

Business Bulletin

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 14 January 2021

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

Convener:	Members:	Contact:
<p>Convener Councillor Kate Campbell</p>  <p>Vice Convener Councillor Mandy Watt</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Chas Booth • Cllr Jim Campbell • Cllr Graham Hutchison • Cllr David Key • Cllr Kevin Lang • Cllr John McLellan • Cllr Claire Miller • Cllr Gordon Munro • Cllr Norman Work 	<p>Jamie Macrae Committee Officer Tel: 0131 553 8242</p> <p>Sarah Stirling Assistant Committee Officer Tel: 0131 529 3009</p>

Recent News

Developing Online Self-service Solutions

Work to progress the implementation of online self-service tools for customers is already underway and an online assessment tool is currently being developed and will be added to the Council's homelessness webpage on completion.

A fully operational self-service housing options advice tool which allows customers to enter details and receive advice on pre-defined outcomes would require funding and support from our digital partners.

The rollout of the online 'Key to Choice' in January 2021 and EdIndex housing application by the end of 2021 along with online assessment tools in development may be more cost effective. Market research on customer experience will indicate whether it would be reasonable to consider funding options, and this is scheduled to be completed by Spring 2022.

Allocations and EdIndex

The Council Allocation policy is reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure continued compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and to provide the necessary level of assurance that the policy is current and relevant. The last legislative changes in relation to social housing allocations came into effect during 2019. These included changes to the reasonable preference categories that must be taken into account by landlords when setting allocation policies. The Gold and Silver priority categories for Choice Based Letting continue to meet the new reasonable preference requirements.

Through the EdIndex partnership the Council and Housing Associations work closely to continue to improve information and advice to applicants on how to access social housing and to direct applicants to the range of housing options available in Edinburgh. Work is underway to upgrade the IT systems and website that support Choice and EdIndex and to move to an on-line

Background

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Background

EdIndex application form. This will enable applicants to easily update their application with any change in household circumstances and to view their individual bidding information. The next phase of the project will provide applicants with an on-line housing options tool to direct applicants to other housing options that may be suitable for their individual household circumstances.

A report on the Council policy on Allocations will come forward to Committee later in the year.

Neighbourhood Alliance (NA)

The NA is provided with grant funding through the Housing Revenue Account to support resident involvement in placemaking in relation to the new Craigmillar town centre as well as supporting the implementation of the citywide Tenant Participation Strategy for 2020/23. Funding to the NA for 2020/21 of a maximum of £67,200 was approved by the Leadership Advisory Panel in March 2020.

The funding is however subject to evidence of activity and ongoing monitoring of delivery against agreed outputs and longer- term outcomes set out in a service level agreement (SLA). The SLA and ability for the NA to work with the local community in the normal way has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic but the current priorities are to continue with work to support the community in the ongoing developments in Craigmillar Town Centre and other initiatives in the North East Locality as well as taking forward actions related to membership and governance for the organisation.

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Improvements to North Cairntow Travelling Peoples Site

The Cairntow travelling peoples site is located in Craigmillar and consists of 20 pitches serviced by semi-detached utility blocks. Over the past year, officers have been working with residents to co-design improvements to the site. The planned improvements include larger pitches, new chalets, installation of hard standing

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Recent News

Background

parking and fencing and a community hub. Communication has been key throughout the design and development process with officers holding monthly site meetings to carry out consultation on the site plans, to capture requirements of individual households and to provide general updates on the overall programme. During Covid-19 lockdown officers have prioritised completion of the planning application and necessary consents and warrants and procurement of a contractor. It is anticipated that works will start on the site in Spring subject to Finance and Resources Committee approving the award of contract. The co-design project at North Cairntow has been recognised by the Scottish Government and COSLA as best practice, particularly the approach taken towards community engagement and was well received during a visit from the Ministerial Working Group.

During the pandemic the patch Housing Officer has been based on site during set hours and has prioritised socially distanced contact such as phone calls, text alerts and notice board posters to support resident welfare. Advice has been provided on how to keep safe during the pandemic, distribution of health boxes and plans developed should there be a need for residents to self-isolate on site, away from their family. Advice has also been given on the range of emergency services available at the North East Community Resilience Centre.

Investment in North West Locality in New Build and Council high rise blocks

Hart Builders have been appointed as the contractor for the affordable homes development at Silverlea. The £18m investment for the affordable homes development will be funded by the Council and grant funding from the Scottish Government. Work is underway to design around 150 brand new affordable homes and a new home for Craigryston Community Youth Football Club, at the site of the former Silverlea care home in North

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Recent News

West Edinburgh. Construction is due to start on site as early as Summer 2022.

The site will provide net zero carbon homes for social and mid market rent as part of Edinburgh's ambitious 20,000 affordable homes target. Residents will benefit from improved energy efficiency and savings on fuel bills, and will have access to high quality green space and links to the promenade and shoreline.

Hart Builders are working with designers Smith Scott Mullan; Will Rudd Davidson; Hulley and Kirkwood and Hardies to bring forward proposals for the site as part of the £1.3bn [Granton Waterfront regeneration project](#). In addition to delivering the new homes development, Hart Builders will provide a range of community benefits for surrounding residents including apprenticeships and mentoring programmes as well as supporting local organisations.

Currently under way is the Council's extensive £350m investment programme in council housing which will, over the next 10 years, make existing housing stock more energy efficient, helping tenants save money on their energy bills and ensure homes are more comfortable to live in. With the multi storey blocks in Muirhouse, undergoing extensive refurbishments works, as part of the investment programme.

Update on Housing Property Service

On the 26 December 2020 the Scottish Government placed all mainland local authorities at Tier 4 of the Covid-19 local protection levels for a period of at least three weeks. Further lockdown restrictions introduced for mainland local authorities on 5 January 2021 and will be in place until at least the end of January 2021.

In line with Scottish Government regulations and guidance for local authority areas, the City of Edinburgh Council, like all landlords, will only be able to carry out essential repairs in tenants' homes.

Tenants who had an appointment for a non-essential repair booked from 26 December 2020 onwards have

Background

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Recent News

been contacted to advise them that their appointment has been cancelled.

Essential repairs will continue to be carried out on an emergency basis; and where there is a risk of harm to the tenant; and work will continue to bring empty homes back into use.

Safe working practices will continue to be reinforced to staff and tenants when essential repairs are being carried out in their home.

Tenants who have had a non-essential repair appointment cancelled will be notified when non-essential repairs will begin again so they have an opportunity to book the first available appointment.

Scottish Government Consultation on a Licensing Scheme and Planning Control Areas for Short Term Lets in Scotland

The consultation sought views on the Scottish Government's detailed proposals for the regulation of short-term lets which will form the basis for secondary legislation to be laid in Parliament in December 2020. The target implementation of regulations is April 2021. Comments were requested by Friday 16 October 2020.

The consultation paper addresses three key areas and seeks views on issues arising and possible ways of addressing these issues:

- definition of short-term lets;
- the establishment of control areas under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019; and
- the establishment of a licensing scheme under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

A response has been submitted by officers after consultation with the Short Term Lets Member – Officer Working Group. (See Appendix 1).

A report was considered by Policy and Sustainability Committee on [1 December 2020](#).

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Chief Planning Officer

Discretionary support

As set out in the COVID-19 Business Support report on this agenda, the Council has been supporting the distribution of funding for several Scottish Government schemes to address financial hardship in businesses during the pandemic.

On 17 November 2020, the First Minister announced that, in addition to the grant support already in place, the Scottish Government is providing a £30 million discretionary fund to enable Local Authorities (in all levels) “to provide additional support for businesses where they consider that necessary or justified”.

Guidance is clear that focus should be on those sectors who are experiencing hardship and have not been, or will be, supported by other awards or funding support since October. It is also emphasised that priority should be given to Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Micro Businesses employing fewer than 50 staff.

The guidance also suggests that the Scottish Government’s general position is that the level of payments should be consistent with support paid through the Strategic Framework Business Fund, i.e. recurrently on a four weekly basis but confirms that it is for local authorities to determine whether they consider one-off grants or regular payments to be more appropriate given the needs of individual businesses.

On 9 December 2020, Scottish Government announced a further total of new and additional support of £185m. Sectors / activities covered include hospitality, events industry, food and drink, brewers, travel agents, tour and coach operators, brewers, self-catering and B&Bs, indoor football, visitor attraction, mobile contact services and taxi drivers.

The guidance from Scottish Government and upcoming support have been assessed and feedback sought from internal and external partners to ensure that the grant allocation is effectively applied in Edinburgh. Officers have reviewed all rejected applications to the Strategic

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Recent News

Background

Framework Support Grant fund in order to further understand who may have been directly or indirectly affected by the Strategic Framework restrictions with no recourse to financial support.

Feedback from the Federation of Small Business, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Royal Bank of Scotland, British Business Bank, Social Enterprise Edinburgh and political group spokespeople, as well as other city Councils and neighbouring Councils has been sought.

In light of the recent restrictions announced to combat the transmission of infection across Scotland, officers are working with representatives from Scottish Government and other Local Authorities to understand what this means for business support in general and the Discretionary Grant fund in particular. It is highly likely that further changes to the range and structure of support funds could be made considering these wider changes. This will inform the framework for determining eligibility criteria for discretionary support funding.

Committee will be updated if there are further announcements on this over the coming days.

City Centre Support

On 10 December 2020, the City of Edinburgh Council approved a motion calling for “an urgent meeting of appropriate officers to consider immediate short term measures that could be put in place to support the message that this year Edinburgh City Centre belongs to us – the residents of Edinburgh – and just as your local high street needs your support so does your city centre.”

This meeting took place and, acknowledging that the Council’s primary objective is to safeguard public health and support and reinforce guidance issued by Scottish Government, agreed that while Edinburgh remained in Level 3, messaging would centre around how to stay safe when shopping in the City Centre as well as in local centres. This message was amplified across the Council’s digital and social media channels, including

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Recent News

Background

Edinburgh.org and #ForeverEdinburgh, and in the Council Leader's report.

Through ongoing media enquiries and proactive communications the Council continues to reinforce the importance of supporting local and city centre businesses and how we all play our part, as Edinburgh residents, by visiting the year-round attractions, shops, bars and restaurants and take advantage of our city's great offering as soon as restrictions, are lifted.

Prior to the announcement on 19 December 2020, officers facilitated a collaboration between Edinburgh City Cabs, The Edinburgh Grand and City Centre Business Improvement District (Essential Edinburgh) representatives and are in regular contact with Essential Edinburgh to ensure any messages from them is amplified through Council channels.

The Council also took steps to support the Scottish Government message around celebrating Christmas safely and responsibly with family. This included approaching hospitality businesses about their experiences and how they have welcomed people safely into their restaurants/ bars over the course of the pandemic with a view to sharing any advice for people at home. This activity was cut short due to the change in restrictions but could be revisited when the restrictions are eased.

With the recent announcements from the Scottish Government which encourage people to 'stay local and stay safe', the Council will reflect this messaging in its communications.

As and when restrictions relax and Edinburgh enters Level 2, and guidelines change accordingly, officers will work with partners in both city and local centres to amplify the message around shopping and travelling safely and will continue to work with City Centre businesses on short term campaigns and other initiatives to provide the most effective support.