


Business Bulletin

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 3 December 2024

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

Convener:	Members:	Contact:
<p>Convener: Councillor Jane Meagher</p> 	<p>Councillor Fiona Bennett Councillor Marco Biagi Councillor Graeme Bruce Councillor Pauline Flannery Councillor Tim Jones Councillor David Key Councillor Lesley Macinnes Councillor Claire Miller Councillor Ben Parker Councillor Tim Pogson</p>	<p>Taylor Ward Committee Officer 0131 529 2164</p>

Opportunities for Nature on HRA land & Community Wealth Building

Following addendums to the Opportunities for Nature on HRA report presented on 27 August 2024, the first-round table discussion with stakeholders and Council colleagues was held on 25 October 2024.

The morning was a positive opportunity to explore ways that community groups could share in future contract opportunities that aimed to support community land development, improvements and maintenance across the four localities.

The discussion included presentations on the Parks Thriving Greenspace Project, the City's approach to community wealth building, the history of the Estate Improvement Programme and proposals on a procurement pathway that might allow local groups who had a local vested interest in community development have greater involvement in improving the quality and maintenance of some parts of our HRA land assets, increased visual amenity, community growing preparation and tree planting and gardening support for vulnerable people.

Overall, the broad direction of travel was well received. A steering group of potentially interested service providers, and colleagues from Parks, Housing and Procurement will be set up to discuss the scope and specification of a Community Led Improvement Programme and the governance to support this.

It is likely that a further update report will be presented to Housing Homelessness and Fair Work in April 2025

[Lisa Mallon](#), Head of Housing & Homelessness Strategy, Commissioning & Service Improvement

Tenants affected by Damp and Mould

On 1 October 2024, Committee considered a [report](#) on the support available to tenants who have suffered financially as a result of damp and mould. A number of actions were agreed which are being taken forward by officers. A summary of the actions taken and in progress are:

- In line with previous years, a further article promoting the benefits of Tenants Contents Insurance was

[Sarah Burns](#), Head of Housing Services

included in the Autumn / Winter edition of Tenants Courier, the Council's newsletter for tenants. This will continue to be featured regularly in future editions.

- Tenant Contents Insurance leaflets have been distributed to Locality Offices and are included as part of the sign up pack for new tenants. There is also information available online on the Council's website.
- Updated guidance on rent abatements and ex-gratia payments is being developed and will be rolled out through training for Housing Officers to ensure a consistent approach.
- Further training is planned for officers in the Dampness team to take place in January 2025 to ensure they are aware of the full range of support available for tenants.
- The form for tenants to submit Public Liability Claims is being reviewed to improve accessibility and make it more customer-friendly, and a new flowchart developed to help tenants understand the claims process. This will be available online on the Council's website together with the information relating to the Tenants contents insurance scheme and, where required, paper copies will be printed within Locality offices and can be made available to 3rd sector groups on request. These forms are regularly reviewed and updated therefore a wide distribution of printed packs is not recommended.

Local Housing Strategy for Edinburgh 2025-30

Work continues to progress Edinburgh's Local Housing Strategy (LHS), which covers housing across all tenures and related services. The LHS brings together multiple strands and strategies of housing work and initiatives into one document.

The initial goal was to bring the draft LHS to Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee in December 2024. However, timescales have been revised in light of prioritisation of work tackling the housing emergency. The draft LHS will now be presented to Committee in February 2025.

Through consultation and engagement activities the views of 345 people were gathered through the initial survey in May and over 550 people during Phase 2 engagement throughout August to October.

[Lisa Mallon](#), Head of Housing & Homelessness Strategy, Commissioning & Service Improvement

Recent News	Contact
<p>Phase 2 targeted engagement included workshops, partnership meetings/ forums and a variety of community engagement events. In addition, engagement with Council staff included presenting to colleagues in the online Director Engagement Sessions. There was also a further opportunity to submit any comments on-line or by post.</p> <p>The findings from the engagement to date have fed into the ongoing development of the strategy. This has highlighted key, recurring themes which have informed the development of draft strategic objectives as noted below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A choice of affordable homes are available to meet the needs of all households. • Homelessness is prevented in the first place. • Communities are supported to be vibrant, connected, safe and inclusive. • All homes are well-maintained, energy efficient, safe, warm and sustainable. • Housing is accessible and right for everyone’s needs with the right support services. <p>Further engagement will be carried out over the next few months to address some identified gaps in engagement so far. This will include targeted sessions with the private sector, BAME community and individuals with no recourse to public funds, to ensure these groups voices are represented.</p> <p>The draft strategy will be presented to Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee in February 2025 with public consultation (Phase 3) from February to April 2025. Revisions to the strategy and the action plan will be developed following this further round of engagement and the final strategy will be presented to the May Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee for approval.</p> <p>The LHS website https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/local-housing-strategy will continue to be updated throughout.</p>	
<p><u>Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan</u></p>	<p>Nicky Brown, Head of Homelessness and Housing Access</p>

Recent News

Contact

The second iteration of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) was agreed by Committee on 18 September 2020 and submitted to Scottish Government.

The RRTP is aligned around four key objectives, focusing on both prevention and increasing accommodation options (both temporary and settled):

- Preventing homelessness in the first place;
- Where temporary accommodation is required, this will meet the needs of the household;
- Supporting people to access settled accommodation as quickly as possible; and
- Reducing the number of people sleeping rough.

Going forward the RRTP will form part of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) with any ongoing actions being carried forward as part of this work, along with any newly identified actions. This is one of the Housing Emergency Action Plan (HEAP) actions and will ensure that there is one coherent strategy covering housing and homelessness in the city.

RRTPs were originally intended to be a five year programme concluding at the end of March 2024. No funding beyond March 2025 has been agreed as yet and officers have been advised that this is unlikely to be prior to the Scottish Government budget process concluding.

Homelessness Statutory Return

The Scottish Government published Homelessness in Scotland: 2023-24 on 24 September 2024. This is the annual statistical publication of the homelessness statutory returns for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. All local authorities are required to submit a range of data, quarterly, to the Scottish Government as part of their statutory returns process.

These figures are collated by the Scottish Government through the returns process and are published to allow scrutiny and comparisons between local authorities. The full dataset and accompanying report can be accessed [here](#).

The following notable points from the publication are noted below.

[Jill Thomson](#), RRTP Lead Officer

Recent News

Contact

Nationwide, the number of applications and households assessed as homeless are at the highest level since 2011-12. The number of open homelessness applications and households in temporary accommodation is the highest in the time series (back to 2003 and 2002 respectively).

In Edinburgh in 2023/24 there were:

- 3,814 homeless applications in 2023/24, second only to Glasgow;
- 3,375 households were assessed as homeless, again second only to Glasgow;
- 7,067 open homeless cases, the highest in the country; and
- 158 households per 10,000 in temporary accommodation, the highest in the country.

Westfield Court

Officers have been engaging with the electricity supplier who have now installed smart meters to allow more accurate readings. The testing and commissioning of these meters is ongoing and is being closely monitored. Officers are also discussing the re-procurement of the utility contracts which officers hope will provide cost efficiency and certainty for the future. Investigations continue into the rate of energy consumption of natural gas and conversations are ongoing with the supplier on this. Officers are currently monitoring and tracking both natural gas and electricity consumption on a monthly basis to identify any trends.

A response to the actions agreed by Governance, Risk and Best Value on 31 October 2024 will be prepared for their next Committee on the flooding incident in 2018 which required the boilers to be replaced, including how the work was procured and how the competency of the contractor was evaluated.

Engagement has also taken place with the Lothian Joint Valuation Board to obtain a range of options on how to manage the Rateable Value for the whole block. The Council is also investigating concerns raised

[Graeme Reid](#), Head of High Rise Management & Investment

surrounding the building planning element of the old nursery area and the impact it has on the bills for the block. In the meantime, the Rateable Value has been re-calculated and residents are currently being informed of the amount of credit that they are due which will be applied to their accounts. Work continues to investigate and confirm the total number of residential properties within Westfield Court, and of any newer properties, which should be included within the block rateable value calculation and if energy consumption charges should be applied. If this is the case, it would in turn, reduce energy bills to existing homes in the block.

Officers are working collaboratively with colleagues in Housing Advice, Changeworks and Home Energy Scotland to host two surgeries at Westfield Court for residents where advice on maximising their income, managing challenging debts, saving energy and improving heating efficiency has been provided. Further on-site surgeries will be provided early in the New Year and engagement with residents on issues at Westfield Court will continue.

It is planned to provide a full condition survey for Westfield Court in the new year. This will include a structural assessment, survey of the roof and external fabric and all mechanical and electrical services including the heating system. This will include cost options appraisals for a range of recommendations that will be available. The draft heating survey report will be shared with Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee and Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee. Once the full report has been shared, the Council will engage with owners and tenants in the block and discuss the options that will be available to maintain the block for the future.

Officers have committed to re-establishing a quarterly meeting with tenants and residents in the block designed to build relationships and assist in dealing with ongoing concerns within the block as well as providing an opportunity for owners to query bills. This forum will also allow for discussion and agreement on any future planned work that is deemed as necessary. These will

Recent News

commence in the new year once the new structure is in place with officers in place to support this important work.

Contact