

Spring/Summer 2026

CITIZENS news

**GOVERNANCE
UPDATE**

Welcoming
our new board
members

Summer party

Come and join us at Charter House

Rent review 2026

What you need to know



Bedford Citizens
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

IN THIS ISSUE: SPRING CLEANING • VALUE FOR MONEY • RESIDENT SURVEY



CONTENTS

- 03 Welcome
- 04 Governance update
- 06 Having a spring clean?
- 08 Value for money
- 09 Resident survey - your feedback

- 10 Rent review 2026
- 11 Spring wordsearch
- 12 Summer party
- 14 Thistle Home Insurance
- 16 Get in touch

WELCOME

Welcome to our first edition of Citizens News for 2026 - it is nice to see the signs of spring on the way and the evenings getting lighter.



Marie Taylor
Chief Executive

We have some exciting new things coming to BCHA in 2026 including our activities programmes and our old favourites such as coffee mornings and craft sessions.

We've got an update for you on our new Family Hub service that offers real time care updates for family members of our Charter House residents and some top tips for having a spring clean.

In this issue we are excited to welcome our new board members, David Golding and Jo Barrett, Marilyn Freeman and Chris Harper.

In the governance feature, you can find out a bit more about them and their experience too.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marie Taylor".

Marie Taylor
Chief Executive

A copy of Citizens News in large font or different languages can be requested.



GOVERNANCE update

Welcoming our new board members



| *David Golding*

David Golding

David lives in Bedfordshire and joins the board having recently retired. David has a background in property, community development and more recently working at a national housing association as part of their Community Foundation.

David has always been passionate about the need to provide affordable, quality housing for those in our communities with the

greatest need of support, and his recent experience of working in housing has allowed him to contribute to the important role housing associations play.

David's interests, hobbies and passions mainly involve sports, travelling and reading. He is hoping that now he will have more time, he will through his role on the board be able to support and assist the hardworking team at BCHA.



| *Jo Barrett*

Jo Barrett

Jo has worked in housing and community services for more than 25 years. She has supported councils in both rural and urban areas across Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, with experience in managing housing options and homelessness services, reshaping supported housing and helping to deliver new affordable homes. Jo also has a long track record of developing strategies that improve services for local people. She brings nine years' experience as a board member of a rural housing association, giving her a strong understanding of

good governance and what resident-focused services should look like.

Jo now works as a freelance housing consultant, supporting councils, housing associations and charities. Recent projects include developing new strategies and policies, redesigning services and assessing how well social landlords meet the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards. She is committed to ensuring people feel safe, supported and heard in their homes and communities. Outside work, she enjoys pilates, yoga, cycling, gardening and exploring Europe, especially Italy.

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| Marilyn Freeman

Marilyn Freeman

After retiring from business Marilyn trained as a bereavement counsellor and spent several years volunteering as such. After moving into Bedesmans House six years ago she began writing, which has become something Marilyn loves. She has now published four mystery novels and two Family Sagas.

Marilyn is happy to apply to join the board as she believes it's important to be aware of future developments which may affect all of BCHA's residents. She hopes to be able to contribute to the board's understanding of life in Bedesmans for our residents, but also to appreciate the challenges faced by the organisation as it navigates the inevitable changes ahead.



| Chris Harper

Chris Harper

Chris grew up in Bedford and currently lives in the surrounding area. He has worked in social housing for 34 years and in that time he also qualified as a Certified Accountant.

Chris has worked and gained experience and knowledge of the social housing sector, including the preparation of the financial statements, insurance, security funding, and rent regulation. He has also been involved in improving property data, risk registers and health and safety.

In his spare time, Chris collects and enjoys

listening to music, and attending gigs, especially in the rock and metal world. He follows Formula 1, and experiences the ups and downs of Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Chris has joined the board because he would like to share his insight and knowledge and to also learn and listen. In addition, joining BCHA is important to Chris because he has recently gained an insight into dementia and care with his own family and has seen the process, struggles, frustrations and successes in securing a suitable home and support for other family members.

Having a **SPRING CLEAN?**

Before you start your spring cleaning and maybe clearing some things out, it's worth having a think about how best to dispose of the things you no longer need.



Thinking about fire safety and not leaving items and personal belongings in communal areas while you wait to dispose of them or have them collected is also important. It's worth checking you're not blocking emergency exit routes or causing any slips or trips hazards.

Disposing of large items

Check with Bedford Borough Council, as they will be able to collect large and bulky items. It's also worth contacting local charity shops who may be able to help and can pick up furniture for a donation.

What to do if you see any items left where they shouldn't be

We check all communal areas in our buildings regularly, but if you see any items left lying around, please contact us on **01234 321400** to let us know.

Talking RUBBISH

From 30 March 2026, Bedford Borough Council is introducing weekly food waste collections.

You will receive a small kitchen food waste caddy, which will be delivered between now and 30 March 2026. **Please do not use it until a week before your first collection.**

In many of our blocks of flats, a large communal food waste bin will be located in the bin store. In some smaller blocks of flats, each property will also have its own external food waste bin in addition to the kitchen caddy.

How to use your food waste caddy:

1. Put your food waste into your kitchen caddy
2. Tie the bag
3. Empty the bag into the communal food waste bin in the bin store, or your property's food waste bin if your block has individual bins

To keep bin stores clean and hygienic, **ALL** food waste **MUST** be bagged. **Do not put loose food directly into any food waste bin.**

Please always line your kitchen caddy with a bag before use.



Never put loose food into the communal bin.

What you can put in

- ✓ All cooked and uncooked food
- ✓ Leftovers and plate scrapings
- ✓ Fruit and vegetable peelings
- ✓ Meat and fish (including small bones)
- ✓ Dairy, eggs and eggshells
- ✓ Bread, rice, pasta, cakes and cereals
- ✓ Tea bags and coffee grounds
- ✓ Solidified cooking oils and fats
- ✓ Out-of-date food (remove packaging first)
- ✓ Pet food (not pet litter or bedding)

What must NOT go in

- ✗ Packaging
- ✗ Liquids (milk, juice, hot oil)
- ✗ Garden waste or soil
- ✗ Glass, metal, wood or cardboard
- ✗ Animal waste or bedding

These go in your normal bins.

! Important reminders

- ✓ Always use a bag
- ✓ Always tie the bag
- ✗ Never leave food waste in hallways
- ✗ Never put loose food in the communal bin



VALUE FOR MONEY

A penny for your thoughts

Value for money is really important at BCHA, and it underpins the delivery of our vision and objectives.

For us, it is about making the right choice between cost and quality to deliver the best services to our residents that we can.

If we can optimise value for money (VFM) throughout the organisation, we can free up resources to invest in services to our residents and maintain your homes to the highest standards possible.

Some of the areas we have been focussing on this financial year include:

- Procurement - working as part of a consortium and getting better value for money
- Cleaning materials - moving to concentrated products which has environmental and VFM benefits
- Self-serve contactless laundry facilities

- Changing how we manage staff rotas at Oakway to be more flexible and match staffing to care needs, and to be more responsive.

If you've got any ideas about value for money we'd love to hear from you so talk to a member of the team.

RESIDENT SURVEY

Your Feedback

Your views matter and hearing from you about the things that we do well and those things we could do even better is really important to us at BCHA.

To help us with this, we run resident satisfaction surveys so you can tell us how things are for you and share your ideas about how we can improve services.

We are in the process of planning our next survey and tenant satisfaction measures. We will have an update for you in our next edition of Citizens News.



RESIDENT meetings

We are working on setting the dates for our forthcoming resident meetings for 2026

We will be in touch with you as soon as the dates and details of the meetings are available. In the meantime, if you're interested in finding out

a bit more about resident involvement opportunities here at BCHA please contact Lisa Brennan on **01234 321400**.



RENT REVIEW 2026

In March we will be writing to you about the annual rent review. This year the rent increase will be 4.8%. Our rents are set using a government formula and service charges are purely set to achieve cost recovery.



4.8%

The amount rents for social and affordable rented homes will increase.

The government's formula, is based on the rate of inflation (the Consumer Price Index, or CPI) plus 1%. Since the CPI was 3.8% in September, rents for social and affordable rented homes will increase by **4.8%**.

We will be sending you a rent review letter which will give you some more information about the rent

increase. If you would like to discuss your individual circumstances, please contact us on **01234 321400**.

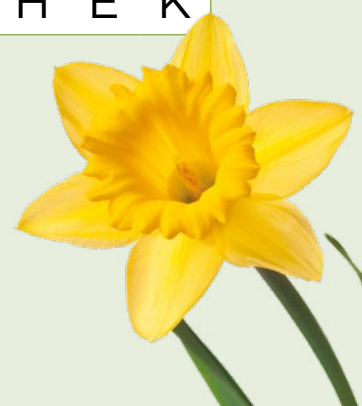
In most cases, the rent increases will take effect from **1 May 2026**.

For residents of Charter House, **residential care fees** will increase from **1 April 2026** and will increase by **8.9%**.

Spring **WORDSEARCH**

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| BLOSSOM | CHICK | KITE | NEST | SPROUT |
| BUD | EGGS | LADYBUG | PUDDLE | TULIP |
| BUNNY | FLOWER | LAMB | RAIN | WORM |





SUMMER party

The annual Charter House summer party will be on 11th July this year. We're busy planning this for you at the moment and we'll be updating you about the party very soon.





THISTLE HOME INSURANCE

My Home Insurance





***Have you got your home insurance in place?
If not why not have a look at the My Home
Insurance Scheme tenants and residents use
to insure the contents of their homes.***

The My Home Contents Insurance Scheme is a specialist insurance scheme provided by Thistle Tenant Risks. The policy covers the contents and personal belongings for tenants in social housing against loss or damage from specific events (for example, fire, theft or escape of water).

The My Home Scheme can cover most of your household goods and contents whilst in your home, such as furniture, TV, clothing, carpets, electrical items and general household goods. It does

not cover property used or held for business or professional purposes. Full details of the policy cover and exclusions are available on request before you apply for cover.

The insurance also covers replacement of external locks if your keys are lost or stolen and the contents of your fridge and freezer (excludes damage caused if the electricity supplier deliberately cuts of the supply to your home).

There are also additional cover options which you can add to the standard policy.



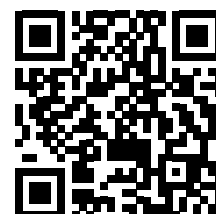
Contact details
General enquiries

Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm
0345 450 7288
myhome@thistleinsurance.co.uk



Contact details
Postal address

Thistle Tenant Risks
Thistle Insurance Services Limited
Southgate House, Southgate Street,
Gloucester, GL1 1UB



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