

Tenants Voice



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

Issue 108 - August 2019



AGM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Friday 13th September 2019
7.00pm-11.00pm**

Registration and Tea and Coffee available from 6.30pm

**Boroughmuir Rugby & Community Sports Club,
2 Meggatland Wynd, Edinburgh, EH14 1XN**

The AGM will be followed by a social event with a buffet



**All welcome to the biggest event of the
year for tenants in Edinburgh!**

To attend please book online at
www.edinburghtenants.org.uk, email
info@edinburghtenants.org.uk or phone 0131 475 2509

Please use public transport where possible

Assistance with childcare and transport may be available

Please book your place by **Friday 6th September 2019**

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Comments, compliments, complaints

Please give us feedback on this publication. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints we would like to know. Just contact us at the ETF office.

AGM PROCEDURES AND DEADLINES

As you will have seen from an article elsewhere in this edition, the rearranged AGM is taking place on Friday 13th September 2019.

The procedures and deadlines have changed slightly this year, as we are now working under the constitution brought in as a result of becoming a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO).

As you will see from the table of dates and actions below annual membership renewals must be returned to the Federation Office by Friday 30st August 2019. For Ordinary members this means that to enable your group to have a vote at the AGM or to put forward a nominee from your group to be on the Federation's Executive Committee your application must be received by this date.

Here's a quick guide to what will be happening during the run up to the AGM:

Final AGM papers sent out	2/8/19
Deadline for membership renewals and nominations to the Federation's Executive Committee	30/8/19
ETF will send member groups a list of all nominations received for the Federation's Executive Committee with a comments form	2/9/19
Deadline for return of comments on Executive Committee nominations	11/9/19
Date of Annual General Meeting	13/9/19

If you wish to discuss anything contained in this article please contact Mary Callaghan, Office Manager, mary@edinburghtenants.org.uk or phone 0131 475 2509.

Joining the Federation's Executive Committee (EC)

This is your opportunity to:

- Represent tenants and influence policy;
- Learn or refresh new skills;
- Gain a wider experience and knowledge of current housing and environmental issues.

Interested? Then make sure your Association's membership form, EC nomination form and supporting statement is signed and returned to ETF's office by **Friday 30th August 2019**.

For further information or a chat about becoming an EC member contact 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk.

'In life you will take chances, some will be good and some will be bad...but you'll never know until you try'. Gloria Perea

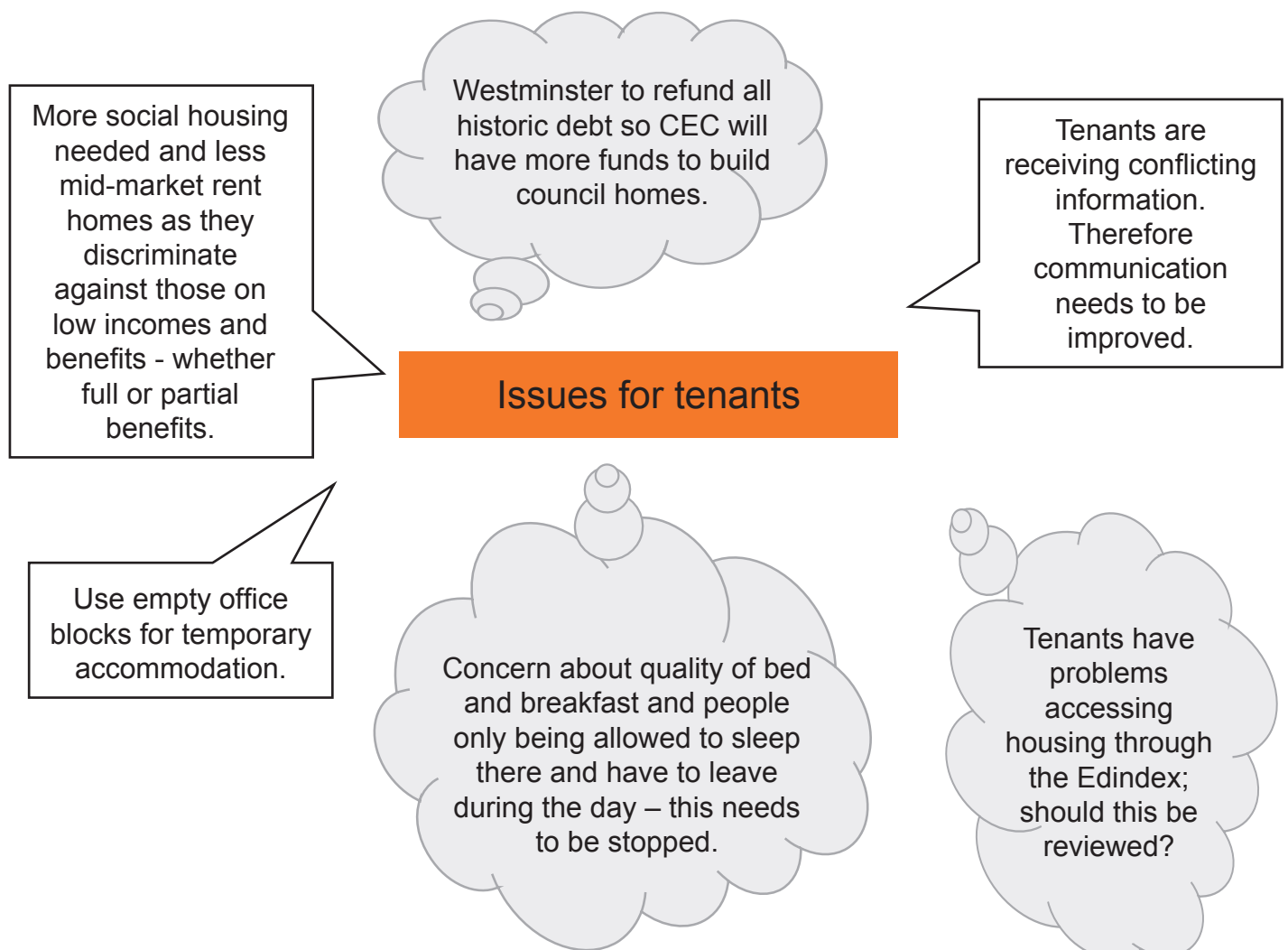


TACKLING HOMELESSNESS IN EDINBURGH



What is the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) doing to tackle homelessness in the city? That was the topic at our May Federation Meeting which stimulated plenty of lively discussions and conversations. Councillors Kate Campbell, Convenor of Housing and Economy Committee, CEC and Lezley Marion Cameron, former Vice Convenor were in attendance to speak about some of the initiatives that CEC had introduced to combat homelessness.

There was a discussion, in groups, and the issues brought up included:





Discussions taking place at the Federation Meeting

RENT COLLECTION COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

At the beginning of June, ETF and CEC held a Rent Collection Communication workshop in the Norton Park Conference Centre. The workshop followed on from the Tenant Led Inspection on Rent Collection Communication and allowed the inspectors and tenants in attendance to review the letters that CEC use to communicate with tenants regarding their rent and, specifically discussed:

1. What do tenants find easy to understand about the letters?
2. What do tenants find difficult to understand about the letters?
3. What improvements could be made to the letters?

There were plenty of lively discussions in the different groups and the main feedback from the workshop was:

- The layout, language and structure of the letters needs improving to attract the tenant's attention and get across the vital message;
- There is too much information crammed into one letter which can mean that tenants are likely to be overwhelmed and not digest the key points the letter is trying to explain.

It was pleasing to note that CEC staff in attendance were on board with the suggestions and will be making the necessary



amendments to the letters. If you would like to receive a copy of the workshop report, please contact ETF's Development Worker Mark Henry by emailing mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk or phone 0131 475 2509.



Discussions taking place at the Rent Collection Communication workshop

Christine Hudson, Tenant Led Inspector

COULD THERE BE A REVIVAL OF 'PREFABRICATED' HOUSING?

Recent articles in national newspapers appear to show an increase in the belief that the issue of funding and costs restricting the supply of homes could be resolved by switching to 'flat pack' homes. In Scotland it's not a new idea; having had the old prefabricated type homes of the 50's etc. some of which are still in use but have reached their limitations. Prefabricated homes, often referred to as prefab homes or simply prefabs, are specialist types of buildings which are put together and can be easily shipped and assembled.

The new idea of 'flat pack' homes is totally different to older homes, both in materials and construction. No more asbestos or inflammable materials and much more use of recycled material as shown by Ikea whose use of recycled material has proved to be the kingpin of their success in prices, adaptability and reduction of the various environmental issues. Another important matter is the flexibility using wood could address problems we have in the ground conditions where concrete foundations are sometimes deemed inadequate. The most relevant points in the issue are the cost, the availability and how this could address the homeless issues.

Present indications are that these homes costs far less than present brick built. The savings are based on being built in factory conditions not being affected by the weather. The factory operates on a multi skills attitude thus reducing labour costs. The homes arrive fully fitted and all services already installed. Building times can be as low as two weeks from arrival on site. Most important is they meet all the building regulations ...water, electricity, sewage and insulation.

There is an indication that in Scotland, two house builders have shown interest in the idea by investing in factories already marketing flat pack homes. Is this the answer to our issue about availability and shortage of homes?

Davie Thomson, Redbraes Residents Association

STAIR CLEANING AND WASTE BINS

As a City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) tenant living in Easter Drylaw, I feel I must raise a number of issues that have come to my attention recently. The first is the Stair Cleaning service. The ISS staff (stair cleaning contractors) were in my block a number of weeks ago and it took them only six minutes to clean the stairs (three storeys) from top to bottom. If the stairs had been cleaned to an acceptable standard, there would have been no problem. However I was not impressed as the stairs were still dirty and had clearly not been swept. As I pay for this service on top of my rent, I felt I had no option but to complain to the Stair Cleaning team at Waverley Court. The contractor admitted that the standard of cleaning done was poor and a re-clean was carried out later that day. The contractor agreed they would also supervise the next scheduled clean to ensure the standard is maintained. It concerns me that I have to report these issues to ensure the stairs are cleaned to an adequate standard. I will continue to closely monitor the standard of stair cleaning in my block in the future.

There have been ongoing problems with regards to CEC's brown waste bins, which are causing me great difficulty. I don't have great digital skills but I have tried countless times to register for the service on CEC's website with no success. The website states that if you need help 'use our live web chat', however when I tried to access the chat, I was informed that it is currently unavailable. As a result I missed the deadline to sign up to the service and I have to empty the bins myself and take the waste to the landfill site. This is particularly challenging as I have mobility issues which make it difficult for me. There are still a lot of tenants in Edinburgh that are not online and there is an ageing population in the city. CEC need to ensure that there are more user-friendly ways for tenants like myself to access these services. There needs to be clear and coherent information as well, which is written in plain English. This will make a huge difference for tenants like myself.

Jimmy Galloway, Tenant Easter Drylaw

NATIONAL NEWS

Strengthening Fire Safety for High Rise Domestic Buildings

I recently attended a Scottish Government event about fire safety, which was held in the City Chambers. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of fire safety in high rise domestic buildings as a result of the Grenfell Tower fire in London just over two years ago. It was good to meet and network with tenants from different parts of Scotland and find out how their area promote fire safety awareness. The groups looked at different methods to promote fire safety including leaflets, hard hitting posters and fridge magnets. Although there were some good points raised in the groups, I don't think the discussions tackled the issue of fire safety far enough, in particular the steps people should take to ensure fires don't break out in high rise flats. I don't think an all-day session was particularly effective as I believe there should have been two separate sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, as there would have been more tenants and community activists there.

Maud Wylie, Vice Convenor, ETF

ETF has welcomed the Scottish Government's commitment to strengthen fire safety in high rise domestic buildings. ETF members held a Focus Group to formulate ETF's response to the consultation paper. ETF Vice Convenor Maud Wylie said 'The tragic events from the Grenfell Tower fire in London just over two years ago are still fresh in everyone's minds. Therefore it is essential that the occupants living in high rise domestic buildings feel safe, there are different methods to communicate fire safety and there are action plans in place to deal with a fire.'

A copy of ETF's response to Strengthening Fire Safety for High Rise Domestic Buildings can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Strengthening-Fire-Safety-for-High-Rise-Domestic-Buildings-July-2019.pdf> or you can phone Mark on 0131 475 2509 or email mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk.



ETF's Focus Group formulating a response to the consultation

Poverty Alliance



WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY

The Poverty Alliance, a national anti-poverty campaigning charity in Scotland, is conducting research with people living in Edinburgh to hear their experiences about struggling financially and living on a low income. We are asking people to share their experiences – we want to understand the issues that are facing individuals and families. These experiences may be around housing, employment, benefits and costs of living in Edinburgh. We

want to understand how these experiences have impacted on people as well as people's views on support and services available in their local area. We also want to understand what people living in the city think needs to change.

This research is important as it will be fed back to the Edinburgh Poverty Commission, an independent group, who are seeking to understand what's driving one in five families into poverty in the city and map out responses.

If you are interested in taking part in an interview for this research please get in touch. As a small token of thanks, we have £15 vouchers to give for your time. For more information, please contact Laura Robertson, Research Officer, Poverty Alliance by calling 0141 353 0440/07709121454 or email laura.robertson@povertyalliance.org.

Laura Robertson, Research Officer, Poverty Alliance

Developing Tenant Participation

What's new?

If you remember in our last edition of *Tenants Voice*, we reported on housing staff in their respective localities on a regular basis, and for CEC staff to find out more about the work of ETF. H

North West Locality Report

I have continued to meet with the Housing Operations Manager George Norval and have visited Granton, Wardieburn, Muirhouse, May and Gunnet Courts over the past couple of months. The tenants in Gunnet Court were consulted on improvement works and this included whether their balconies should be kept. The tenants elected to keep their balconies and will work with the architects on the cladding. The work will begin in January next year.

I was also invited to a Team Leaders' meeting to discuss rent communication letters. CEC is in the process of softening the rent letters, so they are friendlier and offer tenants a range of options if they are needing help and assistance. You can read more about this elsewhere in *Tenants Voice*.

Betty Stevenson



Gunnet Court

North East Locality Report

Whilst the Leith area lacks the support of active tenant participation, it does have the benefits of having a very proactive Localities Team led by Libby Strong, Jennifer Lavery and Patrick O'Shea. I recently wrote about the number of vacant homes lying empty. The 'Team' certainly set the ball rolling and having done the research etc., focused on returning these homes to the Edindex Register. It's an example that, if repeated throughout Edinburgh could fill a gap in the availability of homes. Patrick certainly has made his mark by raising awareness of who he is and what he does within his 'patch'. Quite a few tenants now know him and how approachable he is and it's this basis, we believe, creates the trust and understanding that shows how working together will achieve the most effective outcome.

Davie Thomson



There will be further updates from EC members in the next edition of Tenants Voice.

in your local Area Housing Hub

ported that members of the Federation's Executive Committee (EC) had begun to meet with senior . The meetings have allowed EC members to find out what is happening in their respective areas here's an update from EC members.

South West Locality Report

We had a very productive meeting with Housing Operations Manager Michaela Smith and Team Leader Alan Birnie at the beginning of July. Here is some information on new builds in the South West area.

Hailesland Place – There are 32 homes in total, with 21 social rent and 11 mid-market rent properties handed over and let.

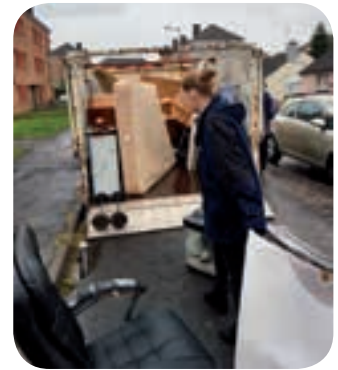
Dumbryden Gardens (phase 1) – There are 30 social rent and 19 mid-market rent properties expected to be handed over in September 2019.

North Sighthill – There are 96 social rent homes, 88 mid-market rent and 132 for private sale. The first batch of rented homes are due to be handed over in August, which will include four social rent and eight mid-market rent properties. There will be further completions ongoing up until December.

Community clean up / bulk amnesty events

City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) staff carried out 18 local events last year and have 20 scheduled for this year. The latest was at Broomhouse on 10th July 2019. The event went very well in spite of the wet weather. In total eight tonnes of items that tenants wanted to dispose of were uplifted. There was good engagement from residents bringing items along and giving positive feedback on the amnesty in terms of saving money and improving the local area by removing dumped items from gardens, stairwells etc. The Fire Service were also present to provide advice to tenants on fire safety which helped to reiterate the importance of not storing items in stairwells. CEC staff also gave advice to tenants on general appropriate waste disposal.

Maud Wylie and John Aitken



CEC staff taking part in the community clean up

North East Locality Report

Over the last few months our monthly meetings with the senior officers, have taken us to locations where CEC have either already spent money on making improvements in properties or will be making future plans.

We started at Greendykes House, Craigmillar, where we were shown the lovely kitchen and small meeting room that had recently been installed, it was very nice.

Other areas that we have visited included Magdalene, Lochend Avenue, Loganlea, Willowbrae and Duddingston Row. There are improvements planned for all these areas and we will report on this in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.

Nicol Johnstone and Sue Taylor



Greendykes House in Craigmillar

NEWS FROM THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL



Councillor Kate Campbell, Convenor of the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

It's my job to make sure we listen to our tenants. Through recent consultations, you've told us that you'd like to see new homes being built, homes and neighbourhoods improved, and better housing services. Here's some of the things we're doing to respond to what you've told us.

New Homes

We've pledged to build 20,000 affordable homes over the next 10 years, along with our housing association partners. Around half of these homes will be built by CEC. We've got around 1,000 already being built and another 3,000 at design stage.

The first phase of work to improve Pennywell town centre is complete and 12 new flats now sit above a dentist, chemist and local shop. This new centre has been named Macmillan Square in memory of Maureen Macmillan, a community activist who dedicated her life to improving Muirhouse, especially for young people and those who could not speak up for themselves.



Proposed design of Pennywell



New landscaping at Greendykes North Park

We've also completed 75 new CEC homes at Greendykes in Craigmillar. These are a mix of social homes and homes for mid-market rent.

Improving existing homes and neighbourhoods

As we build new homes it's important that we also invest in existing homes and neighbourhoods. This year over 2,000 homes will benefit from energy efficiency improvements, including new heating systems, windows and doors. We'll also be modernising about 1,300 homes with new kitchens, bathrooms and electrical and water tank upgrades. Furthermore we'll be installing around 200 new door entry systems to make blocks more secure for residents.

Improving services

We know that we need to improve our delivery of some housing services. One of these is repairs as we know that tenants have been less satisfied with the service they're receiving recently.

We've been working hard to make improvements and from the end of August we should be providing real time automated appointments. We're also working on ways to send you automated text and email reminders of your appointments (the day before) and let you know when operatives are on their way to your home. On-the-spot surveys with tenants will help us to understand how you felt your repair was dealt with so we can act if we know there is an area where people aren't satisfied.

We have a wider Housing Service Improvement Plan which will look closely at all aspects of the housing service over the next three years. This will improve services, improve efficiency and make sure that tenants are satisfied. Tenants will be consulted along the way so that we improve the housing service in a way that works for you.

Alongside this, we've also introduced some new services, including an Energy Advice Service and a housing apprenticeship programme targeted at tenants and their families.

We're doing all of these things because in previous consultations you told us this is what you wanted us to do. We'll be launching the annual consultation on the housing budget in the autumn. It's really important that lots of tenants take part – we want to hear what you think so that we know what your priorities are, and we can make sure we're delivering what you want us to.



New homes at Capella Gardens, Greendykes

OneCity Trust

The work of the OneCity Trust continues to go from strength to strength. The Trust was established in 2003 and its mission is to fight inequality and exclusion in Edinburgh. In 2012 with the creation of the 'Lord Provost's Rapid Action Fund' the Trust was able to raise funds for the purpose of giving out grants (rather than rely solely on the interest from the Trust). The structure of the Trust allows it to support small-scale local as well as larger organisations throughout the city.



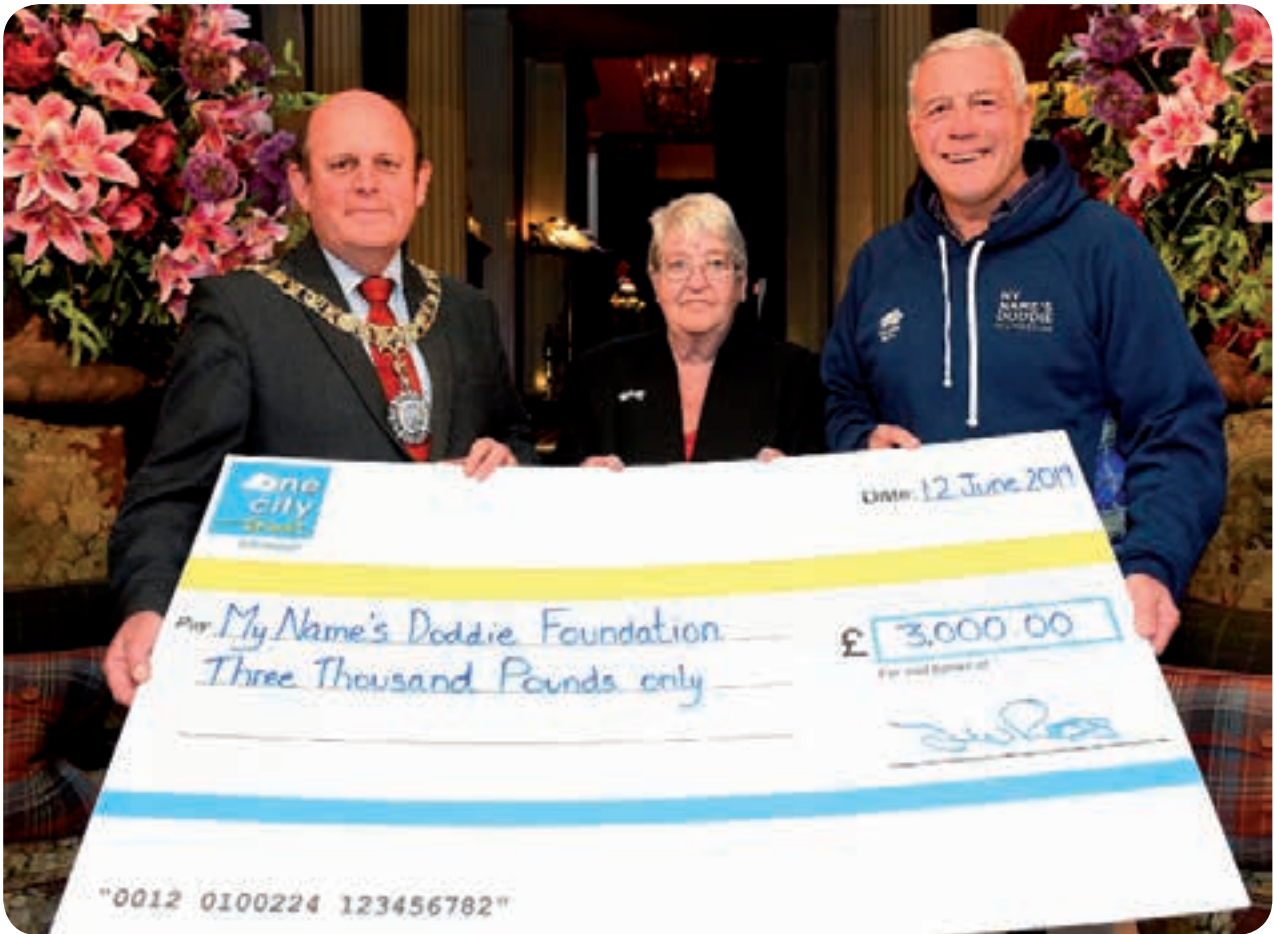
Recent studies have shown that Edinburgh is a wealthy city, with incomes 9% higher than the national average. However, this wealth is not shared, as 22% of all Edinburgh households are living in relative income poverty. People living in the most deprived areas of Edinburgh are twice as likely to die before 75 from heart disease when compared to the Edinburgh average. ETF Convenor and OneCity Trust Board member Betty Stevenson commented 'I have been amazed by some of the projects that we have come across. It is important that the OneCity Trust helps those who feel excluded from society and this is exactly what it does'.

The Trust currently operates two funds:

- Main grants programme – larger grants and strategic projects;
- Lord Provost's Rapid Action Fund – small grants to meet urgent need.

Below are examples of some of the work that the OneCity Trust have been involved in.

OneCity Board Member Betty Stevenson and the Lord Provost Frank Ross presented a cheque for £3000 to My Name's Doddie Foundation.



Representatives of Underbelly presented a cheque to the Lord Provost Frank Ross and OneCity Trust Board member Betty Stevenson.



Representatives of Travis Perkins Managed Services, OneCity Trust and the City of Edinburgh Council were out in Kirkliston to meet with locals as part of the preparations for the new Village Hall which will be built using funding from the OneCity Trust.



If you wish to find out more about the work of the OneCity Trust, please contact Elaine McCafferty by email at elaine@onecity.org.uk or phone 0131 469 3856. You can also follow OneCity Trust on Twitter @OneCitytrust.

• EDINBURGH •
YOUR COUNCIL - YOUR CITY

Community Council Elections

Edinburgh's Community Councils are looking for new recruits. The nomination period starts on **Monday 9th September 2019** and closes on **Monday 30th September 2019, 4.00pm**. Elections, where required, will take place on **Thursday 31st October 2019**. You can apply as an individual or as a Registered Tenant Organisation. A Community Council gives local people a say on decisions that affect their area and consults with local people on issues that will impact on the community. Nomination forms will be available from **Monday 9th September 2019** on the Council's website at http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20133/community_planning/730/community_councils.

For more information phone 0131 469 3126 or email community.councils@edinburgh.gov.uk.

Be at the **heart** of
your community

CONVENOR'S REPORT



Welcome to the Convenor's Report, where it certainly has been a hectic few months. We have been busy planning for our rescheduled AGM and we hope to see as many of our members as possible there. This is a great opportunity to meet and network with other tenants' groups.

I would like to thank the EC, staff, our member groups and CEC for their continued support over the last few months. I have no doubt that the next few months will indeed be challenging but fruitful as well. With your continued support, we can make a real difference to tenants' lives in Edinburgh.

The EC members have continued to hold meetings with senior housing staff in each of the localities. This has been very worthwhile as there has been a sharing of ideas and information between ETF and CEC and it has also enabled working relationships to be built up in each of the localities. We aim to build on these meetings, with a view to more tenants joining us in the coming months.

In my role as a Deputy Lieutenant, the Lord Provost, Frank Ross and I had the great pleasure to welcome her majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles to Holyrood to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Scottish Parliament. It was great to meet them both and I can assure you I had no idea her majesty would be wearing the same colour of dress as mine. I was impressed with the commentators who stated that 'Betty Stevenson is passionate about improving housing conditions in Edinburgh'. I did not tell them to say that!



CALLING ALL RTOs



**We want to share stories from your area with our readers, good or bad.
Not sure how to write an article...**



Fear not, we can provide assistance with writing an article. If you want to know more or want to run an idea past us, please contact Mark on 0131 475 2509 or mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk.

About Edinburgh Tenants Federation

Edinburgh Tenants Federation is the umbrella organisation for tenants' and residents' groups in Edinburgh and a Registered Tenant Organisation. Tenants' and residents' groups can become members of ETF and individuals can become Associate Members. Just contact the ETF office on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk for more information.

Copy Deadline



Tenants Voice is usually published three times a year and is distributed to nearly 3,000 tenants, residents, decision makers and other interested individuals throughout Edinburgh. *Tenants Voice* is also available to download at www.edinburghtenants.org.uk. We always welcome contributions from our readers, though we stress that material included in *Tenants Voice* does not always represent the opinions of Edinburgh Tenants Federation.

If you would like to contribute to our next edition, please do so by Monday 28th October 2019.

Thoughtful Quote

'Don't count the days, make the days count'
Unknown

'It takes courage to keep walking when the path is obscured by confusion. Trust, believe and just keep walking. The way will be revealed!'
Sue Krebs

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

ETF Repairs Group Meeting

Wednesday 21st August 2019, 7.00pm-9.00pm, Norton Park Conference Centre, 57 Albion Road

Deadline for return of membership applications and EC nominations

Friday 30th August 2019

ETF High Flats Meeting

Monday 2nd September 2019, 7.00pm-9.00pm, Birnies Court Community Room, Muirhouse View

Federation Meeting

Wednesday 4th September 2019, 7.00pm-9.00pm, Norton Park Conference Centre, 57 Albion Road

Deadline for AGM bookings

Friday 6th September 2019

Nomination period starts for Community Council Elections

Monday 9th September 2019

Deadline for support/opposition to EC nominations

Wednesday 11th September 2019

ETF Annual General Meeting

Friday 13th September 2019, 7.00pm-11.00pm, Boroughmuir Rugby & Community Sports Club, 2 Meggetland Wynd

The Federation Office will be closed for the Edinburgh public holiday

Monday 16th September 2019

Nomination period ends for Community Council Elections

Monday 30th September 2019

Housing Roadshow

Monday 21st October 2019, 9.30am-2.30pm, Morrisons, Gyle Shopping Centre, 52 Gyle Avenue

ETF Repairs Group Meeting

Wednesday 20th November 2019, 7.00pm-9.00pm, venue to be confirmed

Federation Meeting

Wednesday 27th November 2019, 7.00pm-9.00pm, venue to be confirmed

ETF High Flats Meeting

Monday 2nd December 2019, 7.00pm-9.00pm, venue to be confirmed



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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ETF.

Edinburgh Tenants Federation is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) SC048236, regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

