

Business Bulletin

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 4 August 2022

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

Convener:	Members:	Contact:
<p>Convener: Councillor Jane Meagher</p> 	<p>Councillor Graeme Bruce Councillor Jack Caldwell Councillor Kate Campbell Councillor Stuart Dobbin Councillor Pauline Flannery Councillor Simita Kumar Councillor Ben Parker Councillor Iain Whyte</p>	<p>Jamie Macrae Committee Officer Tel: 0131 553 8242</p>

Craigmillar Week of Action – 27 June to 1 July

In an initiative led by our Housing teams, local residents joined partners from Places for People, Manor Estates, Kier Construction, Morrison Construction, Skanska, Ross Quality Surveyors and a range of colleagues from Housing, Waste and Cleansing, and Grounds Maintenance in a Craigmillar week of action.

Everyone worked together to give Craigmillar Town Centre, Niddrie House and Greendykes a good summer clean and tidy up with fly tipping removal, litter picking and weeding to community growing areas.

Three commercial skips were filled, and numerous trips made to the recycling centre by Council and partner vehicles.

The week ended with a breakfast event hosted by Places for People with volunteers, Council colleagues and partners coming together to enjoy some food and hot drinks.

Residents looked back on the week saying it was a 'wonderful initiative' and highlighted what can be achieved in a short period of time when everyone lends a helping hand.

Plans are underway to organise more weeks of action in other areas as part of our aim to get back out and about in our communities and improve our estates.

**Contact:**

[George Norval](#), Housing Operations Manager

Rent Collection and Assistance for Council Tenants

The rent service for tenants has been maintained throughout the Covid-19 pandemic with officers continuing to make early contact with tenants where they are not meeting their rent payment responsibilities. Every advice and support are provided to help tenants stabilise the underlying cause of arrears, to offer affordable repayment arrangements based on the individual household circumstances and to help them avoid getting into high levels of debt they cannot afford.

Collection of income from Council rents remains challenging with tenants facing increased financial hardship due to the costs of living crisis. The recent edition of the Tenant Courier newsletter therefore included information on where to get advice and potential additional financial assistance with household bills.

Formal debt recovery through the Sheriff Court remains a last resort measure for tenants who fail to engage or make reasonable payments and serving notice can often trigger a response from tenants who have not responded to any prior contact and repayment plans agreed for the arrears. The additional protections from eviction for tenants brought in by Scottish Government during the Covid-19 pandemic that extended the notice period given to tenants before court action can be taken ended on 30 March 2022. Processes however remain in place to ensure cases are only progressed to court if there is a long history of tenant failing to pay rent or engage with the advice and assistance available, and/or there is evidence the household could pay but is choosing not to. Any potential decree cases are also continuing to be referred on to the Council's multi-disciplinary team that was established as part of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to provide a final offer of support and assistance with the aim of preventing homelessness.

[Jennifer Hunter](#), Tenant and Residents Services Manager

Recent News

The changes to some processes for managing the rent service and to standard rent communication letters during lockdown have been reset and guidance provided to staff on returning to safe home visits to support rent collection. This approach is being extended further to look at options to provide local drop-in sessions to encourage tenants to get advice and assistance available at an early stage and to use events such as Edinburgh Tenant Federation roadshows to promote the services available.

Background