



**BELLE ISLE
TENANT MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION**

BOARD MEETING

AGENDA AND PAPERS

Thursday 7th September 2023 at 6.00pm

Refreshments from 5.30pm

**BITMOs GATE
Aberfield Gate
Belle Isle
(With Teams Available)**

Note:

This is the agenda and papers for the Full Board of Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO)

For each item on the agenda there is narrative describing any issues and details of any recommendations requiring Board approval, where appropriate there may be separate reports attached as an appendix

Part A of the Board meeting and related papers are open to the public

Part B is reserved for matters confidential to the Board

Board members who wish to discuss any area of the board papers that requires further information or clarification are welcome to contact Deborah Kelly (CEO) via Karen Hoole 0113 378 2182

FULL BOARD MEETING

Meeting to be held on
Thursday 7th September 2023
at BITMOs GATE at 6.00pm
(With online access available)

Refreshments from 5.30pm

***WOULD BOARD MEMBERS PLEASE PASS ANY ITEMS FOR 'ANY OTHER BUSINESS' TO THE CHAIR
BEFORE THE START OF THE MEETING***

Part A – Public Agenda Items

- Apologies
 - Questions from the public
 - Issues raised by Board members for the agenda
1. Bite Sized Training: Policy reviews (page 5)
 2. Minutes and Matters Arising from the Board meeting held 27th July 2023 (page 5 and Appendix 1 – page 25)
 3. Operational Report (page 7)
 4. Annual General Meeting 28th September 2023 (page 12)
 5. Finance Committee Reports
 - Audit Letter of Representation (page 13, Appendix 2 - page 35)
 - Revenue accounts – update (page 13)
 - Community Fund update (page 15)
 - GATE Kitchen re-development (page 16)
 - Capital accounts – update (page 19)
 - Housing Advisory Panel applications (page 21)
 6. Other Scheduled Reports
 - ABCD project update (page 21)
 7. Board Forward Plan – meeting dates and times for the coming year (page 23)
 8. Any other business
 - Complaints Self-Assessment (page 24, Appendix 3 - page 39)
 - Lift Off Charity (page 24)

Part B – Confidential Items

Separate agenda and papers.

BITMO Board meeting 7th September 2023

Executive Summary

Agenda item	Topic	Why is this important	What can BITMO do as a result	What are the Board being asked to do
Presentation	Bitesize training Re Policy Reviews	Board input into and approval of policies are essential for organisational performance.	Enhance ways of working.	Review and assess.
Operational Report	Key updates from Board Away-Day.	Part of strategic development of the organisation.	Continue to seek enhanced delivery of strategic aims.	Review, assess and challenge. Board is asked to approve recommendations.
Finance Committee Report	- Capital & Revenue Accounts 2022-23 - Community Fund update - Community Kitchen re-development.	The Finance Committee has reviewed activities and made recommendations in each of these areas	Adopt action plans to enhance services.	Board is asked to approve recommendations.
Other Scheduled Reports	Asset Based Community Development programme	Update report on new project of public engagement.	Review and continue to enhance services.	Board is asked to review the report and raise queries and suggest any further work.
Board Forward Plan	To agree meeting and development event dates.	Required for good governance.	To ensure business is carried out correctly and to aid development of Board skills and experience.	Agree the current forward plan.

Part A – Public Agenda Items

Apologies: To be reported at the meeting.

Questions from the Public: All BITMO Board meetings are open to the public. This part of the meeting is set aside for questions to the Board from the public. Time and venue of Board meetings are advertised on the web site. Minutes from previous meetings are also available on the web site.

Issues raised by Board members: If Board members have issues that they wish to raise that are not included on the agenda these should be discussed with the Chair **before** the meeting starts.

1. Bite sized training: Policy reviews

Board responsibilities in terms of policy development.

This training session will examine the role of the Board in the instigation, review and approval of the range of policies needed to manage a Tenant Management Organisation of the type operated by BITMO.

Recommendation:

Board is asked to query, discuss, raise concerns and suggest any suggested additional areas to be reviewed.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

In this part of the meeting the Board will consider the minutes and matters arising from the **Full Board Meeting held on 27th July 2023 (Appendix 1)**. The table below summarises some of the matters arising from these meetings and other issues that have arisen since.

Full Board 27th July 2023

Item	Update
Climate Action Leeds	A funding application has not yet been submitted. It is suggested that the kitchen redesign should form the basis for a bid, under the food provision remit of the scheme.
Learning from Complaints	The Self-Assessment re complaint handling is detailed under AOB.
Gas Contract Procurement	The recent procurement exercise is now complete and the results will be announced shortly.

Health & Safety Forum	The Forum is due to meet on 27 th September.
-----------------------	---

Recommendation:

Board is asked to APPROVE the minutes and Matters Arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda and to APPROVE the proposed bid above.

4. Operational Report

Introduction

The report summarises the discussions held at the BITMO Board strategy day in August. It invites the full Board to discuss and support adoption of three key strategic aims, (1) to develop a new improved repairs service, (2) to grow the organisation through extending BITMO's area of Benefit, and (3) to prepare for a successful ballot in 2024.

Proposals are presented that require additional funding over the next twelve months to support these strategic aims. The proposals are:

- Improve the kitchen repair/ replacement service offer
- Increase the size of the caretaking team to employ additional grounds maintenance staff.
- Employ a stock condition officer to update our stock condition data base.
- Include additional properties in a communication campaign raising awareness of and promoting tenant management

Background

The BITMO Board strategy day with the Management Team was an opportunity to think about the future of the organisation and how the Board want it to develop to continue to meet its core aims, in a time of considerable challenges. The challenges the organisation is facing are external and internal. External challenges include continuing reduction in size and income as a result of Right to Buy and the financial challenges being experienced by the Council, which put our management fee, and the planned maintenance programme under stress; inflation, which impacts the costs of contracted services, and places additional pressure on our community in terms of cost of living. Internal challenges include high levels of staff absence, which impacts on service delivery and performance, and difficulties recruiting staff to vacancies, particularly within the repairs team, as a result of national skills shortages.

We discussed the challenges we are facing in terms of performance, and customer satisfaction with our repairs service. Board is aware that we are working with Mears on an Improvement plan to make sure that the right level of resource is put in place to complete repairs on time and to the standard required in all categories.

Everyone agreed that the quality of the repairs service, and the level of investment we make in people's homes is critical to the medium- and long-term future of BITMO. The speed and quality of the service, and the service provided by the caretakers are key to distinguishing BITMO from other providers, and the Board want our service to be as strong as it can be.

We discussed three key areas: (i) the future of the repairs service, (ii) growth, and (iii) preparing for the Ballot.

There was unanimous agreement that Board members want the management team to explore options around reshaping our repairs service, and growing our area of benefit to include additional Leeds Council owned properties.

Repairs

We discussed:

1. Not matching kitchen units doors, work tops and drawer fronts when carrying out repairs really annoys our customers and leads to complaints. Board asked us to consider whether we could change our approach so that when a section of work top, or cupboard door or drawer front needs to be replaced, we replace fully so that everything matches -We can do this, but it will have a significant price tag.
2. Bringing forward our investment programme, using reserves. There is a limit to the difference this will make in customer experience terms
3. Upskilling our caretakers so that they can become multi skilled and increasing the size of the caretaking team so that they can take on more work.
4. Different models of service delivery in the future that include full contract, as now, hybrid caretaker and a network of small and medium contractors, or a direct labour organisation so that we can directly control the service we provide.
5. Getting our stock condition data up to date
6. The use of apprenticeships to expand the in-house caretaker team

Board discussed the pros and cons of different models of service delivery and asked the Management team to continue to explore different options and produce a costed project plan for each option, and to consider the immediate demands of the service in the build up to the 2024 Ballot.

Immediate priorities

We know that the Caretaking service that we have provides considerable value to our tenants. They receive a rapid and flexible service from a dedicated team who take pride in their work and switch from handy-man repairs, to grounds maintenance. We are upskilling the caretakers to be able to carry out a wider range of repairs, and will start to see the benefits of this from approximately June next year, when the trade skills training will be underway.

Increasing the size of the caretaking team by employing two apprentice gardeners who will be employed between March and October to support grass cutting, weeding, and planting may be beneficial.

Costs of employing seasonal apprentice gardeners £32,000 pa

The information we have on our stock condition is unreliable. Board have previously asked us to explore costs of carrying out a programme of stock condition surveys. Savilles have provided a cost of £200 per survey. A 10% survey would cost £37,600. If we were to employ a temporary member of staff to do this work we would be able to achieve a 30% sample for the same cost.

Cost of employing a stock condition surveyor £37,000
--

Changing our kitchen service offer to include replacing complete work tops and unit doors and drawer fronts would be very popular with our customers. It is proposed that the service offer is amended as below:

We will only patch repair your kitchen when a new kitchen is to be provided within 12 months.

Will replacing all doors and worktops increase the life of the kitchen by over 2 years ?

If so replace all fronts and worktops to match and defer kitchen replacement

Is the kitchen in such condition that this would be purely cosmetic and the kitchen will still need full replacement in the next year?

If so, patch replace and make clear that a full new kitchen will be provided within 12 months.

Additional cost will be managed within the responsive repairs budget.

Growth options

We discussed the fact that each year we lose approximately 20 properties to the Right to Buy, and as a result we lose income. Threats to income and scale threaten the future of BITMO, and place pressure on us. We discussed that growth is a legitimate business objective for any kind of business, and there are different types of growth that we can consider.

We discussed:

1. Growth through new build by LCC in our geographic footprint
2. Growth through developing new business opportunities such as providing repairs and handy person services to other housing providers.
3. Growth through increasing our “area of benefit” by persuading residents of other parts of Leeds to want to join BITMO.
4. The role of Cllrs in being aware of and promoting the Right to Manage

Board and managers agreed unanimously that they want us to grow and explore the ways in which we can do this. There are clear tie-ins with the ballot because this requires delivery of key messages to all our community of the benefits of tenant management, the value that BITMO adds and the quality of service we deliver as well as the higher level of customer satisfaction that we achieve.

Board asked the management team to provide an options paper for Board that includes a plan to grow by a minimum of 20 units per year within 5 years. We will provide this at the Board meeting in November. We have identified approximately 450 houses flats and bungalows in Manor Farms/Newhalls/Town Street, Cranmore & Raylands/Ring Road/Middleton Way areas that we could include in a communication campaign to promote the benefits of tenant management and the unique services that BITMO provide.

The Continuation Ballot

The continuation ballot is scheduled for September 2024. We discussed:

- How the ballot works, how Board members want to be involved, and the key messages we should be communicating, and the ways in which we can do this.
- Making videos of Board members talking about the right to manage and the difference it makes.
- Activities and events that we should run to support a ballot campaign.
- Increasing the size of the caretaker team to get a grip on the physical appearance of the estate.
- Being clear about BITMO's assets – volunteers, the GATE, Community Fund, tuition, support to families
- Promotional items: aprons, tea towels, seeds and plants, food offer.
- Budget we will need to run the campaign.
- Establishing a budget for “planned on demand” for when works need to be done urgently but they are not on the planned programme -as and when stock condition data become more reliable the need for a budget like this will diminish.
- Improving the appearance of the estate, weeding, replanting, and maintaining the planters on the estate

Immediate priorities

We have arranged a meeting with the Continental contract managers to make sure that the locations that Continental are responsible for are being maintained properly, and to consider whether any additional areas such as hedges could be added to the contract. Continental will not maintain any planters that contain perennial or floral plants, which limits the visual attractiveness of them, so we will consider removing these from the contract and giving them to the caretakers to maintain.

We are clear that we need our customer service to be very strong and we need to work hard to delight our customers and really promote what BITMO does that is unique and beneficial to our community. A couple of options for recruitment were discussed that will support a strong campaign and really strengthen our customer service. One suggestion is the appointment of a customer liaison officer to coordinate repairs services and follow up on them to make sure the customer is happy with the service that is provided and there are no loose ends. Another suggestion was recruitment of a social media officer who would promote BITMO through a range of channels to really get the word out about the organisation, the ballot, and the right to manage. We believe that we need to prioritise core staffing issues through recruitment to substantive posts and increasing attendance, and that if we achieve this we will have the requisite skills in house to support increased social media activity and customer liaison.

We discussed holding a number of community engagement events for Board members to meet with tenants and promote the organisation. A schedule of events will be developed and presented to the Board meeting in November.

Board members who were unable to attend the Strategy Away Day are invited to comment on the matters discussed and add their own thoughts.

Recommendations:

The Board is asked to CONFIRM 3 key strategic objectives:

- (i) Growth of housing stock
- (ii) A new improved repairs service
- (iii) A successful 2024 ballot.

And to SUPPORT:

- (i) Funding of in- house completion of stock condition surveys
- (ii) Recruitment of additional seasonal grounds maintenance staff
- (iii) Improving the kitchen repair/ replacement offer
- (iv) Creation of a Tenant Management awareness raising campaign

4. Annual General Meeting 2023

The meeting will take place in the GATE on 28th September at 6pm.

It will be preceded by a presentation by representatives of Leeds Rhinos Foundation to discuss how to approach challenges in life.

At every AGM a minimum of one third of Board members must step down. It should be noted that Board members stepping down are free to stand for re-election through the regular nomination process should they wish to do so. The table below illustrates which of the current Tenant Board members will step down at the 2023 AGM (and who may stand for re-elections).

Board member	First elected to Board	Last elected to Board	Step down or remain
Harry Austin	September 2021	September 2021	To Stand Down
Jean Burton	September 2004	September 2021	Remain
Lisa Caley	September 2019	September 2022	Remain
Kay Lee Marshall	September 2021	September 2021	Resigned
Sharafath Ghafiri	September 2020	September 2020	To Stand Down
Lamin Makolo	September 2021	September 2021	Remain
Tracey Morris	September 2020	September 2022	Remain
John Oddy	September 2021	September 2021	To Stand Down
Julie Rhodes	September 2018	September 2021	Remain
Steven Lamb	September 2022	September 2022	Resigned

Four spaces are also vacant for potential new members and we had expressions of interest from four tenants.

Initial AGM invitation papers, including a call for nominations, was sent to shareholders on 23rd August 2023. Nominations for candidates should be received by 4pm on Friday 8th September 2023.

All co-opted Board members must also step down at the AGM and seek reappointment at the first Board meeting after the AGM (provisionally 12th October 2023). These co-opted Board members presently include Margaret Brown, Ashley Knowles and Rose Hodginson. In addition, BITMO has two co-opted local authority delegates, Councillors Sharon Burke and Wayne Dixon who, subject to confirmation by the Board, will remain on the Board.

If there are contested tenant shareholder elections, then there will need to be ballot of shareholders present. This will be overseen by Leeds CC Internal Audit team.

The second mailing to members would take place shortly after the closing date for nominations on 8th September.

Recommendations:

Board is asked to ACCEPT the above report.

5. Finance Committee Reports

The following items have been reviewed and agreed by the Finance Committee on 21st August 2023.

5.1 Letter of Representation to Auditors

The BITMO external auditors Beever and Struthers require a letter to be signed on behalf of the Board. This confirms that the Board realises its responsibility for the preparation of the Financial Statements of the organisation and are satisfied that the Statements contain all due disclosures and known assets and liabilities.

The draft Letter of Representation is attached per Appendix 2

Recommendation:

Board is asked to APPROVE the signing of the Letter of Representation.

5.2 Revenue Management accounts

5.2.1 Management Accounts to 31st July 2023

A slightly revised summary of the management accounts for the 4 months to 31.7.23 is given below. They include an update on figures from Mears relating to jobs which have commenced but not yet finished.

Introduction

- Summary above details the financial performance in the first four months of current financial year from 1st April 2023 to 31st July 2023.

-

Summary

- Surplus in the first four months of the current financial year is £46.5k after exceptional Community Fund expenses of £13.2k

Variances explained

A brief explanation is given below on the main variances of expenditure against the budget in the first six months of this financial year to the end of September 2022.

Responsive repairs

Underspend of £45.5k is after accruing expenditure based on repairs jobs completed but not invoiced by end of September.

Cyclical Maintenance

The Cyclical Maintenance budget is overspent by £21.3k and this overspend is mainly on installation of Carbon Monoxide alarms (£47.5k), whilst there was underspent on Caretaker Services (6.1k), Payroll cost on office based team (12.5k) and Gas Servicing (£9.8k)

Tenancy Support

Underspend of £13.4k is mainly on payroll cost as some colleagues opted out of pension scheme.

Retirement Life Support

Underspend of £6k is mainly on payroll cost as some colleagues opted out of pension scheme.

Corporate Staffing Cost

Underspend of £17k is mainly on payroll cost (£9.9k) and Staff Training & Development (£2.9k), Occupational Health referrals (£0.9k), Car and Motorcycle costs (£0.9k) and Other expenses supporting staff (£1.7k)

Corporate Running Cost

Corporate Running Cost budget is underspent by £12.5k. This underspend is from various budget headings such as Utilities (£1.5k), Board Members' Expenses (£2.8k), Insurance (£1.3k), Yearend Cost (£1.7k)

Income

Income in first six months was 4k less than budgeted. This is mainly due to penalty on Voids (£3.7k).

Belle Isle TMO**Management Accounts for the period ending 31st July 2023**

Expenditure	Full Year Budget £	Year to Date Budget £	Actual Spend £	Variance
RESPONSIVE MAINTENANCE	1,506,858	506,101	460,574	45,527
CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE	609,517	176,050	197,412	(21,362)
TOTAL MAINTENANCE`	2,116,375	682,151	657,986	24,165
GATE	277,365	87,719	77,795	9,924
INCOME AND TENANCY	289,025	96,342	93,419	2,923
TENANCY SUPPORT	209,338	69,779	56,411	13,368
RETIREMENT LIFE	74,120	24,707	18,674	6,032
CORPORATE RUNNING COST	162,547	57,400	44,843	12,556
CORPORATE STAFFING COST	452,702	152,567	135,508	17,059
SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS	60,582	20,194	20,194	0
DEPRECIATION				
TOTAL EXPENDITURE`	3,642,055	1,190,858	1,104,831	86,027
Income				
Management Fee and Other Income	3,557,592	1,168,705	1,164,592	(4,112)
OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	-84,462.84	(22,154)	59,761	81,915
Thermal Efficiency	(200,000)	0	0	0
Community Fund Costs	(70,000)	(23,333)	(13,226)	10,107
(Deficit) after exceptional items	(354,463)	(45,487)	46,535	92,022

5.3 Community Fund

Community Fund spend 1.4.23 – 30.6.23

208 21	COMMUNITY FUND - PROPERTY EST ENHANCEMENT	£0.00
208 22	COMMUNITY FUND - GREEN STRATEGY	£198.55
208 23	COMMUNITY FUND - TRAINING & QUALIFICATION	£62.50
208 24	COMMUNITY FUND - DECORATING & MINOR WORKS	£0.00
208 25	COMMUNITY FUND - TENANCY SUSTAINABILITY	£2,396.00
208 26	COMMUNITY FUND - VOLUNTARY GROUP INITIATIVE	£550.00
208 27	COMMUNITY KITCHEN Grant expenditure	£19.35

Total April to June 2023

£3,226.40

Commitment: Tree planting Belle Isle Road

£10,000.00

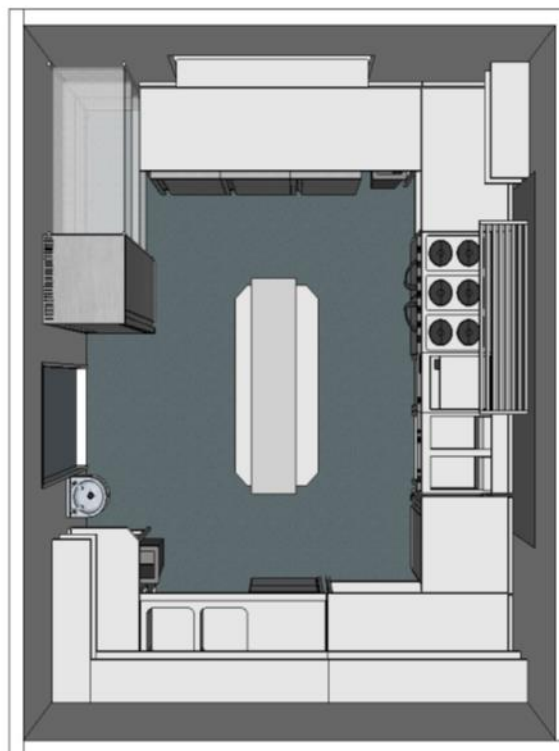
A sub-committee of Board has been established to manage the Community Fund spend going forward. It comprises Jean Burton, Harry Austin, Sharon Burke, Lamin Makalo, Steven Lamb and John Oddy. Further advertising of the Fund will follow on Facebook and tenant emails.

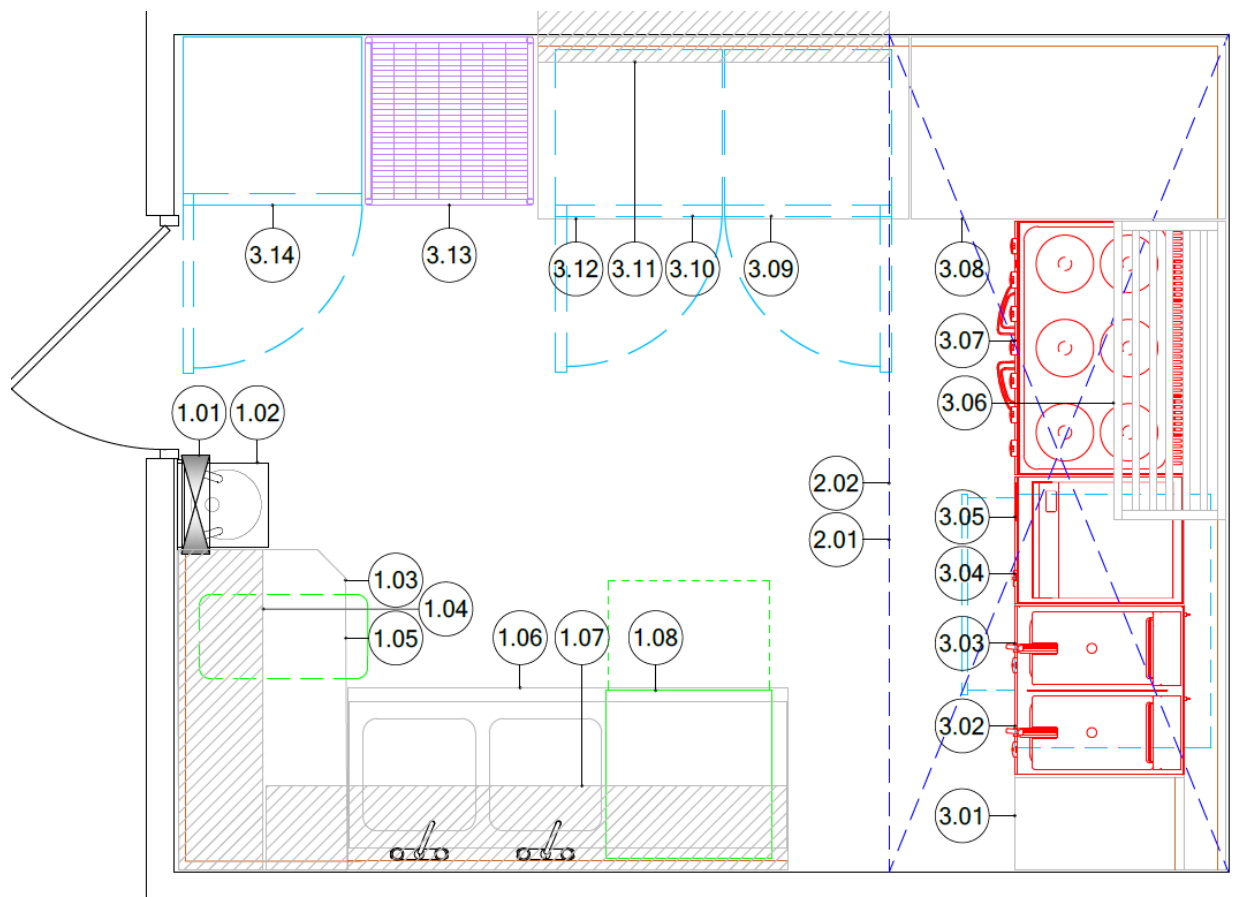
As part of the ongoing work to make Belle Isle Circus a safer place for the community, a 32-metre fun trail has been installed on the pavement, where children and adults alike can jump, hop and skip while crossing the Circus. Residents and Windmill Primary pupils will be consulted about designs for other trails, while we seek funds to put more in. BITMO Community Development staff are working with Leeds Parks & Countryside and Public Health to hold an event to consult residents on further improvements to Belle Isle Circus and Belle Isle green spaces in general. It will be held in a marquee on Belle Isle Circus on Wednesday 20 September from 2.30-4.30pm. It would be useful if Board members could attend.

5.4 GATE Kitchen Development

A verbal comment was made by the consultancy Firntec, who undertook the latest office fire risk assessment, to the effect that the extractor capacity in the GATE kitchen is not sufficient for the operation of café-like services.

Design services have been sought and the firm ACME has provided the following plans:





Equipment Schedule	
Item	Description
1.00	POT WASH AREA
1.01	FLYKILLER
1.02	HAND WASH BASIN
1.03	DROP OFF BENCH
1.04	2 TIER WALL SHELF
1.05	SLIM JIM BIN
1.06	DOUBLE BOWL SINK
1.07	2 TIER WALL SHELF
1.08	UNDER COUNTER DISHWASHER
2.00	EXTRACTION
2.01	EXTRACTION CANOPY
2.02	SERVICE CAPPING SHELF
3.00	PREP AND COOK LINE
3.01	INFILL BENCH
3.02	EQUIPMENT STAND
3.03	TWIN TANK FRYER
3.04	GRIDDLE
3.05	REFRIGERATED DRAWER
3.06	PAN SHELF
3.07	ELECTRIC 6 RING OVEN RANGE
3.08	WORK BENCH
3.09	UNDER COUNTER FREEZER
3.10	UNDER COUNTER REFRIGERATOR
3.11	PASS HATCH
3.12	WORK BENCH
3.13	4 TIER STORAGE RACKING
3.14	UPRIGHT REFRIGERATOR

The Community Development Team and volunteers have assessed the above design and decided on what is needed. They do not think that the Twin Tank Fryer is needed as it is not as healthy and griddles or air air-fryers will be used instead.

Leeds CC has been approached to give consent as landlord of Aberfield Gate.

A full costing is being produced but it is expected that the cost will be in the region of some £25k.

Such cost can be written off over the remaining period of the lease on Aberfield Gate, so that the entire cost is not borne in current the financial period.

We anticipate that the kitchen will be out of use for at least two weeks and will therefore look to avoid the busiest times.

Recommendation:

Board is asked to ACCEPT the report and to APPROVE a spend of up to £27k on the GATE kitchen re-development.

5.5 Capital accounts update 2023-24

Scheme	23/24 programme update
Kitchens and Bathrooms	The programme has commenced and one bathroom installation has now been completed. Following concerns about Mears performance we are currently in the process of obtaining quotes for 21 units from alternative contractors. This will leave 6 units for Mears to complete.
Mansard Roofs	The Middleton Road Mansard roofs replacement scheme has now commenced and a first progress meeting has been scheduled for WC 18 th September.
Boiler Upgrades	The programme is well underway and on track with 24 replacements completed to date
Thermal Efficiency	Tendering is now underway and we are expecting to evaluate these week commencing 18 th September. A full suite of works is including which involves loft insulation, wall insulation, windows, doors, roofing and pointing works.
Chimneys/ Canopies	Adhoc - works to be capitalised
Fencing	A commitment of £18,000 from the £30,000 budget
Footpaths	Footpath inspections are not due until the end of the year
Electrical Remedial Works	The electrical testing programme and any follow on works resulting from this is underway and on track. We have gone from 52% compliancy to 79% since the start of the financial year and are expecting this to increase further as the year continues.
Adaptations	Adaptation referrals have been coming thick and fast with a quarter of the budget already committed. There are some larger adaptations in the offing with the budget of £200k likely to be exhausted.
Capital voids	Works to be capitalised

BITMO				
2023/24 Capital Budgets (30.6.23)				
			Net spend	Residue
Scheme	Budget	Comments		
Kitchens and Bathrooms	£250,000	1	71,923	£178,077
Mansard Roofs	£185,148	2		£185,148
Fire Remedial Works	£30,000			£30,000
Boiler Upgrades	£150,000		17,123	£132,877
Thermal Efficiency	£637,352	3	0	£637,352
Chimneys/ Canopies	£20,000		0	£20,000
Fencing	£30,000		0	£30,000
Footpaths	£15,000		0	£15,000
Electrical Remedial Works	£30,000		8,824	£21,176
Windows and doors	£20,000		0	£20,000
Roofing	£15,000		0	£15,000
Adaptations	£200,000		88,180	£111,820
Asbestos	£30,000		0	£30,000
Structural Works	£30,000		0	£30,000
Decency Failures	£15,000		0	£15,000
Unadopted Roads	£15,000		0	£15,000
Damp Works	£25,000		0	£25,000
Capital voids	£150,000		10,500	£139,500
Legionella	£2,500		0	£2,500
Adhoc capital work	£70,000		151	£69,849
Total	£1,920,000		196,700	£1,723,300

Comments									
1	24 Kitchens and 4 Bathrooms - 24 x £9k = £216,000 & 4 x £5,500 = £22,000 (small hangover for variations)								
2	Based on 15 roofs (phase 2)								
3	Includes £200k from reserves								

Recommendation:

Board is asked to ACCEPT the above report on Capital projects and make any enquiries needed.

5.6 Housing Advisory Panel Grants

There are two current applications.

(i) Clapgate School

The first is from Clapgate School, requesting £2,800 for a climbing wall as part of a wider well-being project. The Finance Committee considered this too high a request and requested some clarification on the application

(ii) Westwood Primary School

An application has been received for funding an outdoor space, a science space and a forest area. Because the school is located away from Belle Isle estate, an enquiry has been made as to what proportion of children at the school may be from families living on the estate. No reply has been received as yet.

Both applications are therefore on hold and will be brought back to the Board once responses have been received.

Recommendation:

Board is asked to ACCEPT the above report. Both applications will be brought to a future meeting for decisions once responses are received to current queries.

6. Other Scheduled Reports

6.1 Asset Based Community Development update

The Belle Isle Community Builder, Ben Mills, has been with us since 2nd May 2023. In this time he has held hundreds of conversations with residents at community centres, at bus stops and on walks around Belle Isle. He has borrowed a dog to help have conversations with dog owners, talked to parents at the Tuesday evening sports sessions at the MUGA and been a regular at the St John & St Barnabas coffee mornings and our breakfast club. He has met steam engine experts, crime novel enthusiasts, Rock & Roll vinyl collectors, Nigerian chefs, a semi-pro footballer, award winning gardeners and veg growers, mothers, grandmothers and carers, widowers and divorced cohabitators, a diehard Celtic fan with an extensive tarantula collection, someone who restores guitars by hand and people with hidden skills such as furniture upcycling and copywrite law.

He has also:

- Found individuals who would be interested in organising community groups, such as a “men’s mental health walking group”, “Belle Isle fruit picking group”, and a group working on renewing the mural in the M621 underpass near the Cranmore Bowling Club as well as uncovering a huge interest in angling.
- Supported residents in Belle Isle Close and Windmill Road to organise their own community fun days
- Talked to people in over 40 households in the Newhalls and Manor Farms area about what they would like to see in the Manorfield Hall community centre. This was written up as a report for the Manorfield Hall Board and was followed up by a coffee morning to get further views. Ben will attend their next Board meeting to discuss this further.

Recommendations:

Board is asked to ACCEPT the above Report.

7. Board forward plan

Meetings schedule

The following schedule sets draft proposals for Board meetings for the coming year.

Date	Headline Report	Discussion topic	Area for Scrutiny and approval (not including standing items)	
October 12 th	Urgent matters, Correspondence, Estate issues and Tenant feedback		Board elections	
November 23 rd		Community Fund	Safeguarding Complaints Performance KPI's Finance Committee Anti-Social Behaviour – deferred	
December		No Meeting	N/A	
January 25 th 2024		Supported Living via Community Links	Budgets Repairs Finance Committee	
March 28 th		Financial Inclusion	Budgets (agreed in January) Safeguarding Expanded KPI's	
May 30 th		TSM Survey	GATE Programme Performance KPI's Risk Register (July) Retirement Life	
July 25 th		To be set by Board	HR Report Statutory Accounts Key Performance Indicators Health & Safety report Safeguarding Anti-Social Behaviour Complaints Finance Committee	
August		No meeting	N/A	
September 5 th		To be set by Board	AGM Repairs GATE programme	
September 26 th				2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Recommendations:

Board is asked to ACCEPT the above Report.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Complaints Self-Assessment.

It is a requirement of the Housing Regulator that all social housing landlords undergo a self-assessment exercise to ensure that their policy and procedures are in line with requirements.

BITMO has undertaken such an exercise in order to feed into the responses made by Leeds CC as a social landlord.

The Self-Assessment can be found at Appendix 3.

Recommendations:

Board is asked to ACCEPT the Self-Assessment as detailed above and attached.

8.2 Lift off Charity

A meeting of the charity trustees took place on 22nd August 2023.

A verbal report will be given to Board on 7th September.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 12th October 2023 at 6.00pm

APPENDIX 1

Board Minutes

**BELLE ISLE TMO
FULL BOARD
Minutes of a Meeting
Meeting held on
Thursday 27th July 2023**

Present: Jean Burton
Tracey Morris
Margaret Brown
Harry Austin
Julie Rhodes
Ashley Knowles
John Oddy
Rose Hodgkinson
Sharafath Ghafiri
Lamin Makolo
Cllr Sharon Burke
Cllr Wayne Dixon

In Attendance: Deborah Kelly (Chief Executive Officer)
Peter Olver (Head of Governance & Finance)
Alex Orange (Head of Repairs, Maintenance and Investment)
Karen Hoole (Governance & Admin Support Officer)
Peter Greenwood (LCC)

PART A – Public Agenda Items

Apologies

Apologies were received from: Lisa Caley

Questions from the Public

There were no members of the public present.

Issues raised by Board Members for the Agenda

There were no issues raised.

1. Presentation – Climate Action Leeds

Joy Justice of Climate Action Leeds provided an overview of the work they are currently undertaking and the ways in which the group can work with Belle Isle TMO.

The Board were asked to consider the potential for applying for funding for training for the following areas:- housing, transport and mobility, energy, nature and biodiversity, food, keeping money locally, waste and recycling, education and young people, climate justice or racial justice.

Recommendation:

The Board were asked to receive the presentation, discuss and consider improved partnership working.

Accepted

The Chief Executive Officer introduced and welcomed Cllr Wayne Dixon as a co-opted member of the Board.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th May 2023 were approved.

Matters Arising from the Board meeting held on 25th May 2023 were as follows:

Item	Update
NFTMO Conference 2023	Peter Sutton, the Community Development Manager, was awarded with the Manager of the Year Award
GATE Kitchen	A consultant's report on the proposed kitchen development and associated works

Recommendation:

The Board were asked to approve the minutes and Matters Arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

Approved

3. Operational Report

The Chief Executive Officer presented the Operational Report and highlighted the following:-

Performance

Performance information was provided at the meeting. The CEO reported that performance is still good and improving.

The GATE

The CEO reported that it had been very busy in the GATE and outlined the various activities being run.

Community Garden and Community Orchard

The Community Garden is now open every Wednesday from 10.00am to 12.00pm and work is being undertaken by a core group of volunteers throughout the week. Board members were invited to attend the garden on 2nd August at 10.00am.

Tutoring

Tutoring will recommence in the next school year. A letter has been circulated to the local primary schools to confirm that free tutoring and meals will continue and inviting them to an open evening on 12th September.

Food Offer

Meals are available at BITMO 3 days a week throughout the year along with deliveries from the Foodbank and a local church every Thursday. A schedule of where food is available throughout the week has been put together and provision of food for the Saturday to Monday period is being investigated.

Repair Café

Three repair cafes have been held on Saturdays to date and these have been hugely successful. The Board were asked to agree for BITMO to run four further monthly sessions from September to December.

Partnerships

Windmill Children's Centre - have been awarded £250 worth of vouchers from BITMO following approval from the Board. The Children's centre have commenced using the GATE for a weekly stay and play pre-school sessions and baby massage courses. A first aid course is booked for 20th September and families are being nominated to receive free air fryers or slow cookers.

Mears – a plan to recruit local employees has been agreed and recruitment days will take place in September and March.

Manorfield Hall – has now a functioning board of five members including Peter Sutton who will represent BITMO.

Belle Isle Network – community centres, churches and other organisations and groups in Belle Isle are being encouraged to co-operate to in community activities. A meeting

took place in March and a further meeting is planned for September. Board members were invited to attend.

Learning from Complaints

A review of complaints was undertaken by the Housing Diversity Network (HDN) due to a number of complainants alleging that racism is the underlying cause of their perceived poor service. The report was completed in July and ultimately concluded that there was no evidence of racism or of customers being offered a lesser service than others. However, HDN did find that BITMO did have weaknesses in the way services were provided. The main weakness is around communication and record keeping and not having a clear policy on disabled adaptations. Work is ongoing with staff to remedy the weaknesses including the adoption of the CRM system to record customer contact.

Staffing Matters

Staff absence has had an impact on workloads and customer performance in the first half of the year. More detailed information was provided in the Human Resources Report.

Procurement

Procurement of the Gas Servicing contract is ongoing. A further update will be given in September.

NFTMO Conference Feedback

Two Board members and one member of staff attended the NFTMO Conference. Peter Sutton, the Community Development Manager was presented an NFTMO award for Manager of the Year.

Board Away Day

The Board Away Day will be held at the Queens Hotel on Saturday 19th August.

Policy Updates

The Disability Adaptations Policy and Managing Attendance Policy was presented at the meeting.

Safeguarding

The Safeguarding team meets fortnightly to monitor and discuss cases.

Recommendation:

Board were asked to

1. ACCEPT the Operational Report and discuss any matters arising.

Accepted

2. APPROVE the running of four further repair cafes sessions, monthly from September to December

Approved

4. Annual General Meeting

The Head of Governance and Finance advised that the Annual General Meeting will take place on 28th September 2023.

One third of Board members will stand down at the meeting and may stand for re-election. Nominations for candidates must be received by 4.00pm on Friday 8th September 2023.

A draft agenda was provided.

Recommendation:

The Board were asked to ACCEPT the Annual General Meeting Report

Accepted

5. Finance Committee Reports

The Head of Governance advised that all items in Item 5 have previously been agreed by the Finance Committee at a meeting held on 20th July 2023.

(i) Draft Reports & Financial Statements 2022-23

The Head of Governance and Finance presented the draft Reports and Financial Statements 2022-23 and gave an update on the recent audit.

The Auditors suggested some minor presentational changes to the accounts with a suggested form of wording as follows:-

The organisations financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis which assumes an ability to continue operating for the foreseeable future.

The Board has reviewed and considered relevant information in terms of its levels of free reserves and spending and income levels in making its assessment. In particular, the Board has considered any risks to income and the effect of inflation, alongside the measures that they can take to mitigate any negative impact.

Given the strength of the balance sheet and availability and liquidity of assets, totalling £1.75m, as well as the expected continuing Management Agreement with Leeds City Council until at least September 2024, the Board believes that the Organisation is well placed to manage its business risks successfully.

Based on these assessments, the Board has a reasonable expectation that the Organisation will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future, being a period of at least twelve months after the date on which the report and financial statements are signed. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in the financial statements.

Recommendation:

The Board were asked to APPROVE the draft Reports and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2023 along with the suggested wording amendments.

Approved

(ii) Revenue Account – Update

The Head of Governance and Finance presented a summary of the management accounts for the year to 31st March 2023. He advised that the Revenue Budget has a potential deficit of £354k, but that present indications were that there was an underspend – particularly on responsive repairs.

He advised that BITMO's reserves as at 1st April 2023 stood at £1,755k.

The Management Accounts for the quarter to 30th June 2023 were being finalised.

Recommendation:

The Board were asked to ACCEPT the Revenue Account Report.

Accepted

(iii) Community Fund Update

The Head of Governance and Finance gave an update on the current status of the Community Fund. He advised that the sub-committee last met on 11th May.

Recommendation:

The Board were asked to:

ACCEPT the Community Fund Report

Accepted

AGREE Staff Management sign off of responsibilities as detailed in the report

Agreed

AGREE the Pavement Painting Project

Agreed

(iv) Capital Accounts - Update 2023-24

The Head of Governance and Finance presented the Capital Accounts for 2023-24.

Recommendation:

The Board were asked to ACCEPT the Capital Accounts Update report and discuss any matters arising.

Accepted

6. Other Scheduled Reports

6.1 Health & Safety Report 2022-23

The 2022-23 Health and Safety Report was provided for approval and asked to complete a checklist as part of the Annual Report.

Recommendations

The Board was asked to ACCEPT the Health and Safety Report 2022-23 and to COMPLETE the checklist.

Accepted and Completed

6.2 Anti-Social Behaviour Report 2022-23

The Anti-Social Behaviour Report 2022-23 was provided at the meeting. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the types and number of ASB cases managed since April 2022.

Recommendations

The Board were asked to ACCEPT the 2022-23 Anti-Social Behaviour Report.

Accepted

6.3 Retirement Life Annual Report 2022-23

The Retirement Life Annual Report 2022-23 was provided at the meeting.

Residents have indicated that they are happy overall with the level of service received but have raised concerns about anti-social behaviour and cleaning of communal rooms. Discussions with the contractor are ongoing.

Recommendations

The Board were asked to ACCEPT the Retirement Life Annual Report 2022-23

Accepted

7. Board Forward Plan

(i) Meeting Schedule

The Board Forward Plan for the forthcoming year 2022/23 was presented at the meeting.

(ii) Board Member Bitesize Learning Sessions

Board members were asked to note the Bitesize Learning Sessions

Recommendation for Approval

Board members were asked to discuss and approve the Board Forward Plan

Approved

8. Any Other Business

Health and Safety Forum

The Health and Safety Forum is due to meet shortly. There is no date planned as yet but Board members were asked to contact the Head of Governance and Finance if they wish to attend.

BITMO Charity

A meeting is planned on 22nd August 2023. A summary of progress will be presented at the September Board Meeting.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 7th September at 6.00pm

APPENDIX 2

AUDIT LETTER OF REPRESENTATION 2022-23



BEEVER AND STRUTHERS
One Express, 1 George Leigh Street
Ancoats, Manchester
M45DL

CLIENT:

**BELLE ISLE TENANT MANAGEMENT
ORGANISATION LIMITED**
Aberfield Gate, Belle Isle, Leeds LS10 3QH

Date of Accounts: 31 March 2023

Chartered Accountants

REPRESENTATIONS REGARDING LIABILITIES AND CERTAIN MATTERS

27th July 2023

Dear Beever and Struthers,

This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation Limited ("the Society") for the year ended 31 March 2023 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the results and financial position of the Society in accordance with United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and the Co-operative and the Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief the following representations.

1. We are responsible for the preparation of financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), the Co-operative and the Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, which give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Society as of 31 March 2023 and of the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended and for making accurate representations to you.
2. Significant assumptions used by us in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.
3. We have no plans or intentions that may materially alter the carrying value and where relevant the fair value measurements or classification of assets and liabilities reflected in the financial statements.
4. We have disclosed all known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements and these have been disclosed in accordance with the requirements of accounting standards.
5. Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of accounting standards.
6. All events since the balance sheet date which require disclosure, or which would materially affect the amounts in the financial statements have been adjusted or disclosed in the financial statements.
7. We confirm that the financial statements are free of material misstatements, including omissions. All misstatements identified during the audit were corrected.
8. We confirm that, having considered our expectations and intentions for the next twelve months, including the potential impact of the current uncertain economic climate, and the availability of working capital, the Society is a going concern. We confirm that the disclosures in the accounting policies are an accurate reflection of the reasons for our consideration that the financial statements should be drawn up on a going concern basis.

9. All accounting records and relevant information have been made available to you for the purpose of your audit. We have provided to you all other information requested and given unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you have deemed it necessary to obtain audit evidence / request information. All other records and related information including minutes of all management and board meetings have been made available to you.
10. All transactions undertaken by the Society have been properly reflected in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements..
11. We acknowledge our responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of controls to prevent and detect fraud. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
12. We have disclosed to you all information in relation to fraud or suspected fraud that we are aware of and that affects the entity and involves, management, employees who have significant roles in internal control, or others, where fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.
13. We have disclosed to you all information in relation to allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud affecting the entity's financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.
14. We confirm that we are not aware of any possible or actual instance of non-compliance with those laws and regulations which provide a legal framework within which the Organisation conducts its business, and which could affect the financial statements. The Organisation has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance.
15. We confirm that we have disclosed to you the identity of the entity's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions relevant to the Organisation that we are aware of.
16. The Society has satisfactory title to all assets, and there are no liens or encumbrances on the assets except for those disclosed in the financial statements.
17. There are no liabilities, contingent liabilities or guarantees to third parties other than those disclosed in the financial statements.
18. The Society has at no time during the year entered into any arrangement, transaction or agreement to provide credit facilities (including loans, quasi loans or credit transactions) for Board members, nor to guarantee or provide security for such matters, except as disclosed in the financial statements.

- 19. The Organisation has satisfactory title to all assets, and there are no liens or encumbrances on the assets except for those disclosed in the financial statements.
- 20. There are no liabilities, contingent liabilities or guarantees to third parties other than those disclosed in the financial statements.
- 21. The Association has at no time during the year entered into any arrangement, transaction or agreement to provide credit facilities (including loans, quasi loans or credit transactions) for directors, nor to guarantee or provide security for such matters, except as disclosed in the financial statements.

We confirm to the best of our knowledge and belief that the above representations are made on the basis of enquiries of management and staff with relevant knowledge and experience and, where appropriate, of inspection of supporting documentation sufficient to satisfy ourselves that we can properly make each of the above representations to you.

We acknowledge our legal responsibilities regarding disclosure of information to you as auditors and confirm that so far as we are aware, there is no relevant audit information needed by you in connection with preparing your audit report of which you are unaware. The Board members have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as Board members in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that you are aware of that information.

Signature	Name & Title	Date
------------------	-------------------------	-------------

Signature	Name & Title	Date
------------------	-------------------------	-------------

Note: this document should be on the letter head of the organisation and be signed by the Chair and Chief Executive. It should be dated the same day as the approved and signed annual financial statements.

APPENDIX 3

COMPLAINTS

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-Assessment Form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and discussed at the landlord's governing body annually.

Evidence should be included to support all statements with additional commentary as necessary.

Explanations must also be provided where a mandatory 'must' requirement is not met to set out the rationale for the alternative approach adopted and why this delivers a better outcome.

Section 1 - Definition of a complaint

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents'</i>	Yes	BITMO complaints policy defines a complaint as: 'An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'
1.3	The resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must still be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.	Yes	BITMO's policy states that complaints may be (i) an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, and (ii) made via a third party so authorised to act.
1.6	... if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint	Yes	BITMO - This is outlined within the complaints policy. An assessment is made of service requests and complaints logged where requested/appropriate.

1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	<p>BITMO - Reasons for exclusions are detailed within the complaints policy.</p> <p>BITMO's policy states that it will investigate whether there has been a service failure.</p>
1.8	A complaints policy must clearly set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered, and these circumstances should be fair and reasonable to residents.	Yes	<p>BITMO's policy states that a complaint needs to relate to a relevant standard of service or action/lack of action by staff or those acting on behalf of the organisation. A request for service or information or a complaint about a neighbour or third party is not a complaint (unless a third-party acts on behalf of BITMO). Matters will not be considered if the issue arose over 6 months ago, is subject to legal proceedings or has already been considered under the policy and all stages completed.</p>
1.9	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.	Yes	<p>The reasons for the non-acceptance of a complaint will be relayed to the tenant.</p>

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
1.4	Landlords should recognise the difference between a service request , where a resident may be unhappy with a situation that they wish to have rectified, and a complaint about the service they have/have not received.	Yes	Any issues of uncertainty are passed to management to ascertain whether a complaint is being made.
1.5	Survey feedback may not necessarily need to be treated as a complaint, though, where possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue their dissatisfaction as a complaint if they wish to.	Yes	BITMO (via Leeds City Council) conducts a quarterly tenant satisfaction survey and tenants are asked if any negative comments can be relayed to the service provider and such feedback may be considered to be a complaint.

Section 2 - Accessibility and awareness Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
2.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which residents can make a complaint such as in person, over the telephone, in writing, by email and digitally. While the Ombudsman recognises that it may not be feasible for a landlord to use all the potential channels, there must be more than one route of access into the complaints system.	Yes	<p>BITMO's policy states that complaints may be made by the following mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In person at our office • To a member of staff on the estate • By telephone • In writing • By email • Via the website • Via a third party.
2.3	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the number of stages involved, what will happen at each stage and the time limits for responding.	Yes	<p>BITMO policy is available via: https://www.belleisleimo.co.uk/contact-us/feedback-complaints/</p> <p>It is also available via leaflet form and in large print or translation if requested.</p> <p>Details of stages and timescales are given.</p>
2.4	Landlord websites, if they exist, must include information on how to raise a complaint. The complaints policy and process must be easy to find on the website.	Yes	<p>As above, this is clearly set out and accessible on the main BITMO website</p> <p>See above website link</p>
2.5	Landlords must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and may need to adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual's needs. Landlords must satisfy themselves that their policy sets out how they will respond to reasonable adjustments requests in line with the Equality Act and that complaints handlers have had appropriate training to deal with such requests.	Yes	<p>The BITMO Policy states that <i>'We will seek to make any reasonable adjustments to process necessary in order to comply with requests under the Equality Act 2010.'</i></p> <p>Staff have had EDI training in 2023 and the Policy has been circulated. All reasonable adjustments will be considered and, if possible, complied with. Separate customer care training provided for front line customer service provision.</p>

2.6	Landlords must publicise the complaints policy and process, the Complaint Handling Code and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme in leaflets, posters, newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	<p>Where a customer is dissatisfied with a service, we will make them aware of the complaints procedure and we regularly ask for feedback on our services.</p> <p>Key contact information is regularly given to residents via newsletter, email, social media, website, posters and leaflets. Feedback is welcomed. The Complaints Policy and Procedure is detailed on the website, newsletter and on leaflets. Details of the Code will be given going forward.</p>
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	BITMO will be including Code and Ombudsman details in further newsletters, emails and social media posts going forward.
2.8	Landlords must provide early advice to residents regarding their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout their complaint, not only when the landlord's complaints process is exhausted.	Yes	BITMO – Ombudsman details are given on complaints literature and residents are given this detail when they are notified of the outcome of the initial stage of investigations.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
2.2	Where a landlord has set up channels to communicate with its residents via social media, then it should expect to receive complaints via those channels. Policies should contain details of the steps that will be taken when a complaint is received via social media and how confidentiality and privacy will be maintained.	No	<p>If we receive complaints in a public forum, we invite the customer to speak to us in private to address any complaints. This is then processed through the correct channels. Our complaints policy doesn't currently specifically reference social media, but our practices maintain confidentiality and privacy if a complaint is received in this way. The service will seek to include more clarity on complaints received through social media within the wider council complaints policy.</p> <p>Issues of confidentiality, privacy and social media are detailed in the Complaints Policy.</p>

Section 3 - Complaint handling personnel

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
3.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling to ensure complaints receive the necessary attention, and that these are reported to the governing body. This Code will refer to that person or team as the "complaints officer".	Yes	BITMO complaints administration is conducted by the Governance & Finance Team. Guidance is sought from senior managers as to which independent manager should undertake the Stage 1 review. Complaints statistics are reported to the Board.
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	BITMO – the Governance & Finance Team have extensive experience of complaint handling. Staff are required to declare any conflicts of interest.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
3.3	<p>Complaint handlers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be able to act sensitively and fairly • be trained to handle complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents • have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints • have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly. 	Yes	BITMO – complaint handlers are managers within the organisation and have extensive skills and experience in customer liaison. They have autonomy to make decisions. Staff have been reminded of the need to prioritise enquiry responses.

Section 4 - Complaint handling principles

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
4.1	Any decision to try and resolve a concern must be taken in agreement with the resident and a landlord's audit trail/records should be able to demonstrate this. Landlords must ensure that efforts to resolve a resident's concerns do not obstruct access to the complaints procedure or result in any unreasonable delay. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'pre-complaint stage') as this causes unnecessary confusion for residents. When a complaint is made, it must be acknowledged and logged at stage one of the complaints procedure within five days of receipt .	Yes	We aim to log and acknowledge within 3 working days
4.2	Within the complaint acknowledgement, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties	Yes	Written acknowledgements briefly describe the nature of the complaint. For complaints acknowledged over the phone, the officer will clarify all the details with the customer before allocating to an Investigating Officer. As part of the investigation, the Investigating Officer will attempt to speak to the customer about their complaint. This is in order to opportunity to understand the complaint in full, the impact to the customer and what the customer would like us to do to resolve the complaint. A complaint capture form is used to ensure that the nature of the complaint and the outcomes sought are clear.
4.6	A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner	Yes	At BITMO (Belle Isle Tenancy Management Organisation) the Investigating Officer is normally independent from the team to whom the complaint is directed. The organisation is too small for there to be independent investigation from within the team being investigated.

4.7	<p>The complaint handler must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with complaints on their merits • act independently and have an open mind • take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest • consider all information and evidence carefully • keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter 	Yes	<p>BITMO – Investigating Officers are independent from the team being investigated. In-house complaint handling training is provided for Investigating Officers and for Panel members.</p>
4.11	<p>Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication</p>	Yes	<p>When a complaint is logged, the office asks the customer how they would like to be communicated with. If the response timescale needs to be extended, this is agreed with the customer. We would agree communication methods and frequency with the customer as part of the investigation.</p> <p>At BITMO, all reasonable arrangements and requested methods and frequency of communication would be adhered to.</p>
4.12	<p>The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position • comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. 	Yes	<p>At BITMO the complainant and those staff that are subject to the complaint are spoken to by the Investigating Officer/Panel at each stage of the process and given an opportunity to respond to allegations and findings before a decision is made.</p>
4.13	<p>A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint</p>	Yes	<p>The Complaints Policy stipulates an appeal to Stage 2 should take place no later than 28 days after the Stage 1 response.</p>
4.14	<p>A landlord must not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure and must have clear and valid reasons for taking that course of action. Reasons for declining to escalate a complaint must be clearly set out in a</p>	Yes	<p>Any refusal to escalate would need to have good reason, which would be conveyed to the customer. Reasons for declining an escalation are set out in the Complaints Policy.</p>

	landlord's complaints policy and must be the same as the reasons for not accepting a complaint.		
4.15	A full record must be kept of the complaint, any review, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any reports or surveys prepared	Yes	All complaint details and documents are placed in bespoke server folders in SharePoint. Progress of each complaint is monitored via a tracker system.
4.18	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint	Yes	BITMO has a Service Code of Conduct which sets out why behaviour needs to be acceptable.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
4.3	Landlords should manage residents' expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic	Yes	<p>We would expect the Investigating Officer to discuss openly and honestly the realistic remedies available to help manage tenant expectations. Our customer satisfaction monitoring allows us to track the extent this is being done.</p> <p>Customer satisfaction is currently monitored via quarterly surveys and also sending questionnaires to all complainants.</p>
4.4	A complaint should be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity, having assessed what evidence is needed to fully consider the issues, what outcome would resolve the matter for the resident and whether there are any urgent actions required	Yes	<p>The relevant issues and desired outcome are discussed at the earliest opportunity with the customer.</p> <p>This is done by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying immediate service requests to action when we log the complaint Seeking a quality conversation with the customer prior to issuing the formal response <p>Customer satisfaction monitoring gives us feedback from residents who have been through the complaints process to help us understand and measure the extent to which we have done this.</p>
4.5	Landlords should give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord where this is reasonable.	Yes	<p>We accept complaints from advocates or representatives where this has been agreed with the customer. If no advocacy in place, we would direct the response to the customer</p>

4.8	Where a key issue of a complaint relates to the parties' legal obligations landlords should clearly set out their understanding of the obligations of both parties.	Yes	We would direct customers to the tenancy agreement and any relevant legislation. Investigating Officers have access to Leeds City Council legal services for more complex cases. We are also aware of the importance of outlining both our responsibilities as a landlord and the customer's responsibilities as a tenant. Where appropriate, we would signpost customers to independent legal advice.
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	Investigating Officers adopt a 'one organisation' response for complaints and respond as 'BITMO'. Individual staff members or contractors will only be referenced where a customer has specifically complained about an individual officer or contractor.
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	The Complaints Policy sets out response timescales. Any variation from these would be notified to the Complainant and agreement sought. Response times are diarised for the Investigating Officer with 5-day advance warnings given before the deadline.
4.16	Landlords should seek feedback from residents in relation to the landlord's complaint handling as part of the drive to encourage a positive complaint and learning culture.	Yes	Satisfaction surveys are issued to customers who have had a complaint response. These are used to identify service improvement opportunities that are shared with staff and teams.
4.17	Landlords should recognise the impact that being complained about can have on future service delivery. Landlords should ensure that staff are supported and engaged in the complaints process, including the learning that can be gained	Yes	Impacts on staff are discussed during regular meetings – either One to One or more generally. Complaint discussion sessions are held with staff periodically.

4.19	Any restrictions placed on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their needs and should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	We will only restrict or reduce customer contact as a last resort to safeguard staff. We will always ensure that a channel of communication is available with the tenant or representative.
------	---	-----	---

Section 5 - Complaint stages

Mandatory 'must' requirements Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.1	Landlords must respond to the complaint within 10 working days of the complaint being logged. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear time limit for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.	No	Service response times from BITMO are 10 working days for Stage 1 and 15 working days for Stage 2. Explanations are given for any needed extensions. Responses within timescales were below the 100% target for 2022-23. Some 70% of Stage 1 complaints and 67% of Stage 2 were responded to within timescales. Performance has however improved from 1 April 2023.
5.5	A complaint response must be sent to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue, are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned expeditiously with regular updates provided to the resident.	No	This is in line with our current guidance to Investigating Officers Outstanding actions will be tracked, and relevant staff informed, but this has not been completely adhered to until recently.
5.6	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law, and good practice where appropriate	Yes	Response templates and team discussions support and guide Investigating Officers to respond to the complaint in full, with all relevant information
5.8	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions • details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer 	Yes	Our response templates have been reviewed and updated to ensure that customers are receiving detailed responses to their complaints. Responses are reviewed for quality assurance and outcomes are fed back to the leadership team and relevant officers.

Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.9	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage one it must be progressed to stage two of the landlord's procedure, unless an exclusion ground now applies. In instances where a landlord declines to escalate a complaint it must clearly communicate in writing its reasons for not escalating as well as the resident's right to approach the Ombudsman about its decision.	Yes	Complaints are escalated to stage 2 where appropriate. If a complaint isn't being escalated, the customer will be provided with reasons for why their complaint isn't being escalated alongside signposting to the relevant appeals process (if applicable) and to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
5.10	On receipt of the escalation request, landlords must set out their understanding of issues outstanding and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.	Yes	An information capture form is completed for each escalation. This form sets out the nature of the complaint and resolution sought. It is sent to the Complainant along with other documentation that the Panel will be reviewing prior to the hearing.
5.11	Landlords must only escalate a complaint to stage two once it has completed stage one and at the request of the resident.	Yes	As per policy, we respond at stage 1 initially and escalate to stage 2 on the customer's or their representative's request
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Yes	Stage 2 referrals are dealt with by a panel of 2 board members and a senior manager. The original investigating officer from Stage 1 does not form part of the panel.
5.13	Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear time limit for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.	No	The target for Stage 2 responses is 15 working days. Extensions may exceptionally be required, and the complainant is kept informed as to the reasons and to likely timescales. See above for performance report.

5.16	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the landlord has a third stage, details of how to escalate the matter to stage three • if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied. 	Yes	Response templates and procedures reviewed. Responses to be checked monthly by a senior manager.
------	---	-----	--

Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.17	Two stage landlord complaint procedures are ideal. This ensures that the complaint process is not unduly long. If landlords strongly believe a third stage is necessary, they must set out their reasons for this as part of their self-assessment. A process with more than three stages is not acceptable under any circumstances.	N/A	BITMO operates a two-stage process.
5.20	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions • details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied 	N/A	BITMO – N/A

Best practice 'should' requirements
Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.2	If an extension beyond 20 working days is required to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	Yes	In most cases a date is mutually agreed, and we would seek to discuss this with the customer
5.3	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.	Yes	We would provide contact details for the HOS
5.4	Where the problem is a recurring issue, the landlord should consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident.	Yes	We would endeavour to look at relevant historical information to help provide a quality response and outcome for the customer
5.7	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these should be incorporated into the stage one response if they are relevant and the stage one response has not been issued. Where the stage one response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the complaint should be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	Investigating Officers are encouraged to be flexible. At both stage 1 and stage 2, the complainant is given the opportunity to speak with the Investigating Officer or Panel for either side to understand each other's position and to help provide a considered and high-quality response. At this time additional concerns or queries can be raised, if relevant.

Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.14	If an extension beyond 10 working days is required to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties	Yes	In most cases a date is mutually agreed, and we would seek to discuss this with the customer
5.15	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.	Yes	BITMO would provide contact details for the HOS

Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
5.18	Complaints should only go to a third stage if the resident has actively requested a third stage review of their complaint. Where a third stage is in place and has been requested, landlords must respond to the stage three complaint within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated. Additional time will only be justified if related to convening a panel. An explanation and a date for when the stage three response will be received should be provided to the resident.	N/A	BITMO – N/A
5.19	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.	N/A	BITMO – N/A

Section 6 - Putting things right

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
6.1	Effective dispute resolution requires a process designed to resolve complaints. Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right.	Yes	Rectification of the problem is always pursued as far as possible when there is any sort of service failure. Apologies and compensation are given where appropriate, but these are secondary to rectifying the underlying issue if there is a service failure.
6.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result. A landlord must carefully manage the expectations of residents and not promise anything that cannot be delivered or would cause unfairness to other residents.	Yes	BITMO's standard operating procedures ensure consistency of approach. Expectations are not raised until some certainty and timescale exist as to actions needed.
6.5	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	Remedies and possible timescales are clearly detailed to customers.
6.6	In awarding compensation, a landlord must consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred, the time and trouble a resident has been put to as well as any distress and inconvenience caused.	Yes	BITMO has a Compensation Policy which is adhered to for consistency.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
6.3	Landlords should look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether anything needs to be 'put right' in terms of process or systems to the benefit of all residents.	Yes	Complaints are discussed at management meetings to assess any lessons learnt. Any proposed alterations to processes are put to senior managers for approval.
6.7	In some cases, a resident may have a legal entitlement to redress. The landlord should still offer a resolution where possible, obtaining legal advice as to how any offer of resolution should be worded.	Yes	Investigating Officers have access to legal advice where appropriate.

Section 7 - Continuous learning and improvement

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
7.2	Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints in their annual report and more frequently to their residents, staff, and scrutiny panels.	No	<p>BITMO's complaints information is fed through to LCC (Leeds City Council) for inclusion in reporting above. In addition, BITMO conveys complaints performance to Board and Staff.</p> <p>For the year 2022-23 it will include a report on complaints handling in its annual <i>Reports and Financial Statements</i>.</p> <p>Learning from complaints will also be reported via newsletters.</p>

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
7.3	A member of the governing body should be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord's complaint handling performance.	No	We are currently reviewing our governance arrangements and have identified this requirement so that it is included as a responsibility of a BITMO Board member from July 2023.
7.4	As a minimum, governing bodies should receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates on the volume, categories, and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman's orders Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling, The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including where the Ombudsman made findings of severe maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies. The implementation of management responses should be tracked to ensure they are delivered to agreed timescales. The annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code for scrutiny and challenge. 	No	Regular reports on volumes, categories, outcomes and performance are given to the Board. The Ombudsman performance report would be included within the LCC structure as landlord. Individual outcomes are reported to the Board where necessary. A complaints tracker is maintained to ensure actions are dealt with within timescales.
7.5	Any themes or trends should be assessed by senior management to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. They should also be used to inform staff and contractor training.	Yes	Management discusses complaint issues during operational meetings, as they arise and as resolved. Training issues are identified and built into the training plan where needed.
7.6	Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints rather than blaming others act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing. 	Yes	Standard operating procedures have been conveyed to staff through internal training. A pan-organisational approach is adopted to ensure a joined-up approach to dealing with issues. Further training will be built into the training plan for staff and board members.

Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary, and any explanations
8.1	Landlords must carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements.	Yes	BITMO is completing the annual self-assessment herewith for the first time as it has recently been clarified with the Ombudsman that this is needed.
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	Yes	During the period of this self-assessment, we have not undergone any significant restructure or changes to process.
8.3	Following each self-assessment, a landlord must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report the outcome of their self-assessment to their governing body. In the case of local authorities, self-assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members • publish the outcome of their assessment on their website if they have one, or otherwise make accessible to residents • include the self-assessment in their annual report section on complaints handling performance 	No	The self-assessment will be shared with our Board before publication on the website The self-assessment will also be signposted in our Annual Report.

