

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Monday, 20 January 2020

Tenant Participation and Community Engagement

Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All
Council Commitments	1,2,41,44

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee:
- 1.1.1 approves the new Tenant Participation Strategy 2020/2023; and
 - 1.1.2 agrees to fund Edinburgh Tenants' Federation (ETF) for a further two years, on a maximum standstill budget of £241,083 per annum, subject to ongoing review and progress against the delivery of key outputs, outcomes and improvement actions.

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Tenant Participation and Community Engagement

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report seeks approval of an updated Tenant Participation Strategy (TPS) and summarises improvements made by ETF to strengthen the service and participation role they provide, through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) currently funded until 31 March 2020, that supports the delivery of the TPS objectives.
- 2.2 The report seeks agreement for ETF to be funded for a further two years from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2022, subject to ongoing review and progress against the delivery of key outputs, outcomes and improvement actions. These will be set out in the SLA and will be monitored and reviewed on a six-monthly basis.
- 2.3 The report also notes that work is underway to finalise the continued approach to funding of the Neighbourhood Alliance (NA) to support regeneration and place making in the North East Locality. Any future funding proposal will be reported to Committee for approval.

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'. Tenant groups can register with their landlord to strengthen their rights to information and to take part. All social landlords must also have a TPS which sets out the support and actions to enable tenants to participate.
- 3.2 The [Scottish Social Housing Charter](#) requires social landlords to ensure that 'tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with'. Participation is distinct from but complements other consultation and engagement with tenants through activities such as focus groups and surveys.
- 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. The first statement for the service was agreed by Committee on [31 October 2019](#).

- 3.4 The [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) aims to ensure that all citizens can get involved and help make important decisions; it sets out community planning arrangements and how people can request to participate.
- 3.5 On [30 August 2018](#), the Housing and Economy Committee agreed to extend funding for ETF to 31 March 2020 subject to performance improvement milestones in the revised SLA being met. Since then work has been ongoing to improve monitoring and evaluation processes in respect of both organisations to ensure the delivery of key initiatives, which are measured against progress on short term outputs and longer-term outcomes that support and strengthen tenant participation and community engagement across the city.
- 3.6 The ETF SLA has been jointly developed with ETF and agreed with them. The actions describe expected key outputs and the long-term outcomes sought and make clear ETF's responsibilities and the expected timescales for these to be progressed. Some actions are joint and/or need to be agreed and progressed with the Council.

4. Main report

- 4.1 All social landlords must have a TPS setting out support and actions to enable tenants to participate in the delivery and development of the Housing Service. The TPS has been updated for the period 2020/23. It has been developed with tenants and builds on previous strategies, achievements and activities. A copy is provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Consultation on the strategy has confirmed that tenants want the Housing Service to continue to ensure that tenants' views are taken on board to help shape and improve housing conditions and services, with increased transparency and accountability to tenants and greater tenant influence. They want to ensure that tenants really 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. An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is being completed and this will inform the iterative Action Plan.
- 4.3 The draft TPS 2020/23 is recommended for approval by Committee. The actions and outcomes set out in the ETF SLA will assist with meeting the objectives of the TPS. It will also support the delivery of the Housing Service Improvement Plan.

Edinburgh Tenants Federation

- 4.4 ETF plays an important role in representing tenants and supporting local residents and Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) to participate and influence decisions. The ETF SLA 2019/20 focuses on supporting the delivery of the agreed TP Strategy outcomes referred to at 4.2. It sets out specific tenant participation initiatives and measures, key improvement actions to support and strengthen ETF, a timetable and performance dashboard and it also includes the standard Council terms and conditions.

- 4.5 As reported to the Housing and Economy Committee on [30 August 2018](#), the improvement actions were agreed to strengthen ETF's capacity to deliver the defined outputs and outcomes set out in the SLA and to ensure a more constructive working relationship that reflects wider tenants' views. Communication protocols are now in place, including a requirement for ETF to clarify the scope of any representations made to the Council by them on behalf of tenants.
- 4.6 As a voluntary member organisation, ETF have faced some challenges due to gaps in staff support. To address this, ETF proactively put in place some assistance for the organisation through the Tenants' Information Service (TIS) within their existing funding. The work TIS have been involved in includes help with managing some employer/employee matters; looking at approaches to long-term staff management requirements; finalising the move for the organisation from being an unincorporated voluntary body to becoming a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) and ongoing work to review the organisation's governance and learning requirements. This work is supporting areas of improvement that were set out as a requirement of the current SLA.
- 4.7 TIS have initially been assisting ETF with early work to consider a long-term approach for staff management and support within the organisation to reduce the volunteer members direct responsibilities for employing and managing staff. Council officers have been involved as appropriate in these discussions and have emphasised the benefits of increasing capacity for the volunteers on the management committee to focus on delivery of the SLA requirements and to lead the day to day work of the organisation.
- 4.8 With TIS's assistance, the move to a SCIO was finalised at the ETF Annual General Meeting on Friday, 13 September 2019 and ETF are now formally recognised and operating as a SCIO with all the required standards met. Operating as a SCIO provides limited liability and a separate legal identity to organisations that want to become charities but do not want or need the complex structure of company law.
- 4.9 ETF have also arranged for TIS to review their governance and learning requirements with a focus on executive committee recruitment and training for existing and new members to ensure that they understand ETF's core policies and codes of practice, as well as their role/relationship with others, within and outwith the organisation. This will help ETF to affirm their strategic direction and to guide and direct the activities of the organisation as instructed by their wider membership. Capacity building in terms of the whole organisation is also being emphasised.
- 4.10 The Tenant and Resident Services Operations Manager meets with ETF representatives on a regular basis to ensure there is clear communication and joint understanding on the work programme set by the ETF membership, and its relationship to the requirements of the ETF SLA, which has been agreed with the housing service. A joint review of the 2018/19 SLA, as set out in the [30 August 2018](#) report to Housing and Economy Committee, was completed by 31 May 2019; a mid-point review of the 2019/20 SLA has also been completed. The outputs of these reviews, which capture the range of activity carried out by ETF, have been shared with senior managers at the bi-monthly meetings with ETF.

- 4.11 The existing 2019/20 SLA includes specific tenant participation initiatives and measures to ensure the requirements of the SLA are being met; these are being considered as part of the work on the governance and potential areas for development that TIS are providing to the organisation and these will be captured and agreed with ETF as part of the annual SLA for 2020/21 onwards.
- 4.12 Agreeing to fund ETF for a further two years will enable a period of stability for the organisation to continue to deliver on the improvement actions and progress their work with TIS within the context of work ongoing on the Housing Service Improvement Plan, which recognises the importance of ongoing dialogue with tenants to ensure they are involved in shaping improvements and influencing decisions being taken on services. A separate report to this Committee on the 'Housing Service Improvement Plan: Update' provides more information on the programme of improvements.
- 4.13 Work is being progressed on options for alternative professional development support for the operation of ETF, covering staff and management of their governance requirements. Any model would maintain independence for the organisation, which is important for tenant members. This type of model would enable ETF to operate within their existing governance arrangements but provide resources to ensure ongoing access to professional development support and best practice in tenant participation.

Neighbourhood Alliance

- 4.14 The NA provides support for local regeneration and place making in the North East Locality. Similarly, to ETF, this small voluntary organisation has had reduced staff capacity. Work is underway with the organisation to get assurance around continued capacity and the governance arrangements for the management Committee. The SLA objectives are also being refocused to ensure effective support for local regeneration and place making in the North East Locality as this moves forward. Once this work has been completed any proposal for future funding will be reported to this Committee for approval.
- 4.15 On 2 April 2019, the Edinburgh Partnership agreed a new governance framework, which included establishing 13 new Neighbourhood Networks. The Neighbourhood Networks will play a key role in community planning processes and, through their new remit and membership, provide a way of increasing community influence and involvement across the city. Membership includes community councils and other community groups in the area, such as residents' organisations and parent councils, as well as councillors and voluntary groups. Any future support provided to the NA will need to align with the locality-based model as work goes forward.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The ETF SLA to 31 March 2022 will be finalised in discussion with ETF. Six-monthly monitoring meetings and evaluation of the delivery of key initiatives will continue, assessed jointly by ETF and the Housing Service against agreed short

term outputs and long-term outcome measures. A funding extension is being recommended for a period of up to two years to 31 March 2022. The funding will be transferred in six monthly blocks and subject to delivery against the SLA objectives and the areas of improvement continuing to be taken forward by the organisation. The ETF SLA will also support the delivery of the new TPS 2020-23.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 In 2017/18, the Council spent £ £1,400,063, or £72.64 per property, on resident involvement, inclusive of grant funding for RTOs, ETF and NA spend. This calculation includes the costs for Council staff time on tenant engagement, operational costs and overheads, e.g. ICT, finance and premises.
- 6.2 The cost to the HRA of extending ETF funding from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2022 would be £482,166. Tenant participation and engagement spend is included within the HRA Business Plan. Payments will be released in six-monthly blocks with ETF required to provide thorough six-monthly reports on spend and annual accounts for review.
- 6.3 This work is contributing to ensuring best value for tenants by ensuring that tenants' views inform the Council's approach to delivering services and investing in homes.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 This report has been informed by previous discussions with stakeholders and the services involved, as well as consultation on the TPS 2020/23, to ensure that the approach taken by the organisations through these SLAs supports the implementation of the new TPS.
- 7.2 The second stage of the TPS consultation closed on Friday 10 January 2020. Feedback has been analysed and the draft document finalised to take account of feedback received. An IIA is being completed to inform the Action Plan, which will be reviewed regularly, as well as the future ETF work programme, identifying actions required to encourage wider involvement. Previous concerns about under-representation of some residents in tenant participation and engagement processes led to ETF contacting tenants living on the Gypsy/Traveller Site and work to explore support setting up a residents' association on site.
- 7.3 There are no adverse environmental implications arising from this report. 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.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Housing and Economy Committee on [30 August 2018](#), Tenant and Customer Engagement.

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 - City of Edinburgh Council Tenant Participation Strategy 2020/23.

Appendix 1 -Draft Tenant Participation Strategy 2020-2023

Involving You



Introduction

Welcome to the draft City of Edinburgh Council Tenant Participation Strategy, which will cover the period 2020-2023. It's been developed with tenants and builds on previous strategies, achievements and activities.

The Strategy is part of our commitment to listening to local people and working together with local communities. It also supports the Edinburgh Partnership's role to improve wellbeing and secure high quality public services for the city; the Tenant Participation Strategy will develop to fit with the city's new local community planning arrangements, including the neighbourhood networks.

Context

The [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) requires social landlords to “consult tenants on proposals that affect them, and take account of their views”. Tenants' groups can register with their landlord to strengthen their rights to information and to take part.

The [Scottish Social Housing Charter](#) requires social landlords to ensure that “tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with”.

The [Scottish Housing Regulator](#) checks tenant participation, emphasising the importance of tenants and social landlords scrutinising services together to improve performance and ensure value for money.

The [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) aims to ensure that everyone can get involved and help make important decisions; it sets out community planning arrangements and how people can request to participate.

The new Strategy will meet [equalities legislation](#) and an Impact Assessment will be carried out and findings included before the Strategy is finalised.

The new Strategy will comply with the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#).

The results you and we want to achieve

Housing is important to people and their quality of life. It's essential that we understand tenants' views to help to shape and improve housing conditions and services. We want to make sure that tenants really:

- 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
- can help to develop quality services.

Tenants developed these outcomes and a recent survey confirmed that they want us to continue to aim for these results - with increased transparency and accountability to tenants and greater tenant influence.

Keeping you informed

We will keep you informed and updated in a range of ways, including:

- the Tenants' Courier delivered to every tenant at least twice each year
- the Tenant Handbook provided to all new tenants, on request and online
- a landlord performance report made available to all tenants every year
- providing a copy of the annual Assurance Statement as required by the Scottish Housing Regulator
- a newsletter provided to the Tenant Panel and Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) at least three times each year.

Gathering your views

We will consult with you on any changes to housing management related policies and procedures, including:

- your rent
- repairs and maintenance
- allocations
- estate and tenancy management
- the Tenant Participation Strategy
- improvements to your homes and environment
- housing strategy, including new build council housing.

We will provide plain language information in a range of formats, at an early stage, to enable tenants to understand any proposals.

We will allow at least six weeks for feedback.

The findings will be reported to tenants on the Tenant Panel and RTOs, as well as senior managers and the relevant Council committee as appropriate.

Ways you can be involved

You can become involved in different ways, for example:

- Tenant Panel
- tenants' groups
- Edinburgh Tenants' Federation (ETF)
- events and meetings
- surveys and consultations
- online
- community council
- neighbourhood networks



To find out more, please call 0131 529 7805 or email tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk

Resources

The Council will provide direct and indirect funding to support tenant participation, ensuring a value for money approach. This will include help from council officers as well as independent support. It will also include financial support for City of Edinburgh Council tenant groups.

Key areas of work

Key areas of work over the term of this new Tenant Participation Strategy will be:

- making it easier for all tenants to become involved and ensuring that tenants are updated on actions taken because of tenant feedback;
- an increased focus on ways for tenants to become involved locally;
- continuing to develop and strengthen tenant scrutiny of services;
- bringing the benefits of the internet to all tenants while continuing to provide traditional methods of contact for those who are not online;
- developing and delivering the tenant grants programme with tenants;
- clarifying and developing the role of the Tenants' Panel, and
- continuing to work with RTOs, ETF and the Neighbourhood Alliance (NA). (The NA focuses on locality-based place making and regeneration in Craigmillar and Portobello).

Performance monitoring and evaluation

Progress will be measured by monitoring and evaluating:

- tenants' understanding of the ways they can take part and influence decisions;
- the support and resources provided for tenants to take part, and
- tenant satisfaction with services provided.

An annual report will be produced to show how tenants' views have been taken in to account when decisions are being taken about their homes and services.

Registering as a Registered Tenants Organisation

Groups representing City of Edinburgh Council tenants will be invited to register. Each registration lasts three years and groups' contact details are publicised in the Register of RTOs. The Register is a public document and available online at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/tenantpanel The Council will support non-registered groups.

Edinburgh Tenants Federation

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) represents tenants and residents across the city. ETF is a membership-based organisation run by and for its members. It can help you to set up a group. Contacts: 0131 475 2509, info@edinburghtenants.org.uk,

Key Actions

	Action	Timescale	Measure
Working locally	A conversation with your Housing Officer (HO)	At least once each year	% of tenants offered the option
	Options to be involved locally promoted by HOs, including in the Neighbourhood Networks.	At least twice yearly	Increased awareness of option
	Locality housing roadshows organised with tenants	At least twice yearly	Post event evaluation
	List of RTOs maintained and HOs made aware of groups active in their areas	Ongoing	Tenant Satisfaction Survey
	HOs provided with information on tenant participation and attending tenant group meetings	Ongoing	Feedback from RTOs
	Tenants and tenant groups encouraged to submit suggestions for the Neighbourhood Environment Programme (NEP)	Variable	Increased awareness and involvement
Scrutinising services	Continued support for tenant led inspections. Findings reported to tenants, councillors, and managers in appropriate formats.	Annual inspection	Completed report
	Continued support for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Scrutiny Group	Annual check HRA.	Completed report
	Estate walkabouts organised and promoted locally with feedback provided to participants	Variable	Tenant Satisfaction Survey
	Mystery shopping considered as an approach to checking services	Tbc	Tbc
	Training in place for tenants inspecting and scrutinising services	Annually	Evidence of training
	Tenant Scrutiny Framework updated to align the different approaches.	Year One	Framework
Working digitally	Action	Timescale	Measure
	Resources to help tenants get on line explored	Ongoing	Increased use
	Tenants updated on progress via the Tenants' Courier	Annually	Update produced
Resources	Approach to managing funding for tenants' groups reviewed in discussion with tenants	Year One	Report produced
	Participatory budgeting explored as an approach in discussion with tenants.	Year One	Report produced

Tenant Panel	Role of the Tenant Panel reviewed	Year one	Report produced
	Tenant Panel promoted	Ongoing	Promotion examples
	Tenant Panel provided with regular feedback	Ongoing	Feedback
RTOs	RTO register maintained	Ongoing	List of RTOs
	RTOs encouraged and supported to take part, locally and city wide	Ongoing	Feedback from RTOs
	Continued work with ETF to shape and improve services	Ongoing	SLA
Equalities	Explore ways to better involve and communicate with tenants with disabilities	Year one	Report produced

Involvement is an overall term used to describe citizen engagement at any level

Information is the basis of good communication and strengthening Council-tenant relationships

Consultation is seeking customers' views and ideas, taking account of those views and providing feedback

Participation is when tenants actively engage in decision-making from planning through to implementation



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