

# **PARTNERSHIP FORUM CONSTITUTION**

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**May 2015**

**BIELD HOUSING & CARE**

Registered Office: 79 Hopetoun Street, Edinburgh, EH7 4QF

Scottish Charities No SC006878

## **1. Name, Purpose and Contact**

- 1.1** The name of the organisation will be the Partnership Forum of Bield Housing & Care ('The Partnership Forum').
- 1.2** The purpose of the Partnership Forum will be to provide a national group within which tenant participation proposals at a strategic level will be discussed and decided.
- 1.3** The Partnership Forum will be specifically for tenants in Bield's rented or supported housing i.e. Amenity, Retirement, Sheltered, Very Sheltered and General Needs Housing. Separate arrangements will be put in place for other Bield services users such as Registered Care Housing, Home and Day Care, Owner Occupiers and Shared Owners.

The co-ordinator of the Partnership Forum will be the Assistant Director of Housing Services.

## **2. Membership**

- 2.1** Membership of the Partnership Forum will consist of three constituents as detailed below.

### **2.2 Board Member Representation.**

The Chair of the Board will be invited to attend and other Board Members will be invited on an ad-hoc basis.

### **2.3 Staff Member Representation**

The following staff members will be invited to attend the Partnership Forum:

- The Chief Executive
- The Director and Assistant Director of Housing Services
- The Assistant Director of Tenancy Services
- The Director of Asset Management
- The Assistant Director of Property Services
- Housing Performance Manager
- Tenant Engagement Officer
- Housing Services Assistant (Tenant Engagement)

Other staff may be invited to attend the Partnership Forum as required; attendance will be dependent on the matters to be discussed.

### **2.4 Tenant Membership**

Four tenants from each of the four geographical areas detailed in appendix 1 will make up the constituent of 16 tenants. Appendix 1 will be updated as new supported housing schemes are completed or transferred to Bield ownership.

## **3. Tenant Elections**

### **3.1 Nominations**

Nominations will be sought for when a vacancy arises, either when a member's term of office comes to an end or if a member resigns/retires from the Partnership Forum. If a tenant's term of office has come to an end they can choose to re-stand by completing the nomination form.

Should a vacancy arise a nomination form will be sent out to all tenants within the relevant geographical area. There are some rulings to nominations:

- Only one tenant member is permitted from a development – tenants will be notified of the developments where a current tenant member resides
- A tenant can only make one nomination and cannot nominate a tenant from a different geographical area to the one they live in

Following the closing date for nominations the successful candidate will be elected onto the Partnership Forum. If there is more than one candidate an election will be undertaken.

### **3.2 Future Elections & Ballot Process**

Should there be more than one candidate an election will take place shortly after the nomination process has concluded. Tenants within the relevant geographical area will decide which candidate should be put forward as a tenant member on the Partnership Forum.

Each candidate will be asked to provide biographical details for the ballot paper. It will be suggested that the candidates are asked to reply to the following 3 questions however it is their prerogative should they wish to deviate from this:

- How long have you been a Bield tenant?
- Tell us a bit about your background, where you worked and any voluntary work that is relevant
- Why are you interested in joining the Forum?

The biographical details will not exceed 150 words. The details can be collected either by questionnaire, email or over the phone – whichever is easier for the nominee.

Ballot papers will have candidates listed alphabetically on the front with biographical details in alphabetical order on the back.

The ballot paper will have a clear closing date. It will be made clear on the ballot paper that any votes received after the closing date will not be counted nor will any spoiled papers.

The closing date will be taken as the date the ballot papers are returned to the office.

A stamped address envelope will be issued with every ballot paper to assist tenants to return them to the correct office. Tenants will be encouraged to return them direct rather than via their Local Managers to ensure there is no delay, if for example the Manager is on leave.

Every tenant will be entitled to vote therefore in the case of joint tenants 2 ballot papers will be issued to that household.

After the closing date ballot papers will be counted and double checked. The candidate(s) with the highest number of votes will be elected.

A record of all late and spoiled ballot papers will also be kept.

A report on the election outcomes will be prepared for all Forum members.

All candidates will be contacted by telephone to advise them of the outcome and this will be followed up in writing. The result of the ballot including names of candidates and number of votes cast will be notified to all parties.

The results of the election will be notified to all tenants in the relevant area via an information poster which will go up on development noticeboards.

In the case of a draw, the Forum will select a nominee that represents a group or area not already represented on the Forum, i.e. two tying nominees from Dumbarton and Rothesay but if there is already representation on the Forum from Dumbarton then the nominee from Rothesay would be given priority.

- 3.3** A 5 year period of office will commence from the date of the first Forum meeting that the Member is invited to attend. The term of office will end on either the date of termination of the Members tenancy, the date of their resignation or at the end of their five year term of office, the anniversary of which will be taken from the date of the first meeting attended. No notice period or reason for resignation will be required although where this is provided it will be recorded in a register and used for statistical purposes. If a tenant has been elected onto the Forum and then resigns up to 6 months following their first meeting the position should then be offered to the next best placed candidate.

#### **4. Role of Tenants on the Partnership Forum**

- 4.1** The role of tenants on the Partnership Forum is to participate in Bield's affairs at a strategic level. This will allow a tenant perspective to be introduced to the decision making process within Bield.
- 4.2** Tenants are expected to be broadly representative of the views held by Bield tenants, however given the wide geographical area tenants are not expected to consult with other tenants or feedback to other tenants. This will be done by Bield via poster updates, tenant meetings, letters and articles in the Bulletin.
- 4.3** Development issues will be dealt with through normal staff structures, which are in place to deal with such issues. It is therefore not expected that the Partnership Forum will deal with development specific issues, or that tenants will act as a tenant spokesperson within a development.
- 4.4** Chair and Vice Chair of the Partnership Forum

A tenant member will chair each of the Partnership Forum meetings with a vice-chair position also in place to support the Chair in their duties. The post of Chair and Vice Chair shall be for three years from the date of their first meeting in that role. After the three year period has ended the Chair will step down from the post with the Vice Chair then offered the position. The Chair cannot re-stand after they have served a term of office and this also applies to the Vice Chair.

For electing each post candidates should put themselves forward for nomination and if there is more than the required number for the positions available an election will be held among tenant members to determine the outcome. In this event each candidate will be asked to provide a short summary on why they would like to stand which will be incorporated into the ballot paper. The election will take the form of a postal vote with only tenant members getting the opportunity to vote. If there is a tie vote for one post the position will be offered to the member who has served longest on the Partnership Forum.

If the Chair loses their place on the Forum or resigns then the post should be offered to the Vice Chair for a three year term. Role descriptions for both the Chair and Vice Chair positions are in place which explains their duties in serving the Partnership Forum and training will be offered to those taking up either of the posts.

If there is an indication that a Chair or Vice Chair is not performing in their duties then tenant members will meet as a group with the person(s) present to try and resolve any potential issues. If the situation is still not satisfactorily settled after this then formal mediation will be sought.

## **4.5 Training Opportunities**

Partnership Forum tenant members will be given the opportunity to undertake the following training:

- Induction training on joining the Forum
- Any up-skills training required
- Training for Chair (and possibly Vice-Chair) roles
- Skills audit training
- Any other training that may be required

## **5. Equal Opportunities**

The Partnership Forum is committed to advancing equality of opportunity, eliminating unlawful discrimination and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation). Acting on these principles, we aim to promote an environment that is free from all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination, and one that values diversity. We seek to treat people fairly, with dignity and respect, and to uphold human rights for all.

## **6. Meetings**

**6.1** The Partnership Forum will usually meet four times per year although sub-groups will be convened to progress various issues agreed by the Partnership Forum.

Partnership Forum members will have access to good meeting facilities and will be able to contribute to the creation of the agenda, and have a record of the meeting. In this regard:

- Meeting times will be set having full regard to travel time involved.
- Meeting venues will be barrier free.
- Travel arrangements will be agreed which are appropriate to individual need, including the use of taxis, accessible public transport and where appropriate, Bield vehicles.
- Agendas will be prepared after consultation with members of the Partnership Forum.
- Final agenda and papers will be issued at least one week before the meeting date.
- A record of the meeting will be issued to all members shortly after the meeting is held.

## **7. Expenses**

**7.1** Expenses will be paid to cover all costs incurred by tenants when engaged on the business of the Partnership Forum. These will be paid in accordance with guidance detailed in Appendix 2.

## **8. Relationship to Bield Board and Committees**

**8.1** Board members are invited to attend the 2 full group meetings which take place each year.

## **9. Independence and Inter-dependence**

**9.1** All parties of the Partnership Forum will recognise and accept the legitimate need for both independence and inter-dependence within the Partnership Forum.

They will recognise and accept independence which ensures:

- Resources and funding are available to allow tenant members to fulfil their responsibilities.
- That tenant members are able to seek independent advice and assistance if desired.

- That tenant members are able to discuss and consider matters outwith the Partnership Forum meetings and are given adequate time, resources and support to do so.
- Compliance with statutory and contractual obligations placed upon Bield as a Registered Social Landlord, employer and provider of services.

They will also recognise and accept Inter-dependence which ensures: -

- A true partnership approach to consultation at the national (strategic) level.
- Acknowledgement of the different but complementary input each can make to the Partnership Forum.
- A strengthening of the ethos which already exists within Bield regarding partnership working.
- Open and honest sharing of information.
- Open and honest sharing of ideas.
- Open and honest sharing in decision making.
- A strengthening of the mutual trust and respect which already exists with Bield.
- Improved decision making based upon increased awareness.

## **10. Review of the Constitution**

- 10.1** The constitution will be reviewed on a five yearly basis in consultation with the Partnership Forum, Registered Tenant Organisations and where appropriate by obtaining feedback from tenants.

**Geographical Areas for Election Purposes****CENTRAL AREA**

Bothwell	Wishaw	Bannockburn	Dumbarton
Motherwell	Airdrie	Stirling	Alexandria
Carluke	Newarthill	Falkirk	Balloch
Uddingston	Cumbernauld	Bo'ness	Greenock
Biggar	Grangemouth	Stenhousemuir	Kirkintilloch
Coatbridge	Bridge of Allan	Port Glasgow	Milngavie
Airdrie	Bearsden		

**NORTH AREA**

Leven	Bankfoot	Buckhaven	Brechin
St Andrews	Crail	Arbroath	Montrose
Perth	Dunfermline	Dundee	Blairgowrie
Kennoway	St. Monans	Kirriemuir	Broughty Ferry
Glenrothes	Ballingry	Monifieth	Elie

**EAST AREA**

Dunbar	Duns	Dalkeith	Blackburn
Musselburgh	Penicuik	Whitburn	Livingston
Edinburgh	Melrose	West Calder	Uphall
Haddington	Gorebridge	Broxburn	Bathgate
Macmerry	Greenlaw	Armadale	Selkirk
Wallyford	Winchburgh	Fauldhouse	Bonnyrigg
Prestonpans	Linlithgow		

**WEST AREA**

Dunoon	Oban	Patna	Glasgow
Kirn	Dunbeg	Cumnock	Johnstone
Innellan	Helensburgh	Netherthird	Saltcoats
Rothsay	Kilwinning	Dalmellington	

## BIELD HOUSING AND CARE

### Partnership Forum Tenant Expenses

#### When expenses will be covered

Tenants on the Partnership Forum are entitled to claim expenses reasonably and properly incurred when engaged on the business of the Partnership Forum. The allowance rates for car mileage and meals are normally reviewed annually.

#### What expenses will be covered

Expenses may be claimed on the following basis.

- for actual expenses on production of a receipt
- to attend Partnership Forum meetings of which the person is a member
- when undertaking other official business on behalf of Bield on the authority of the Forum. This includes attendance at conferences, training events, meetings (including site and scheme visits) and seminars

Expenses may be claimed on the following basis: -

1. TRAVEL  
It is left to the discretion of Members to decide which form of transport should be used for each journey, However Members are encouraged to use public transport, where this is accessible and when able to do so.  
  
Rail: 1<sup>st</sup> or Standard class at the Member's discretion  
  
Car: At the current mileage rate per mile (45p per mile)  
  
Taxi: The actual cost incurred as detailed on a receipt  
  
Air: Economy fare
2. ACCOMMODATION  
Hotels/Guest Houses: AA 3 star rating is the standard normally used although circumstances may necessitate the use of a different grade. A claim may include room with private facilities, full breakfast, early morning tea and other light refreshments, necessary telephone calls plus service charge and VAT.  
  
Guest rooms: Guest rooms can be booked and used as overnight accommodation instead of a Hotel where there is availability.
3. MEALS  
A dinner allowance of £18 may be claimed when members are required to stay overnight or when Association business precludes arrival home before 8.00pm.  
  
A lunch allowance of £8.50 may be claimed when lunch is necessarily taken away from home, office etc.

Note: meals taken on trains may be claimed in full when they exceed the appropriate allowance.

In any of the above circumstances expenses will only be paid where alternative provision was not included e.g. expenses cannot be claimed for meals, accommodation, transport etc where these are already included in any attendance fee, or they are provided free of charge.

4. OTHER

Any other reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, e.g. telephone, postage, etc. may be claimed on the basis of the actual costs incurred.

5. CHILD CARE

The costs incurred through having to have a child looked after while carrying out normal duties as a Member will be met by Bield providing that a receipt for expenses incurred is provided and the person minding the child is not a member of the Member's household.

Childminding expenses will be paid for any child or step-child of a Member, or any child for whom the Member is the legal guardian. The child must normally live with them and be under the age of 16.

The Scottish Childminding Association's (SCMA) rates state that the average charge per child is £4 per hour or £160 per week (based on an 8 hour day, 5 days a week).

Bield may ask for documentary evidence of any child's age, or their legal guardian before paying expenses. Childcare costs cannot be claimed where cheaper or free alternatives were available e.g. a crèche was provided.

6. CARE OF OTHER DEPENDANT RELATIVES

Members can also claim expenses incurred through having other dependant relatives cared for while they are carrying out duties of a Forum Member, provided that they can provide a receipt for expenses incurred and the person caring for a dependant is not a member of the Forum Member's household. Bield may ask for documentary evidence of the relationship of the dependant from the Forum Member and any legal duty of care e.g. payment of a relevant social security benefit, payment from social work etc. before paying expenses.

The same rates will apply as for childcare with the same maximum payable.

7. LOSS OF EARNINGS

Bield will also reimburse a Forum Member for any loss of earnings or annual leave entitlement in the following circumstances which are consistent with Exception 6 – Payment for loss of earnings as detailed in Communities Scotland Guidance Note 2003/02 10/13 relating to part 1 of Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 attached provided the following conditions are met:

- the payment is not being made in respect of routine meeting
- the meeting or event could not reasonably have been held at an alternative time
- the attendance of the Forum Member was required and authorised by the Forum

- another Forum Member who would not lose earnings could either not attend in their place, or it would not have been appropriate for them to attend in their place
- the claimant must submit an official letter from the employer confirming that earnings have been lost or annual leave entitlement used, on which date and the amount or value involved

Bield will pay up to a maximum of £60.00 per day for loss of earnings or annual leave entitlement. Loss of earnings will not be paid to those Forum members who are self-employed.

## 8. SUPPORT

Bield acknowledges that some Members may require the support of a carer to enable them to attend meetings. Where this is the case, a Member will be eligible to claim accommodation, travel and meals allowance for their carer as well as themselves in accordance with the agreed rates noted above.

Expenses detailed above will be paid at the approved rates.

### How expenses will be paid

It is not expected that Members meet the cost of travel and any other expenses incurred. Arrangements can therefore be made to meet the cost of expenses in one of the following ways: -

#### **Payment in advance from Bield office**

Members should contact the Admin support team to advise their estimated expenditure and the money will be transferred into their account or a cheque will be forward to them normally within two weeks. Receipts will require to be submitted within one month of the meeting detailing the expenditure being incurred, together with a claim for any underpayment or a refund of any over payment.

#### **Payment on the submission of an Expenses Claim Form**

It is accepted that in some cases members may prefer to meet the cost of any expenses incurred and then submit an expenses claim.

Claims for expenses should be on the prescribed form and be sent to the Admin support team. Expenses claims in accordance with the prescribed rates and procedures are authorised and passed to Financial Services for payment, normally within 4 weeks of receipt of the claim. The record of claims and expenses paid is held by Financial Services.