



## Edinburgh Tenants Federation

### ETF's response to City of Edinburgh Council's Budget Consultation 2021-2022



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

## 1.0 **Background**

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) is the umbrella organisation for tenants' and residents' groups in the city of Edinburgh and a Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO).

ETF's purpose is to represent tenants at a citywide policy level and the Federation aims to promote the improvement of the quality of life of residents and the housing conditions of all tenants.

## 2.0 **Introduction**

At our Special Meeting, held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020, ETF members discussed City of Edinburgh Council's (CEC's) Budget Consultation, specifically:

- Prioritising improvements;
- What can be done to improve local areas?
- Rents.

Seven delegates, including representatives of five Registered Tenant Organisation's (RTOs) participated in a group discussion relating to CEC's Housing Budget Consultation. The feedback has been grouped into themes where possible.

## 3.0 **ETF members' comments**

### 3.1 *How much do you agree or disagree that we should prioritise improvements in these areas?*

#### **Safe, secure and modern stairwells**

- It's very important as tenants and visitors see the stairwell before entering the home;
- Tenants take a lot of pride in having stairwells that are safe, secure and modern;
- ETF believes that money for safe, secure and modern stairwells should be invested by CEC's Repairs or Investment budgets.
- ETF would like to know how much of the HRA account will be invested in modern stairwells.

#### **The external fabric of your building i.e. the outside of homes being modern and energy efficient**

- This is what tenants pay rent for and CEC should be monitoring properties on a regular basis to ascertain if anything needs to be done to improve outside the properties;
- It's the duty of CEC to look after the fabric of the building;

- Stock Condition surveys should provide information on what's required to improve the external fabric of buildings. This is a priority for the tenant and a duty of the landlord.

### **The inside of your home**

- This question needs clarification and to be defined better. Does it include:
  - Repairs;
  - Heating;
  - Improvements;
  - Smoke and Carbon Dioxide detectors;
  - Kitchens and Bathrooms;
  - Windows.
- The inside of your home does not mean decorating and should be made more clearer in the question.

### **Storage of waste and recycling facilities**

- ETF would like to know what budget this is being spent on? Is it Waste Management or HRA?
- ETF believes that this money should not come out of the HRA account as cleansing and waste management are General Fund services.

### **Cycle storage**

- This is not a priority for ETF.

### **Good quality, safe green spaces**

- ETF would like to know if this comes out of the Park's or HRA budget;
- If the money doesn't come out of the HRA budget, then it could be beneficial for tenants in certain areas;
- CEC could discuss possibilities with local RTOs and the Neighbourhood Networks.

### **Environment improvement projects e.g. benches, planters, street art**

- ETF would like to know if this comes out of the Park's or HRA budget?
- If the money doesn't come out of the HRA budget, then it could be beneficial for tenants in certain areas;
- CEC could discuss possibilities with local RTOs and the Neighbourhood Networks.

### **Community food growing/ gardening**

- ETF supports this priority as long as the money doesn't come out of the HRA budget;
- One of ETF's member groups' has a community garden which is proving to be very popular with volunteers and locals. ETF would like to see more of this throughout the city;

- If the money comes out of the Park's budget, then local RTOs and the representatives from Neighbourhood Networks should have their say on the development and location of such projects.

#### **Access to local shops for affordable essentials**

- ETF would like to know how is this connected to the HRA and how will it be paid for if identified by wider tenants as a priority;
- If the money comes out the HRA account, then it should not be a priority for tenants.

#### **Transport links/active travel**

- ETF would like to know how is this connected to the HRA and how will it be paid for if identified by wider tenants as a priority
- If the money comes out the HRA account, then it should not be a priority for tenants.

#### **Playparks**

- ETF would like to know if this comes out of the Park's or HRA budget;
- If the money comes out of the Park's budget, then many areas could benefit from Playparks for children to congregate benefit from.

#### **Sports facilities**

- ETF would like to know how many sports facilities are CEC owned;
- The money should not come out of the HRA account.

### 3.2 *What else could we do to improve your local area?*

#### **Rents**

- Should be made affordable as CEC tenants in Edinburgh already pay the highest rents in Scotland;
- Many tenants are struggling to pay their rent.

#### **Tenant's properties**

- Stock condition surveys should be carried out on a regular basis and findings feedback to tenants in plain English;
- Housing Inspectors could be brought back to ensure properties are wind and water-tight.

#### **Roads**

- The condition of many of the roads and pavements in Edinburgh are hazardous and dangerous. This includes potholes in roads and uneven pavements;
- Due to restrictions and lack of space, many tenants have great difficulty in parking their cars near their homes. This affects tenants with mobility issues.

### **Tenant involvement**

- Tenants would like to have the opportunity to help influence other CEC's budgets such as roads and/or parks but are unsure how to do this;
- There should be more local initiatives, such as estates walk-about between CEC officials from all relevant services and tenants where circumstances allow.

### **Anti-social Behaviour**

- This is a major problem and there should be a consistent approach to dealing with this throughout the city.

3.3 *The Council policy is to keep rents affordable by keeping annual increases below inflation and limit any increases to below 2% (around £2 extra week). Your rent pays for these improvements. If rents increase by more than £2 a week, improvements could be delivered sooner. If rents are increased by less than £2 per week improvements would have to slow down. Do you want the current plan, to speed up improvements or slow them down?*

- Outside of London, Edinburgh has the highest property rent in the UK and it continues to increase faster than many households can afford. High rents act as a major constraint on living standards and reduce the amount of money people have to spend on other goods and services;
- CEC rents are simply not affordable;
- Many tenants are on low wages and at this time of year have to decide on whether to heat their homes or feed their families as they can't afford to do both;
- Many tenants have income from paid employment or pensions but can't afford to pay their rent;
- Tenants need to be able to afford to live in their homes;
- There is no mention about a proposed Council Tax increase;
- More than 77,000 Edinburgh residents live in poverty – about 15% of the total population, including one in every five children according to The Edinburgh Poverty Commission's findings. The housing crisis was a "distinctively Edinburgh challenge because so many families are only dragged below the poverty line by an unaffordable rent". Dr Jim McCormick, Chair, Edinburgh Poverty Commission.

### **4.0 Other**

ETF requires clarification that CEC will not increase rents of tenants who may receive increased benefit payments through changes to Universal Credit and Child / Family Allowance.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

ETF welcomes the opportunity to contribute to CEC's Housing Budget Consultation. This paper will be shared with the Federation's Executive

Committee, thereafter the paper will be shared with CEC staff as part of the overall Housing Budget Consultation. ETF looks forward to working with CEC representatives to address the issues raised in the paper.

**Mark Henry**  
**November 2020**