

Business Bulletin

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 4 November 2021

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

Convener:	Members:	Contact:
<p data-bbox="199 331 564 409">Convener Councillor Kate Campbell</p>  <p data-bbox="188 853 515 925">Vice Convener Councillor Mandy Watt</p> 	<ul data-bbox="628 327 938 712" style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr Jim Campbell• Cllr Cammy Day• Cllr David Key• Cllr Kevin Lang• Cllr John McLellan• Cllr Susan Rae• Cllr Alex Staniforth• Cllr Susan Webber• Cllr Norman Work	<p data-bbox="1118 320 1398 439">Jamie Macrae Committee Officer Tel: 0131 553 8242</p> <p data-bbox="1118 488 1417 645">Sarah Stirling Assistant Committee Officer Tel: 0131 529 3009</p>

Recent News

Background

Local Connection Update

At present local authorities have the power to refer a household they have assessed as homeless to another local authority if they determine that the household does not have a local connection to their local authority area.

The suspension of referrals between Scottish local authorities will remove the local connection part of the homeless assessment and will mean that households can choose where to make a homeless application. Households will therefore be entitled to homeless assistance in the Scottish local authority area of their choice, regardless of whether they have a local connection to that area.

Modifications to local connection referrals was due to take effect in May 2021, however this was delayed as a result of Covid-19. Officers have continued to engage with the Scottish Government on this matter, however to date there is no further information available regarding a commencement date.

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Regeneration Capital Grant Fund

The Council made seven bids to the ninth round of the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund as agreed by the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee on 3 June 2021. Two of these bids were successful at stage one:

- The MacMillan Hub – the creation of a new creative and community hub in Muirhouse/ Pennywell in partnership with North Edinburgh Arts; and
- West Shore Studios – the creation of a new creative hub on West Shore Road at Granton Waterfront.

Stage two applications have been made for these bids with a final decision on each expected in early 2022.

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Awards Success for Affordable Housebuilding Programme

The Housing Development and Regeneration team's work has been recognised by The Scottish Home Awards – an accolade that acknowledges excellence in the Scottish housing sector.

The Craigmillar Town Centre development has won the 'Housing Regeneration Project of the Year'. This project was completed for the Council in partnership with CCG (Scotland), our housebuilding contractor and architects Anderson Bell Christie.

The Craigmillar Town Centre development consists of 194 high-quality, energy efficient homes that form part of a rejuvenated, thriving community. These homes are for social rent and mid-market rent. The blueprint for the regeneration of Craigmillar has integrated retail and education as part of an area-wide improvement in facilities and amenities, and the housing development at the town centre has been central in completing the remaining phases of the vision.

In addition two further shortlistings have recently been announced. Firstly the Council's [Meadowbank Masterplan](#) has been shortlisted in 'Masterplan' category at the [Architectural Journal \(AJ\) Architecture Awards](#). Recognising excellence in UK architecture the winners will be revealed on 17 November at a ceremony in London.

The Housing and Regeneration team, on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council, has also been shortlisted for the Council of the year category in the [UK Housing Awards 2021](#). This award represents celebrates the housing teams and individuals who have demonstrated a real commitment to the housing sector and whose work has made a valuable impact on the people and communities they serve. Winners will be announced on the 25 November.

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Accessible Housing Research

The Housing Service has commissioned research on accessible housing to gain a greater understanding of the extent of adapted stock and accessible stock in the city, across tenures, and to provide an estimate of current and projected need for accessible housing, including wheelchair housing.

There are recognised challenges in assessing current provision and unmet needs for accessible, specialist and wheelchair housing including:

- Limited availability of hard data particularly on the extent and nature of provision and unmet housing need across a range of disabilities and health impairments; and
- Fragmented data across partners and professionals with limited insight on housing need, demand and supply in the private housing sector.

A successful launch event for partners and stakeholder was held in June 2021 to inform them about the study and to request their support in gathering data and insight. Over 40 people attended the online event, representing the Council, Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership, Registered Social Landlords and third sector organisations. Primary research, in the form of telephone and online surveys, was carried out to help address the data gaps noted above. Partners also helped to promote the online survey through their networks.

A further event will be held with stakeholders to discuss the findings of the study and the wider strategic responses and interventions needed to meet accessible housing requirements going forward. A briefing for elected members can be arranged in November before the final report is completed. The study is expected to complete before the end of the year.

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Re-letting of Council Homes

During Covid-19, Scottish Government Guidance recognised the significant challenges of re-letting available empty homes safely including overcoming many practical barriers such as social distancing requirements, reduced workforce capacity, new connections for utility supplies, and difficulties with removals and furnishing properties. The Council and the partner EdIndex landlords put in place safe working practices to protect the public, staff and wider communities and, following a brief pause, the advertising/re-letting of empty homes has been maintained since June 2020. The Scottish Social Housing Charter data for 2020/21 shows impacts across the social housing sector in Scotland with a reduction in the turnover of homes during 2020/21 but an increase in the average time taken to let homes.

The more complex and time consuming processes associated with completing repairs and the viewing/offer process adopted during the Covid-19 period has impacted on the time taken to turnaround available empty homes, and officers have worked hard to find solutions to some of the ongoing challenges associated with utility supplies, carrying out safety checks and coordinating moves for households. Officers have developed new approaches during this time to overcome these challenges and where new examples of best practice has emerged, it will be embedded in the lettings process moving forward.

Safe working practices remain in place and are being reviewed and updated as the service continues to adapt in line with the Corporate approach and to respond to increasing expectations from the public on a return to more normal services, whilst still ensuring the safety of our staff and tenants.

Tenant Grant Fund

The Scottish Government has provided grant funding to local authorities for tenants who are at risk of

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homelessness as a direct result of rent arrears accrued due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Edinburgh received £1.499 million from this fund, which can be used for arrears accrued for both private and social tenants. A dedicated team to administer the fund is being set up at the moment. Details of the criteria for a grant award will be placed on the Council's website with communications also being distributed to Registered Social Landlords and Private Landlords, and to tenants via social media.

Energy Advice Service

The Energy Advice Service is now in its fourth year of operation. It provides an invaluable service to Council tenants many of whom are in fuel poverty. The key outcomes of the Energy Advice Service are to empower tenants to reduce their energy use and carbon emissions through improved understanding of energy efficient behaviours and reduce their energy costs through increased confidence in engaging with providers (switching, managing energy bills, negotiating debt repayments etc.) and the ability to access funding for energy efficiency improvements. Since the service was introduced over 3,000 tenants have received support, with financial savings of approximately £700k achieved for supported tenants over this period.

The recent increases in fuel costs and inflation, coupled by changes to Universal Credit (removal of temporary uplifts) and increases in national insurance rates are a growing concern. These changes are likely to have the biggest impact on those on the lowest incomes and is likely to affect many residents in Edinburgh, including Council tenants.

As a result the Housing Service and colleagues in Communications are promoting a Winter Communications Campaign to highlight the various agencies that can provide support to our tenants and residents in the city more generally. This will highlight the bespoke support available to our tenants through the Energy Advice Service and for residents, more widely, the support available from Home Energy Scotland

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including advice on grants and funding available for improving home insulation etc. The Council will also be liaising closely with Changeworks and Home Energy Scotland to ensure a collaborative approach across the agencies and also consistency in messaging.

The winter edition of the Tenant Courier is focussed on 'Keeping Warm this Winter', with a range of advice provided and key contact details for the Energy Advice Service and Home Energy Scotland provided.

The Edinburgh Guarantee

The Edinburgh Guarantee recently relaunched as an all age service, to help meet the needs of individuals who had their life chances, employment or other opportunities affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Bringing together public, private and education sectors, the Edinburgh Guarantee aims to position itself as a one-stop-shop to help the city's residents access training or employment, and support small businesses to recruit and upskill their workforce.

Funding to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to support recruitment of those who have barriers to employment, signposting of those in need of support to find training or employment to relevant services, and linking employers offering training and skills to those who will benefit from them, are a few of the main services on offer.

Fair work and payment of the real living wage are high on the agenda and one recent outcome was negotiation with a large employer to offer a minimum guaranteed number of hours employment, rather than the zero hours they were originally proposing.

The Employer Steering Group has representation from a variety of sectors, including Financial Services, Hospitality, Care and Health Care, Energy, Transport, Fintech, Engineering, Manufacturing and Aerospace/Defence which helps to inform and guide our employability offer.

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Although one of the main areas of focus is young people, supported by Young Person's Guarantee funding from Scottish Government, the new website now hosts information and opportunities for all ages, with employability and support organisations beginning to use the calendar to promote forthcoming training courses and other activities.

Since 1 April 2021:

- 313 opportunities have been advertised on the job's boards;
- 200 organisations are signed up to receive weekly bulletin;
- 608 people are signed up to receive weekly job alerts;
- 1338 followers on Twitter;
- 46 awards of Edinburgh Employer Recruitment Incentive funding have been made to SMEs;
- 21 Kickstart extensions made; and
- 86 paid work placements secured in public and third sector.

An intensive marketing campaign is due to start in November, with the main activity taking place from January. This will include community-based advertising, social media, radio and other routes to share the Edinburgh Guarantee message.

To view the website visit www.edinburghguarantee.org or email edinburghguarantee@edinburgh.gov.uk for further information.

Scotland Loves Local Gift Cards

The Scotland Loves Local campaign is a national initiative designed to encourage all those who live in Scotland to think local first and support their high streets safely and in line with public health guidelines.

The outbreak of Covid-19 has caused significant challenges for our town centres, high streets and local businesses who have lost out on vital trade, yet many of them have gone to enormous lengths to support the most vulnerable people in our communities.

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Scotland's Towns Partnership, the organisation behind the Scotland Loves Local campaign, has joined forces with Town and City Gift Card provider Miconex to launch the Scotland Loves Local Gift Card. The objective of the Scotland Loves Local Gift Card is to encourage consumers to spend money locally, in turn supporting local businesses that are emerging from the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions.

The Scotland Loves Local Gift Card is a localised product for each of Scotland's 32 local authority areas, and will be rolled out across Scotland. Rollout success hinges on each local authority signing up to support the scheme to allow use of the Gift Card in every region of Scotland. In doing so, they will enable the active participation of businesses across Scotland and keep spending in the community local for longer.

The Council will promote this through channels such as Forever Edinburgh, Business Gateway, the Business Champions Network and also partner organisations like Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Essential Edinburgh.

Background