

Housing and Economy Committee

10.00am, Thursday 7 September 2017

Present

Councillors Barrie (Convener), Cameron (Vice-Convener), Kate Campbell, Jim Campbell, Gardiner, Lang, McLellan, Miller, Munro, Rae and Rose.

1. Tenant Participation and Engagement Services

1.1 Deputation – Edinburgh Tenants Federation

The Committee agreed to hear a deputation from Betty Stevenson and Clare MacGillivray on behalf of the Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) in relation to the report by the Executive Director for Place on tenant participation and engagement. The deputation highlighted the following:

- The funding outlined in the report was welcomed as it would allow the ETF to plan its future work, complete a governance review and deliver new initiatives for Edinburgh's tenants.
- The ETF opposed the tendering of tenant participation services as the ETF was run by and provided support for tenants themselves.
- Tenant participation services needed to deliver what was best for tenants and decision making processes should involve tenants.
- The ETF appreciated the report's recognition of the strong representative voice ETF has in debating housing policy in Edinburgh.
- The report indicated a desire to further strengthen the voice of the ETF and to improve the effectiveness of the Council in listening to tenants' issues, while also recommending that the Council should be involved in the management of the campaigning and engagement activities of ETF.
- The independence of the organisation and its staff was stressed as it was highly valued by tenants.
- The ETF disagreed that its campaigning role interfered with its ability to provide tenants with impartial information.
- As an independent organisation, ETF staff needed to be free to advise tenants in an independent way and not have this curtailed by the Council.
- The longstanding history of the ETF as a campaigning and representative organisation.

The deputation requested the Committee consider the following:

- The lack of information provided in the report regarding how the tendering process for tenant participation services would be implemented.
- To recognise that participation methods have changed across Scotland and the ETF responded well to this through the use of various methods of communication.
- The ETF encourages elected members to inform the ETF of issues tenants raise to them and help set up tenants' groups across their wards.
- To support the extension of the ETF funding to March 2019 as outlined in the report.
- To consider concerns raised regarding retaining the independent voice of the ETF.

1.2 Report by the Executive Director of Place

Approval was sought to extend the funding arrangements for Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF), Neighbourhood Alliance (NA) and registered tenants organisations (RTOs) until March 2019.

During this period both ETF and NA would have the financial stability to properly focus on governance and funding challenges they need to resolve. It would allow the Council and ETF to agree a protocol setting out how campaigning and engagement activities can be more effectively managed.

The report also sought approval to procure a framework of independent professional participation and engagement services to support engagement between the Council, other public services and local tenants and residents.

Decision

1. To extend funding arrangement for Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) the Neighbourhood Alliance (NA) and registered tenants organisations (RTOs) to March 2019.
2. To procure a framework of independent, professional participation and engagement services to assist tenants' and residents' organisations engage with the Council and other public services submitted to Committee for consideration in December 2017. An update on the progress of the informal consultation process would be submitted to Committee in November 2017.
3. To instruct officers to report with indicative costs of tenant engagement services provided by the Council as opposed to services provided via the contract with Edinburgh Tenants Association and the Neighbourhood Alliance for the next meeting of the Committee.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place - submitted)

2. Fire Safety in Council Tower Blocks

On 29 June 2017, The Council in response to a motion by Councillor Mowat agreed that a full review of fire safety in tower blocks was underway, working with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and residents and that that the outcome of that review be reported to the Housing and Economy Committee

An update was provided on the Council's response to concerns regarding tower block fire safety following the fire at Grenfell Towers in London the report set out what had been done to ensure that Council tenants were safe in their homes and that they were engaged in shaping the future shape of the service arising from any findings from the Grenfell Towers inquiry.

The report also set out the approach taken, jointly with Scottish Government, to ensure the safety of other buildings in the city.

Councillor Mowat was heard in respect of her motion

Decision

1. To note the response to concerns about fire safety in tower blocks;
2. To agree to review its waste management and vehicle access arrangements in Council owned tower blocks;
3. To note the revised inspection arrangements with Scottish Fire and Rescue Services (SFRS); and
4. To discharge the motion agreed by Council on 29 June 2017.
5. To note the Directorate would work with the Fire Service to raise awareness of the risks associated with waste storage in this type of property

(Reference – Act of Council 10, 29 June 2017 and report by the Executive Director of Place - submitted.)

3. Minutes

Decision

1. To approve the minute of the Health, Social Care and Housing Committee of 18 April 2017 as a correct record.
2. To approve the minute of the Economy Committee of 25 April 2017 as a correct record

4. Housing and Economy Committee Key Decisions Forward Plan

The Housing and Economy Committee Key Decisions Forward Plan for the period November 2017 was presented.

Decision

To note the Key Decisions Forward Plan

(Reference – Key Decisions Forward Plan, submitted.)

5. Education, Children and Families Committee Rolling Actions Log – August 2017

The Housing and Economy Committee Rolling Actions Log for September 2017 was presented.

Decision

1. To approve the closure of actions 1, 4 and 5.
2. To otherwise note the remaining outstanding actions.

(Reference – Rolling Actions Log, submitted.)

6. Housing and Economy Committee Business Bulletin

The Housing and Economy Committee Business Bulletin for September 2017 was presented.

Decision

To note the business bulletin.

(Reference – Business Bulletin, submitted.)

7. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Strategy

Approval was sought to consult tenants on the development of the 2018/19 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget.

Each year tenants were asked for their views on how the Housing Service can be improved. Tenants have previously prioritised the acceleration and expansion of affordable housebuilding, investment in affordable energy and accessible and responsive and local services.

In addition to the above, new proposals were outlined to increase investment in existing homes and neighbourhoods with the aim of bringing these up to the same quality as new developments. Tenants would be consulted on these priorities.

Decision

1. To agree to seek tenants' views on the HRA budget strategy for inclusion in the 2018/19 HRA budget report;
2. To approve the revised 2017/18 Capital Investment Programme set out in Appendix 3 of the report by the Executive Director of Place; and
3. To note the 2017/18 Capital Investment Programme had increased by 80% on 2016/17 levels.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director for Place - submitted)

8. Development Plan Scheme

Since then, the Edinburgh Local Development Plan (LDP) had been adopted. A feedback survey was carried out seeking comment from stakeholders on the LDP process as a whole. The findings of that survey will be used to make improvements to the engagement of stakeholders and different communities in the next LDP process: LDP 2.

Planning authorities have to publish a scheme setting out their programme for preparing their local development plan at least once a year. The last such scheme was approved and published in May 2016. An indicative timetable for LDP 2 was provided, the timetable showed LDP 2 being adopted within four years of the first one, rather than the statutory five year target.

Approval was sought of a new Development Plan Scheme

Decision

1. To approve the Development Plan Scheme detailed in appendix 1 of the report by the Executive Director for Place
2. To note the feedback on first Edinburgh Local Development Plan project detailed in appendix 2 of the report by the Executive Director for Place

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place - submitted)

9. Supplementary Guidance: Developer Contributions and Infrastructure Delivery

Approval was sought of a revised final version of Supplementary Guidance (SG) on Developer Contributions and Infrastructure Delivery.

Decision

1. To approve Appendix 1 of the report by the Executive Director of Place as a revision to finalised Supplementary Guidance on Developer Contributions and Infrastructure Delivery; and
2. To note that it would be adopted as part of the statutory development plan following procedural steps.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director for Place - submitted)

10. Edinburgh Economy Strategy

Proposals for an approach to develop a new Economy Strategy for the city for the period beyond 2017 were provided.

Decision

1. To notes the progress so far and proposed forward plan for the development of the city's new economy strategy.
2. To agree the next steps for elected member engagement in the strategy development.
3. A progress report to be submitted to the Committee on 2 November 2017

(Reference – report by the Chief Executive - submitted)

11. The EDI Group Ltd – Transition Strategy

An update was provided on the progress made in relation to The EDI Group Ltd (EDI) and sets out the strategy for closing down its activities and transferring certain assets to the Council.

Decision

1. The Executive Director of Place to report to the Housing and Economy Committee on 2 November 2017 on the financial aspects of the proposals
2. The Executive Director to arrange a briefing for members on the proposals

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place - submitted)

Declaration of Interests

Councillor Barrie declared a non-financial interest in the above item as a director of The EDI Group Ltd.

Councillor Cameron declared a non-financial interest in the above item as a director of The EDI Group Ltd.

Councillor Rose declared a non-financial interest in the above item as a director of CEC Holdings Ltd.

12. Investing in Jobs: Economic Development Service Performance Update

An update was presented on the performance of the Economic Development Service in delivering the key performance indicators (KPIs) for the period January to March 2017.

Decision

To note the progress made against the three KPIs between January to March 2017.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place - submitted)

13. Civic International Programme

Details were provided on a range of activities during 2017 to be supported by the Lord Provost. The selected activities will profile the Council and the city internationally, and enhance strategic relationships, from which the city and service areas across the Council will benefit.

Decision

1. To approve the following outlined commitments to be undertaken by the Lord Provost in positioning the city internationally through a programme of visits, events and strategic international collaborations which underpin existing partnerships and reflect mutual international interests and civic relationships.
 - i. EUROCITIES Conference and AGM – 28 – 30 November 2017;
 - ii. EUROCITIES Mayor’s Summit – May 2018;
 - iii. Community Events in Krakow – 29 – 30 September 2017;
 - iv. Future of Europe and the role of Cities – 20 October 2017;
 - v. China Outbound Investment Conference – 29 – 30 November 2017; and
 - vi. Kyoto Tea Festival – November 2017.
2. To agree that a summary report be compiled for each event, detailing the value of the visit, the relevant contacts made and follow up actions required; and that these reports be included for noting at future meetings of the committee.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Place - submitted)

14. Motion by Councillor Rae – Empty Homes Service

The following motion by Councillor Rae was submitted in terms of Standing Order 16

“Committee notes:

1. According to standard council tax statistics, across Scotland, Edinburgh has the highest number of private sector properties empty for more than 6 months, standing at 4,997 as at September 2016.
2. More than half of Scottish councils employ a dedicated empty homes officer. In 2016-17 97% of empty homes brought back into use were in councils where there is a dedicated empty homes officer.
3. The action agreed at Health, Social Care and Housing Committee on 31 January 2017: "The Executive Director of Place to review the data from other Councils on extra revenue raised through the additional Council Tax generated through empty homes being brought back into use and consider the possibility of funding a dedicated Empty Homes Officer post from similar revenue."
4. That, until 2016, Edinburgh had a dedicated empty homes service but, at that point the service was discontinued, and responsibility for dealing with empty homes has been allocated to generic private sector officers, with a consequent loss of focus on empty homes.
5. That re-use of empty homes can meet a number of council objectives: improving housing supply; reducing pressure on greenfield sites; improving neighbourhood amenity; and reducing risks of vandalism or anti-social behaviour.
6. That the experience of other councils is that having a dedicated empty homes service can more than cover its own costs through a greater focus on identifying and reclassifying property for council tax purposes and associated higher yield.
7. And therefore agrees:
8. In principle, to re-introduce a dedicated post to deal with private sector empty homes, subject to a report within one cycle setting out the costs of a service and, based on evidence from other councils, the additional income derived from improved intelligence on empty homes and associated council tax yield.
9. Further agrees to ensure that, within the same period, the council an easily accessible means by which members of the public can directly log details of empty property in their neighbourhood."

Decision

1. To note the motion had been withdrawn.
2. The Executive Director of Place review the data from other Councils on extra revenue raised through the additional Council Tax generated through empty homes being brought back into use and to report to the Health and Economy Committee on 2 November 2017 on the possibility of funding a dedicated Empty Homes Officer post from similar revenue

(Reference – report by the Executive Director for Communities and Families - submitted)