



**BIELD HOUSING & CARE**  
**Minutes of the meeting of the Partnership Forum**  
**31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 | Westport, Linlithgow**

**Present:**

Iain Kirkman	IK Dean Court
Deborah Docherty	DD Bridge Court
Maria Duncan	MD Inchkeith Court
John Thompson	JT Craigengar Park

**Via Teams:**

Gillian Merrett	GM Ashgrove Court
Charles Craske	CC Kingsburn Court
Joe McLean	JM Jamaica Court

**In Attendance:**

Alan Morris (AM)  
Tenant Engagement & Participation Lead

Robert Black (RB)  
Policy and Insight Officer

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

Kalli Fox (KF)  
Customer Standards Administrator

Action 1. Add to winter newsletter a comment on keeping developments safe by tenants not allowing people into the

development if they are not there to visit them or if they do not know them. Promote safe living.

Action 2. RB to email Liz Peacock with questions from IK on RAAC and Asbestos.

Action 3. AM to ask Ron Mould if there is anything in place for personal warmth? Much like the previous roll out of air fryers.

1. Welcomes and Introductions

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

2. Apologies and Absence

Zhan McIntyre  
Margaret Smith  
William Smalley

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the Partnership Forum meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 agreed.

AM – Updated on actions

Action 1.

IK - explained no movement had been made in relation to posters up in developments.

MD - development fairly clear.

Action 2.

DM - to speak to asset team to get it added into external decoration.

GM - discussed mess left from smart lights being installed.

DM - to speak with property regarding this. Furniture bought from small grant fund should be maintained, again discuss with property.

Action 3.

DM - nothing specific in tenancy agreement (TA), there has been some instances and some action taken however it has never went to court. We are looking into the tenancy agreement in relation to other issues such as Domestic Abuse to see where we can use this as a ground of eviction. We are working with multi agencies to help with this.

GM - it is an issue and as demographics of tenants change it will increase. It should have in the TA that illegal substance is a no go.

DM - there are grounds for recovery if someone is dealing drugs from their residence.

GM - security is failing as individuals are coming into the development.

DM - if tenants are inviting people in we cannot stop that.

GM - the TA needs strengthened.

JT - some developments have their doors locked at all times.

IK - vulnerable tenants should not be policing the doors. IF multi agency works, then you need to publicise this.

GM - is this something we can put in a go in the next bulletin?

DM - Zhan is drafting a policy on being a good neighbour. We do not expect any tenant to police the door or development.

AM - we can put it something into the winter newsletter.

#### **4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair:**

AM - on behalf of the group would like to thank Willie for standing as chair. Only JT and DD let KF know they would be interested.

IK - asked if the chair would still be a member of the board? I believe it should be.

JT - should be 2

RB - ZM is in talks with governance.

AM - asked the group one by one if they would be interested.

GM - no – other people are better suited. Happy with JT

JM - No thanks

CC - No not suitable

IK - proposed JT

DD - second.

AM - Vice chair? DD?

IK - Propose DD

AM - second.

## 5. Small Grants Fund:

AM - this will be a quick bit and IK wants to discuss a couple of issues so we will do it in this section.

AM - gave a quick run through of the small grants, delighted on how it went and everyone who was successful now either had the money, or the items ordered.

MD - how do you apply for this?

AM - explained that an email will be sent to developments with application form also developments who were successful in the previous grants will not be eligible this time.

KF - suggested getting a poster made, which can go up within the development, so tenants can be more involved. This was agreed by the members.

AM - explained that the team are working with other officers including procurement and property to try and get some community benefits.

Raac and Asbestos:

IK - asked questions in relation to RAAC and Asbestos within Dean Court and the other developments.

- How many Bield projects/ developments have been checked for a, Raac; b, asbestos
- How many have been found to have a, Raac; b, asbestos
- How many have work started as identified for a, Raac; b asbestos
- How many are having work done to replace a, Raac; b, asbestos
- How many have had the work that has been identified completed for a, Raac; b, asbestos

AM - very few with Raac and asbestos is dependent on the development.

IK - mentioned that only some tiles had asbestos, why not the rest? It is very unsafe.

AM - offered to go to Dean Court after meeting for a look.

**6. TP Update:**

AM - ZM has put groups forward for awards and some have been shortlisted. This will take place on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November and we have a couple of tenants from groups attending also.

Tenant Information Service Excellence awards:

- Outstanding Contribution to Tenant Participation
- Outstanding housing organisation award
- Excellence in Digital Engagement
- Tenant Group of the Year

Chartered Institute of Housing

- Excellence in Communication – My Bield roll-out
- Excellence in Scrutiny – Compliment and Complaint Collective
- Marian Gibbs Award for Equality in Housing – Bield Equality Network.

AM - gave a run through of the current groups within tenant engagement and groups still trying to set up.

Scrutiny Group:

Current work	Terms of Reference
	Code of Conduct
	Recruit Members
Future Programme	Exercise to be decided

Regarding members – we are looking at it being one tenant only from a development.

Communication Champions:

Current Members	7
Current work	Performance report for tenants
Future Programme	Bield Bulletin
	Bield Calendar

Communication Champions will look at winter bulletin first.  
AM - always looking to recruit for groups. RB using the surveys to help recruit.

Compliments and Complaints collective:

Current members 4  
Current work Review sample of complaints  
Future Programme Meet in Feb 2025

DD - a really good group with officers included also. You are getting the bigger picture, able to ask questions on why things are done a certain way. The group has really moved up levels  
AM - it is a co production group with complaints picked at random.

Bield Equality Network:

Current membership 7 (+3 since last update)  
Opened to officers as well  
Current Work Meeting in October 2024  
Future programme

AM this is a co production group again with officers and tenants.

Tenant Action on Sustainability:

Current work Arranging meeting with Net Zero Carbon Manager

AM - name is not for definite, can be changed. Its about what Bield can do and get to net zero. I have spoke to Ron Mould and Liz Peacock who are willing to speak to tenants through the group. We will be looking at different ideas such as recycling and reusing. IK - Binmen will refuse to take stuff if it isn't recycled properly. AM - there has been good feedback and enthusiasm regarding the group.

Registered Tenant Organisation (RTOs):

Number of RTOs 1 in course of being registered

AM - a lot of housing associations have these, however Bield currently have none, so this is what we are aiming for. Duns is in the process of getting set up and they are set up we will be giving them £300 to help them up and running. An RTO is to encourage individuals to get their voices heard.

KF - currently trying to get a regional forum and RTO set up within Leven. The aim for like minded individuals to come together to discuss issues that are important to them.

AM - working on Ayrshire. We have tried Inverclyde but had to put that on hold due to the issues going on within a development involved.

Currently it is not up to managers to be involved or help just now.

KF - we have people who really want to be involved and do stuff, others half in half out and some who do not want to be involved at all.

GM - it is really to do with dynamics and individuals coming in and out. We have two people who have started a games afternoon and its going well.

AM - great to hear.

Regional Forums:

Current Work    Initial meetings being held

Interested Parties List:

Number of tenants    222

Communications    Sent out October.

AM - this is continuing to rise through the work of RB

RB - we are looking to change the name, and it will be known as Tenant Insight Network (TIN), we have a lot of email addresses and we are going to be using this to filter out surveys so we can have quick responses to things. Give into on policies and procedures changing, and we will be asking if you would like a printed copy then get the development manager to print. There will be more info in the bulletin. Information which has come in is that some tenants do not know what the partnership forum is, so can

we make sure we are discussing and the information that was discussed.

KF - When the minutes are done and on the website we will make a poster to go up in developments letting tenants know the minutes are on the website. Poster to be up for around 2 weeks.

GM - things need to remain anonymous.

KF - if you do not want it to be in the minutes then say at the time and we will not put an initial beside it. This was agreed.

#### Tenant Satisfaction Results:

RB - Currently in Q3 and it has been the best return rate so far, with one development getting 100%.

Overall return rate so far for Q1,2,3 is 37%. Total return so far is 1345

88% are happy with BR24

210 more tenants to add to TIN

- Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by Bield? 83%
- How good or poor do you feel Bield are at keeping you informed about the services we provide and the decision we make? 77%
- Would you be interested in getting involved in our tenant engagement and participation programme? Through this you can help shape the services we offer to tenants. 134 tenants stated they are interested
- Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of your home? 88%
- Thinking about the last time you had repairs carried out, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the repairs service provided by Bield? 70%
- Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Bield's management of the neighbourhood you live in? 81%
- Taking into account the accommodation and services Bield provides, to what extent do you think that the rent and service charge for your property represents good or poor value for money Is it 77%



- Do you have access to the internet in your home? 449 tenants stated they did have access to internet

DD - is there internet in the common room?

KF - only some do

MD - if you are living outwith the main building you should be getting information on letter.

RB - going into Q4 after Christmas which will include Inverclyde and East Dumbartonshire.

## 7. Rent Policy:

DM - this is the future rent policy, not the rent for next year. A whole review is being undertaken. In 2019 we put a lot into the service charge, and rent was based on 4 criteria:

- Size of property
- Type of service
- Garden Size
- Type of property

Local Authorities (LA) have asked for more transparency when paying Housing Benefit Applications. So we are looking to go back to the model prior to 2019 which has rent based on a number of factors. This will cause a problem for Bield if LA will not pay housing benefit for individuals because we are not being transparent enough. There is a working group in place currently with the plans of taking the policy to board in March 2025 and it being fully implemented in April 2026. This gives us a chance to discuss the policy fully to make sure it is correct and meets the criteria being asked for LA's.

IK – What is Scheme Equipment?

DM – BR24

IK – Should say that.

DM – It needs to be worded a certain way to maximise the chance of getting Housing Benefit.

IK – I will be sending it to LA.

MD – What does this have to do with LA?

AM – All LA's are different and asking for different things.  
GM – How many tenants are on housing benefit?  
DM – 50% of tenants get housing benefit paid directly to us. The rest are self funders or getting their Housing benefit/Universal Credit paid into their own bank accounts.  
GM – so it is a significant if Bield cannot this policy worked through and completed?  
DM – we have more councils questioning what is included, and not everything will be eligible, but we need to make what we can fit the criteria.  
GM – asked if Bield could get a template from a LA?  
DM – No  
IK – LA will not tell what is included.  
DM – if you are transparent LA's are usually fine, the issue lies with central government.  
IK – Window cleaning, is it all windows?  
DM – Yes it is development specific.  
IK – General Cleaning? Is that staff and cleaning products?  
DM – Materials not staff. There will be another line in the final copy with staffing costs.  
IK – Staffing, manager, RHA?  
AM – Staffing costs is different to management  
IK – Where is all the staff costs coming from?  
DM – You can work out how much Bield costs are per development.  
IK – When I send this to LA, I will be able to work out how much staff are paid, I do not think that should be the case.  
GM – Does it matter? The sums are already public.  
IK – Lighting and Power – is there a charge?  
DM – No this is the old one, its now energy communal charge.  
IK – IT Costs?  
DM – Whether we put that in we do not know, we might put that as a company cost.  
IK – If the grounds do not belong to Bield, then do not pay ground maintenance. There is a great amount of unhappy people, if the council are able to pull apart you need to be able to answer.  
AM – so we have a year to go through this policy?

DM – Yes

GM – agreed with IK regarding ground maintenance. Costs need to be looked at.

DM – The ground maintenance have a clause to say they can be called out to deal with ice and snow. However if local manager feels safe to do it they can do.

MD – Why not local contractors?

DM – We are legally required to tender for works which sometimes means local contractors will not want to be involved. The contract will explain what developments need to be covered. Not all developments will be able to be done all the time.

Commented [DM(S(1):

MD – Only the main door gets done?

RB – The main door gets done due to it being the emergency access.

MD – No.

AM – DM are you happy to keep the policy for the upcoming agenda's?

DM – Yes.

## 8. Rent Setting:

DM - Currently looking at 25/26, and this is to discuss the rent charge only. We need to get a paper sorted for Board and we wanted to bring it to the Partnership Forum.

Responses have not been great the past few years, so we are looking at bettering that. We need a financially secure model that does not cause implications for the tenants. We are looking at 3 scenarios and ZM has kindly put together some information.

There are going to be challenges, and these are the costs going forward of:

- Repairs
- Maintenance
- Backlog of work

Repairs are a real example of a cost that is high.

We have a team working on our new strategic investment.

Going forward for rents next year, we are proposing between 2.7% and 3.7%.

GM – Asked what is the average age of the Bield estate?

DM – 30 to 40 Years.

GM – so repairs and net zero are on the bill?

DM – this year is Raac, last year was mould, our backlog is extensive.

IK – asked if Raac is covered by insurance?

DM – NO

AM – We really need to take into consideration a number of external costs, and repair costs.

DM – we had 17% increase for repairs costs in the contracts.

IK – If you go lower and costs rise dramatically what can you do to recoup?

DM – we would need to reduce costs by cutting planned stuff. This is why we are this position now, because we have had to cancel jobs getting done and its caused such a backlog. We really want to avoid that. We are looking further ahead and planning a year budget. If we go with CPI + 1 (2.7%) we are going to be in a deficit, with inflation at 3%. The new asset team we have are looking at works and working out what needs to be done and what does not.

IK – Go upper figure, level with people. This is something that cannot be predicted, we need to look at the real world.

DD – remove lower option? Gives a better chance of getting somewhere.

JT – we need to think about full funders.

DM – That's why we are doing the rent policy also, because we need to take a closer look at things, such as investment. We need to take a multitude of things into account and rent needs to be more linked to property and standard.

GM – You want to level up properties? With the average age being 30 to 40 years, a lot needs done.

DM – Yes. We have to look at this through policy and we need to be mindful.

JT – middle would be better

DM – The budget from the government on employers national insurance will cause issues.

9. AOB

DM - We are trying to look at the repairs experience. We are looking at communication between all parties and different options to be kept up to date. You would be able to tell us if you are satisfied with the repair and if it is complete.

GM – I think that's excellent, I did recently receive a text regarding a repair and the number you are meant to contact to change appointment was unavailable.

IK – There needs to be different ways.

DD – communication is poor regarding repairs. They often do not turn up.

DM – Agrees there needs to be different options, and looking for the forum to give thoughts.

MD – Local contractors?

AM – it is all down to procurement.

RB – can we maybe ask at sign up about how they would like to be contacted?

GM – Is there any thoughts of running a personal warmth campaign? We had airfryers rolled out, is there anything for this year? With many losing the winter fuel allowance.

AM – we can certainly put that to Ron.

Next Meeting:

6<sup>th</sup> February 2025