



Edinburgh Tenants Federation

Federation Meeting Wednesday 23rd September 2020 Feedback Report



“ETF, COVID-19 and beyond”

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Edinburgh Tenants Federation is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) SC048236,
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1. Introduction

On Wednesday 23rd September 2020, ETF held its first online Members' Meeting since lockdown was introduced at the end of March. The topic was, 'ETF, COVID-19 and beyond'. The aim of the meeting was for members to:

- Find out more about ETF's activities during lockdown;
- Hear about the good work of ETF member groups;
- Discuss ETF, member group and tenant priorities for the future.

2. Priorities for ETF moving forward

Two discussion groups enabled members to discuss priorities for the Federation moving forward. These have been grouped into key themes where possible.



Building more homes



Members agreed that building more social housing in Edinburgh is a high priority as many tenants and applicants are on lengthy waiting lists and can't afford to live in mid-market or private rent properties. ETF should support more campaigns aimed at building more social housing, eg 'Shelter's social housing campaign'.

Rents

Members are aware that a lot of tenants are struggling to pay their rent at the moment and therefore consider that as Edinburgh rents are currently the highest in Scotland that any proposed rent increase would be unaffordable to many. Members also noted that rent arrears are increasing as a result of COVID-19. It was agreed that ETF should challenge any proposed rent and council tax increases and propose a rent freeze for CEC tenants.



In addition it was agreed there should be no evictions for tenants who are struggling to pay their rent.





Communication

Members consider communication between the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) and tenants requires improvement. Some tenants have not heard from their Housing Officer since the locality offices closed at the end of March. Some tenants do not have contact details for their Housing Officer and as a result can't get in touch with them. There needs to be a consistent approach in terms of communication between CEC and tenants across the city.



Repairs



Members advised that repairs being completed on time and to an acceptable standard was an issue before COVID-19.

Many tenants are unsure if CEC is still only carrying out emergency repairs. It was agreed ETF will seek to clarify:

- What is defined as an emergency repair?
- When will CEC be able to carry out normal repairs?

Digital knowledge and training

To address continued lockdown measures and further develop digital engagement needs, it was agreed that it is important that tenants feel able to and confident to take part in online meetings, including Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Training should be provided to tenants who are struggling to learn online methods. Funding should be sourced to allow tenants who can't afford to buy digital equipment to be able to take part in online discussions.



Anti-social behaviour



There is a lot of anti-social behaviour taking place across the city, particularly during lockdown. Due to competing demands, it is quite difficult for CEC to respond to and deal with perpetrators.

Members advised that there needs to be a bigger police presence in neighbourhoods. It was agreed ETF should be having more meetings with senior CEC staff to discuss ASB and what can be done about it.





Funding & Support from Registered Social Landlord's (RSL's)

It was proposed that ETF seek funding and support from RSL's providing homes across Edinburgh.



Grants to Tenants' and Residents' Associations

It was proposed that ETF provides groups will details of funding sources and / or organisations who can donate equipment and materials.



3. Next Steps

This report will be shared with the Federation's Executive Committee, the attendees at the Federation Meeting and CEC staff.



**Mark Henry
September 2020**

