



BIELD HOUSING & CARE

Minutes of the meeting of the Partnership Forum

1st May 2025 | Westport, Linlithgow

Present:

Deborah Docherty	(DD) Bridge Court
Gillian Merrett	(GM) Ashgrove Court
Iain Kirkman	(IK) Dean Court
John Thompson	(JT) Craigengar Park
Margaret Smith	(MS) Gordon Court
Maria Duncan	(MD) Inchkeith Court
William Smalley	(WS) Lynn Court

Via Teams:

Joe McLean	(JM) Jamaica Court
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Apologies:

Charles Craske	(CC) Kingsburn Court
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In Attendance:

Alan Morris (AM)
Tenant Engagement & Participation Lead

Robert Black (RB)
Policy and Insight Officer

David MacInnes (DM)
Head of Housing
(Via Teams)

Claire Macbeth (CM)
Head of Customer Contact Services
Maria Martin (MM)
Customer Contact Services Co-Ordinator

Action 1. Approach training providers

Action 2. Bring pens and notepads to next meeting

Action 3. Print off expense forms

1. Welcomes and Introductions

JT extended a warm welcome to the Partnership Forum (PF) meeting.

On behalf of the group, JT wanted to wish DM well in his retirement and thanked him for his attendance at Forum meetings.

DD wanted to congratulate Debbie Collins in her appointment as CEO which the Forum all agreed with. It is hoped Debbie could find the time to attend a meeting in the future.

Kalli Fox is on Maternity leave and the group would like to know when the baby is born to pass on their best wishes.

2. Apologies and Absence

Charles Craske

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the Partnership Forum meeting held on 6th February 2025 agreed.

AM – Updated on actions

Action 1. RB investigated timeline for programme of works, which is available on-line, and will distribute to group in due course.

Action 2. RB investigated cleaning procedures for laundry facilities and agreed they were out of date and needed revision. Local managers as well as tenants' views will be sought for best practice and procedures. It was noted that the number of machines vary significantly between developments. Biggest concern from GM is cross contamination and for procedures to be clearly visible to all.

4. David Macinnes – Head of Housing

DM apologised for not being in person as he had to finish the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) submission for the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).

Rent Policy Review

DM - In March our Board approved the development of a new rent and service charge policy which will be introduced from April 2026. The new Policy aims to provide greater transparency to tenants in relation to our charges.

At the moment we have the following charges:

- * Rent – This is based on 4 criteria and reviewed annually with a % uplift being applied
- * Staffing Charges - This is the cost for staff employed at your Development (and includes employers NI and pension costs)
- * Meals Charge – If someone takes a meals service
- * Communal Energy – This is the cost for providing heating and lighting to the communal areas and was separated from the rent in 2023
- * Domestic Energy – This is charged for heating and hot water where this has been included as part of the services Bield provide

What will change:

Rent - A new points scheme will be introduced for the way we will calculate the rents. This is being finalised but is likely to include a wider number of factors than we currently use and there will be more consultation on this towards the end of the summer.

Service Charge - We want to provide a service charge which shows the costs for services within a development. This is likely to include:

- * Grounds Maintenance
- * Lift Maintenance
- * Window Cleaning
- * Servicing Works
- * Gutter Cleaning
- * Staffing Costs – as above

Each tenant will receive a breakdown of these charges for their Development annually. For those tenants who were here before 2019 they might remember that this was the way we used to detail the charges.

(Important) - The review is not about Bield trying to increase our charges – it is simply about rents being based on a wider range of factors and greater transparency in terms of service charges.

WS – Will this have an impact on rent rebates and or Housing Benefit?

DM – All costs that go to councils will be Housing Benefit eligible which is how it used to be. Councils are looking for rents to be broken down to ensure they are paying for services according to their own policies. There are ineligible costs such as contents insurance or allowances for empty properties. This is due to be introduced from April 2026.

Anti-Social Behaviour

DM - We are currently working with an external trainer in relation to a review of our ASB policy and procedures. This follows feedback from both tenants and staff about the increasingly complex issues around ASB and the way it is managed. I know this has been raised at the PF previously – for example the question of cannabis

use – and we have tended to take a route which involves legal action for recovery of the tenancy.

However, working with the external trainer, has opened up new ideas – for example we can look to change current tenancy agreements to what is known as a short Scottish secure tenancy agreement – basically it is designed to make it easier to recover a tenancy if the tenant does not comply with their tenancy conditions. We have also carried out mediation training and introduced a good neighbour agreement which is useful where issues are linked to different opinions within a Development – some of these would not justify commencing legal action but we know they can be extremely upsetting (e.g use of the communal areas)

The external trainer is currently meeting with various staff – including Local Managers to discuss their concerns before starting work on the policy and procedure review.

MD – Why can tenants not just be evicted?

DM – Courts can only grant an eviction and there must be clear stringent evidence and high level in its nature. Eviction is usually a last resort measure.

MS – Can clause 21 not be used?

DM – Housing Associations must use Notice of Proceedings which involves legal fees as solicitors are used which then if appropriate will go to court for sheriff action.

GM – Different tenants are coming to Bield which is quite right however Bield needs to be wary of tenants with cognitive impairment and those with addictions. Protocols needed throughout the sector to keep the most vulnerable safe.

DM – The external trainer is a former solicitor who has good experience in the sector. Looking to try different routes with different issues as its not a 'one size fits all'.

GM – Could the Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) be amended to handle these issues more effectively?

DM – The tenancy Bield uses is a standard agreement similar to other Housing Associations. Bield are trying Good Neighbour agreements and getting input from Local Authority personnel to add to the severity.

GM – SST needs to be reviewed at a higher level.

MD – Alcohol and drugs have an impact on a tenant's behaviour.

JT – Does Bield still carry out home visits or are most over the phone?

DM – The majority of pre-allocation assessment are carried out over the phone.

Voids

DM - In 24/25 void properties cost us £1.3 million (or just over 3% of our rent) and we took an average of 87 days to relet properties. In addition to this each void costs about £1800 in terms of work required to make it lettable. We also have 25% of offers refused over the course of a year.

We have been working for a few months with an external Company on ways to improve our performance and reduce costs. This work has set very defined targets for improvements in 3 areas:

Void Repairs – As well as reducing costs we are looking at improving the performance of contractors in relation to turnaround times.

Allocations – We want to significantly improve the time between a property becoming void and being relet using the information we have in our Cx allocations system.

Refusals – We want to use the information we hold on applicants to reduce the number of refusals as each time a property is refused costs us time and money.

Work is already underway and although this is a 3-year project, there is a specific target for the end of March 26. This work involves staff across the whole of Bield including many local Managers.

GM – What is the most common reason for refusal.

DM – The prospective tenant is not ready to move.

GM – The properties may not be fit for today's tenants, or they may get a shock moving from a larger home to a bedsit.

MD – Do you get taken off of the waiting list if you refuse a let?

DM – Not on first refusal but Bield has a policy to handle this, and the prospective tenant is usually suspended for a set time.

GM – Is Bield losing out on tenants due to bedsits?

DM – Possibly, we are looking at ways to make bedsits more appealing, you can look at new student accommodation as examples of this. The allocation system is now set up so if a person on the waiting does not wish a bedsit, then they will not be offered one. We are looking to work with Local Authorities and external groups such as Scottish Veterans.

GM – Will all bedsits be reconfigured?

DM – No, some will be reconfigured to make them more spacious and appealing, with others, where big enough, be made in to a 1 bed apartment.

MD – Could Bield look at sliding doors to create a separate bed space?

DM – It is something to look at but most of the time it is the bathroom area which is the issue as they can be too small. Our Director of Assets has been out to see the what the issues are.

GM – First impressions, especially décor, are extremely important when ‘selling’ a property.

MD – Could look to explain a décor allowance in more detail or to paint all void properties prior to let.

MS – Please not magnolia!

JT – Passed on the group's thanks and best wishes to David in his retirement but also taking time out to come to the meetings.

-----Break for lunch-----

5. TP Update

AM – Provided a brief update regarding Tenant Participation

7. Topics and Speakers

JT – Noted the reminder regarding not to discuss development issues, unless it effects the whole of Bield.

IK – All well and good.

GM – It is difficult to set up local groups with the limited number of people who wish to get involved.

DD – Possible attendees could include Debbie Collins (CEO), Bield Chair Paul Edie, Area Managers, Heads of Service, Other Bield staff, Scottish Housing Regulator.

8. Claire Macbeth – Head of Customer Contact Services

Powerpoint (annexed) presented by Claire Macbeth who was accompanied by Maria Martin.

9. Training Specification

DD – Training will be step in the right direction as at the moment there is no great support in our role.

IK – Preference would be for training as a group and in person.

10. AOB

MS – Can you find out dates for Small Grant Fund and send RTO documents?

IK – There are benches at Dean Court which should be relocated to another development.

GM – Recommend hard plastic should developments be looking to make a purchase of new benches.

MD – Could we get more expense forms.

ALL – Could we get more notebooks and pens.

Next meeting will be on Thursday 7th August at West Port

Meeting brought to a close



Customer Contact Services





#Cx

 **BIELD**
FREE TO BE

Customer Contact Centre



- One point of contact for customers
- Trained Customer Contact Centre Advisors
- Repairs: approving requests and issuing work order, paying contractor invoices
- Applications: processing applications for housing, requesting verification evidence, dealing with applicant enquiries and administering annual reviews
- My Bield enquiries
- General enquiry phone calls and emails



Calls Pre-Customer Contact Centre



- Edinburgh Reception, Glasgow Reception and the Repair Line combined received 3,551 calls
- 49.8% of those calls were answered
- 50.2% were abandoned



Post-Customer Contact Centre



Launch (13th May 2024) til 31st March 2025

We've seen a dramatic increase in the number of customer calls being answered and managed

Calls Handled	Inbound Calls	Outbound Calls
33,323	20,838	12,485



Call Answer Time SLA

Ahead of go live, we agreed a target Service Level Agreement (SLA) for all inbound calls. The SLA is based on 80% of calls being answered within 60 seconds



89.5% of calls met the SLA from the launch til 31st of March



Outputs so far



- Over 4,000 housing applications have been processed
- New processes have been adopted since February following the introduction of the My Bield online application form
- Over 21,000 repairs Works Orders have been issued to contractors



Customer Satisfaction



- 171 customers responded to a survey relating to calls handled from launch til 28th of February
- 73% of those responses ranked their satisfaction with the service they received as 4 or 5 stars



Business Services



- Office facilities management: compliance, office invoices, raising office repairs
- Reception duties
- Office mail
- Inboxes



Cx Development



- Change Requests: system improvements and enhancements
- My Bield administration
- Software patches and upgrades
- Training guides and aides

