen the tenant voice in the localities (ongoing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotional material circulated to tenants via CEC and ETF communications, including on ways to become involved and feedback on impact of tenant contribution. 	More tenants will be influencing local work (evidence of tenant input)
Support tenants to form new Registered Tenant Organisation and help groups which may want to re-register as RTOs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information is provided to CEC to update the Register of RTOs, evidencing increased number of groups operating and meeting regularly agreed by 30 September 2023 	Tenants will be satisfied with their opportunities to take part (Tenants' Survey).
Complete a joint mid-point review with CEC on progress with delivery of the 2023/24 SLA outputs and outcomes and the IIA (midpoint year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review completed and evaluation report agreed by 30 November 2023 - Actions for improvement added to future SLAs as appropriate 	Future SLAs strengthened.

Improvement actions to be delivered by ETF

Action	Output measure	Outcome measure
<i>Strengthen the ETF Executive Committee (EC)</i>		
Secure the involvement of a range of people with diverse backgrounds and skills	Promotional material	Increased membership
Effective induction and ongoing learning and development are essential.	Learning plan and event summaries	Strengthened EC (EC survey, membership and stakeholder views)
<i>Shared understanding of views and data</i>		
Clear understanding from EC members on their representative role for ETF and their personal views/circumstances. This is particularly important in accurately representing the work and priorities for ETF/membership in meetings with external parties, elected members etc	ETF EC demonstrate this understanding through their actions.	
<i>Strategic focus and planning of priorities</i>		
ETF work plan to ensure clear strategic direction and focus on members' priorities	Updated work plan developed and agreed with the membership by 30 September 2023	Member satisfaction with ETF Ongoing review and regular reporting
Value for money to be ensured for the Housing Revenue Account.	ETF to provide six monthly financial reports to CEC: 30 Sept 2023 and 31 March 2024	SLA delivered within budget
<i>Monitoring and review</i>		
Complete a joint mid-point review with CEC on progress with delivering the specific actions set out in this Table B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review complete and evaluation report agreed by 31 October 2023 - Any further improvement actions required to be added future SLAs as appropriate 	Future SLAs are strengthened and delivered effectively