



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

SELF ASSESSMENT

AGAINST THE REGULATORY CODE FOR HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS IN WALES

BRON AFON COMMUNITY HOUSING LIMITED

Signed by Chief Executive(s): _____

Date: _____

Signed by Chair(s): _____

Date: _____

RSL 02/07 Self Assessment Advice and Guidance: Self Assessment Form

GROUP / ASSOCIATION NAME	BRON AFON COMMUNITY HOUSING	DATE	
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CONTEXT	
Changes in senior staff	None
Major structural changes	None
Roles and responsibilities of each part of any group structure	Not applicable
Other contextual information	<p>Bron Afon Community Housing was set up in June 2007 as an industrial and provident society and the transfer of housing stock from Torfaen County Borough Council took place on 31st March 2008. This self assessment therefore reflects on our progress in just over eight months covering the period from 31st March to December 2008.</p> <p>There was no significant breakdown of any service over the transfer period and we have since significantly improved several services. In the period since transfer we have received 81 recorded compliments and just 14 complaints from tenants, all resolved at the first stage of our complaints procedure.</p> <p>We have focused on cultural changes required to deliver high quality services to tenants which was a commitment in the Offer Document and flexibility of service, replacing a reliance on old processes and systems which lacked flexibility and took responsibility away from staff. The benefits of this have been seen in the satisfaction levels of tenants with 79% of tenants surveyed satisfied with our services (only 59% voted in favour of transfer in the ballot).</p> <p>In our early months, control of risk and finances have relied successfully on a combination of direct control by senior staff coupled with the continued use of inherited systems. With the recent appointments of key staff we are now able to underpin our approach with suitable systems. This is an important piece of work to develop over the next 3-6 months.</p> <p>In November 2008 we carried out our first tenant survey and some of the results are referred to in this self assessment. A staff survey is</p>

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	<p>being carried out in January 2009.</p> <p>The period since transfer has seen a huge amount of cultural and structural change for tenants and staff alike. This speed of change is set to continue as we are currently reviewing sheltered housing, repairs, our control centre, grounds maintenance and tenancy management, effectively scrutinising most of the front line services to tenants affecting well over half of the staff we employ. The results of job evaluation will also be announced in early 2009.</p> <p>We are very satisfied with the progress made in eight months since Bron Afon went live but by no means complacent. We will be continuing the process of self appraisal in the next few months reviewing our governance arrangements and taking into account the staff survey results and will use all these appraisals to form the basis of our Corporate Plan for 2009-2013.</p>
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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
1	Associations should be primarily focussed upon the provision of suitable, affordable housing with related services and amenities for those who are unable to buy or rent on the open market.					

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
1.1	Providing housing					
1.1.1	Associations should work in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to identify and provide for the housing-related needs of the area.	<p>We have excellent working relationships with the Council's Senior Managers and Housing Strategy Team who are former colleagues of staff who transferred from the Council to Bron Afon. We have been consulting them about joining an RSL consortium and we are facilitating a number of schemes for other RSL's by permitting access through our land.</p> <p>We have been working closely with Social Care and Supporting People teams as part of our Sheltered Housing Review and Control Centre review which are focusing on meeting the future housing and support needs of older people. The outcome of the review with proposals for change will be considered by our Board in the first quarter of 2009. Bron Afon is a key member of the local strategic housing forum developing and progressing the Local Housing Strategy.</p> <p>We are working closely with the Council's housing and regeneration teams in community development and community investment projects in Garndiffaith, Pontnewynydd, Trevethin shops and assisting with access arrangements for other RSL developments at Blenheim Square and Ty Gwyn</p>	<p>Until January 2009 we are still operating the Council's allocation policy that does not address need sufficiently.</p> <p>Sheltered Housing does not currently meet the future needs of older people and we are allocating using a policy that does not assess housing support needs</p> <p>We do not have a long term sustainable business plan for our Control centre that makes clear what services we offer, how they are paid for and which avoids cross subsidy.</p>	<p>Implement new allocation policy and new joint team</p> <p>Monitor the impact of the new allocation policy and the work of the new joint team in particular ensuring that it is catering properly for households with multiple needs</p> <p>Join an RSL consortium</p> <p>Complete Control Centre review and commence implementation of the proposals</p> <p>Complete Sheltered Housing Review and launch a new housing and support service for older people and commence implementation of the proposals including a new allocation policy that involves an assessment of support needs.</p>	<p>January 2009</p> <p>Ongoing after Jan 2009</p> <p>First quarter 2009</p> <p>Feb 09</p> <p>Mar 09</p>	<p>Fails to meet the Regulatory Code until new allocation policies in effect then Satisfactory</p>

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
		<p>We are working in close partnership with the Council over allocations and homelessness. Probably uniquely in the UK, the Council have adopted our allocation policy as their own policy and we have agreed with them to set up and jointly fund a staff team to allocate properties in accordance with the policy with secondments of our staff into the team. Operating a joint policy means that homelessness cases will be identified and their needs met by the joint team without the need for any formal nominations.</p> <p>The new policy and new joint team go live on 26th January 2009.</p> <p>There is joint working with colleagues still based within the local authority, particularly with Social Services, OTs and Homelessness</p>		<p>Complete Service level agreement with Social Care for Occupational Health Services and monitor its effectiveness in ensuring the quality and speed of assessments for disabled adaptations</p>	<p>Mar 09</p>	

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
1.1.2	Associations must provide homes that are well designed, of good quality and easy to maintain.	<p>We have set an improved standard for homes at the time they are let for all lettings after 6th October 2008.</p> <p>Our internal improvement programme commenced on 31st March 2008, the day of transfer. This involves installing new kitchens, bathrooms, heating and wiring systems where required. We work within existing building design in most cases but where improvements to layout of kitchens or bathrooms are not possible consideration is given to more extensive alterations or extensions where this is reasonably practicable.</p> <p>Our windows and doors programme commenced in August 2008 using contractors and we are on schedule to complete the programme by the end of 2010 as set out in the Offer Document to tenants. At that time, all tenants will have double glazing.</p> <p>We have recently negotiated sums from SWALEC to install cavity wall insulation in the remaining homes for which it is suitable but not yet installed.</p> <p>We have secured sums from WAG to install renewable energy in some sheltered schemes and blocks of flats raising the standard above the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and further sums from CERT for roof and cavity installation</p>	<p>The rate of internal improvements is not yet sufficient to meet the WHQS by 2012</p> <p>Tenants have not been given choices they were promised by our window contractors .</p> <p>We have not yet worked up a programme of improvements to flats and communal areas to meet the WHQS.</p> <p>Our business plan needs adjustment to reflect the real cost of communal area improvements..</p> <p>1000 homes still require cavity and roof insulation</p> <p>Our software does not yet fully record progress to WHQS</p>	<p>Monitor the impact and cost of our new improved void standard including satisfaction levels of tenants post allocation.</p> <p>Ensure induction of new additional staff (now recruited) to deliver the increased improvement programme in January 2009 and monitor increased rate of improvements.</p> <p>Meet with contractors and make clear that they must deliver choices promised to tenants.</p> <p>Complete pilot of process for developing communal area improvements with the community in Blaenavon.</p> <p>Report to Board with proposals for Borough wide programme for communal areas.</p> <p>Revise business plan to reflect costs of communal area improvements.</p> <p>Complete works on renewable energy and insulation using grants</p>	<p>April 2009</p> <p>Feb 2009 and ongoing</p> <p>Jan 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>December 2009</p>	<p>Scope for considerable improvement</p>

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
				Obtain software model to record progress against WHQS using new WAG guidance	As soon as available from suppliers	
1.2	Rents and service charges					
1.2.1	Associations should comply with Assembly rent benchmark guidance.	Our rents comply with the commitments made to Tenants in the Offer Document.	Bron Afon has inherited a rent structure from Torfaen CBC that met the different rent criteria for Local Authorities. We need to carry out a whole scale review of the Rent charges to comply with the benchmark – process.	Rent Restructuring Policy is to be developed to comply with Rent Benchmarks but made affordable to all Tenants and equitable across all properties. The process involves 1) Establishing the detail of the housing stock 2) Establishing through a Members Task and Finish Group the procedure to meet the benchmark rents, whilst keeping within the Commitments made in the Offer Document.	Establish the principles – April 2009 Collect accurate data on stock April 2010 Determine new policy and commence implementation April 2010	Fails to meet the Regulatory Code.

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
1.2.2	Associations should keep rent arrears to a minimum.	<p>Our performance is in the worst performing quartile of RSL's who provided information to Housemark for quarter 1 08/09</p> <p>We have recognised the need to support tenants in need and have initiated a redesign of our tenancy management processes including income recovery and researched a wider variety of approaches to Income Recovery.</p> <p>We are participating with other RSL's in discussions about establishing a Community Finance Initiative which would be linked to money advice services. This service would assist tenants with arrears to manage their finances</p>	<p>Rent arrears are increasing and historical number of evictions is higher than RSL average.</p> <p>We need to develop alternative approaches to providing support to sustain tenancies and assist tenants to manage within their resources</p> <p>We need to support the introduction of money advice services for tenants</p>	<p>Complete tenancy management redesign and start to implement proposals.</p> <p>Review income recovery policy in the light of the outcome of the tenancy management redesign</p> <p>Introduce money advice services to tenants.</p>	<p>March 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p> <p>When funding identified – currently exploring potential sources of funding</p>	Scope for considerable improvement

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
1.3	Letting housing					
1.3.1	Associations should ensure that people in housing need are aware and have access to the association's housing.	<p>Joint local authority and Bron Afon team currently produce fortnightly advertisements for all HA/RSL properties which are distributed to all housing applicants who wish to receive a copy. Property adverts are also displayed in our local area offices and LA outlets. They are also available to view on the internet via a system called Webster. Applicants can use Webster at various outlets throughout Torfaen.</p> <p>A new policy has been adopted by the Board which comes into operation in January 2009. All applicants have been sent correspondence about the new policy and system and it has been widely publicised in Council and Bron Afon newsletters and with support providers and Social Care staff.</p>	<p>We will need to ensure that applicants are not disadvantaged by the introduction of the new allocation scheme and process in January 2009.</p> <p>In particular we need to ensure that those with support needs or literacy difficulties are not disadvantaged.</p> <p>The current policy until January 2009 does not give sufficient priority for housing need.</p>	<p>New allocation policy and system operational which takes better account of need.</p> <p>Liaise with support providers and Social Care staff to monitor impact of new scheme on their clients to ensure they are not disadvantaged.</p> <p>Ensure good quality publicity and information materials are widely available.</p>	<p>January 2009</p> <p>Feb 2009 ongoing</p> <p>January 2009 and ongoing</p>	Satisfactory subject to introduction of new allocation policy
1.3.2	Associations should work in partnership with relevant local authorities on the allocation of housing.	See above. We have a strong and probably unique relationship with Torfaen CBC operating a joint team and joint allocation policy in close partnership.	None	None	Not applicable	Good

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
1.3.3	<p>Associations should have a fair selection policy and seek to achieve a balance in housing allocation between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the needs and preferences of applicants and transferees; the need to maximise social inclusion; the need to build stable communities; and The need to make best use of a publicly funded resource. 	<p>In conjunction with TCBC we operate a choice based lettings system which ensures that applicants on the general list are only offered properties which they have requested via the bidding process. Where there are extenuating circumstances on certain grounds e.g. medical, homelessness, overcrowding etc, applicants may be awarded a priority move as an indication that we recognise their increased need for housing.</p> <p>The fact that applicants request accommodation in the area of their choice helps to build more stable communities, as they are less likely to move. Where Bron Afon Management recognise that an applicant, who does not fulfil the criteria for a Priority Card has an urgent need for more appropriate housing, a decision may be made to allocate a property on Management grounds.</p> <p>We have just introduced a monitoring system for the sustainability of tenancies where we can identify tenancies that last only a short time. These may be indicators that allocations or choices were unsuitable though further research will be needed to establish the link.</p> <p>We have reviewed and terminated several schemes inherited from the Council's allocation policy that restricted access to lettings to applicants over 30 years of age</p>	<p>Until the new policy is operational in January 2009 the current policy does not adequately reflect needs.</p> <p>Some applicants with short term priority under the scheme may feel obliged to bid for properties away from their families and support networks leading to less sustainable tenancies.</p> <p>There will be a Lettings Plan agreed with the Council and other partners who will be used to try and secure this balance. .</p> <p>We have one scheme restricting access that has not yet been reviewed in accordance with WAG guidance</p>	<p>New policy to be brought into operation.</p> <p>Use our new monitoring data on tenancy sustainability to try and identify why tenancies are failing and whether the allocation policy needs to be altered.</p> <p>Record adaptations to properties so that this information can be provided to housing applicants.</p> <p>Complete review of last scheme that restricts access</p>	<p>Jan 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p> <p>Jan 2009 and ongoing</p> <p>June 2009</p>	<p>Currently we do not meet the Regulatory requirements but will be satisfactory once new allocations policy is in force in January 2009 and we have reviewed the final scheme restricting lettings</p>

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
1.3.4	Associations should let properties quickly and efficiently.	<p>From 6th October 2008 Bron Afon introduced a new voids process which has already reduced the turn around times of void properties (from 46 days in September before the new system to 35 days in November)</p> <p>We have started to address long term void properties, and have recently let 3 properties that have been vacant since 2002. A further 10 long term voids will be brought back into use for letting by 31 March 2009.</p>	<p>Monitor new voids process to ensure it is effective and value for money.</p> <p>Finalise work on all long term voids or dispose of unusable properties.</p>	<p>Continue the close and regular supervision/ monitoring of the process measuring cost, tenant satisfaction and void turnaround.</p> <p>Determine future of Ty Ambrose farm and fire damaged flats.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2009</p>	Scope for considerable improvement
1.4	Managing housing					
1.4.1	Associations should ensure that residents are offered the most secure form of occupancy.	<p>New tenants are given assured shorthold tenancies as start up tenancies for one year.</p> <p>Other tenants have enhanced assured tenancies that enable Bron Afon to evict only on grounds that were applicable to the Council.</p> <p>We have signed up 51% of tenants who transferred from the Council to the new tenancy agreement with enhanced security. Until final round of home visits we treat all tenants as if restricted grounds for possession applied</p> <p>Our Housing officers explain tenancies at the time of letting</p>	<p>Offer new tenancy terms to remaining tenants who transferred from Torfaen.</p> <p>Complete redesign of tenancy management which will include review of initial lettings interviews and follow up visits to tenants post letting</p>	<p>Home visits to tenants who have not yet signed the new tenancies.</p> <p>Follow up in office or by appointment remaining tenants to ensure those who want new tenancies have received them.</p> <p>Complete tenancy management redesign</p>	<p>February 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p> <p>December 2009</p>	Good

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1.4.2	Associations should help to safeguard the quality of life of residents and neighbours.	<p>Our housing and community safety staff have excellent working relationships with local police and with the Council's Community Safety Team and attend PACT and Safer Neighbourhood Group meetings.</p> <p>67% of tenants who had reported anti social behaviour were satisfied with our handling of their cases</p> <p>We have engaged with Newport Mediation Service to support work to resolve neighbour disputes.</p>	Further work is needed to implement the new community safety policy fully	<p>Implement community safety policy through training and introduction of appropriate systems.</p> <p>Ensure that contract with Newport Mediation is effective.</p>	<p>Starting Feb 2009</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	Satisfactory
1.5	Maintaining housing					
1.5.1	Associations should ensure that homes are let in good condition.	We have introduced a new standard for new lettings which is considerably better than the previous standard. This came into effect on 6 th October 2008. Energy performance certificates are issued for all new lettings	We need to ensure that the new high standard is met in all cases	Monitor quality of homes being met to ensure meet new standard	ongoing	Good

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
1.5.2	Associations should maintain homes in good condition by ensuring that planned and cyclical maintenance and responsive repairs are carried out effectively.	<p>We have a comprehensive cyclical maintenance programme newly developed following the transfer of homes from the Council</p> <p>We are developing a programme of fire safety checks and implementing a programme of measures to ensure fire safety.</p> <p>We have commenced a programme of other safety checks such as legionella.</p> <p>We have a risk register identifying the areas of risk to health and safety and statutory and non statutory checks required.</p> <p>We have a high level of performance on gas safety checks and an effective system of enforcement where access cannot be obtained. 99.5% of gas inspections have been carried out within the 12 month period.</p> <p>We are in the second quartile of RSL performance through Housemark on timescales for urgent and emergency repairs .</p> <p>We have initiated and are piloting a redesign of the repairs systems using a Systems Thinking approach and early indications are that this has improved the service to tenants and increased staff satisfaction This process provides response times sensitive to the needs of residents particularly those most vulnerable.</p>	<p>The programme is not yet up to full speed as the last contractors have only just been appointed.</p> <p>We need to complete fire safety checks and other health and safety programmes that were not in existence with the Council (gas safety is fully effective).</p> <p>We need to complete the risk management policy and procedures and build asset health and safety issues into the other risks.</p> <p>We need to complete the pilot repairs redesign.</p>	<p>Report to Board on five year programme of cyclical maintenance and ensure any revisions to costs are reflected in Business plan</p> <p>Complete fire risk assessments and programme actions required as result</p> <p>Finalise risk management processes</p> <p>Implement proposals from repairs redesign across the Borough</p>	<p>June 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p>	Scope for considerable improvement

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
		<p>In the tenant survey carried out in November 2008, 95% of tenants having repairs thought the speed within which repair works were completed was good, 98% thought the attitude of our staff was good, 93% thought the quality of the work was good, and 98% though we were good at keeping dirt and mess to a minimum</p> <p>We have a code of conduct for staff and contractors and enforce the code when it is breached</p> <p>We have a programme of stock condition surveys</p> <p>We have a planned programme of works to ensure that homes meet the WHQS</p>				

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
1.6	Housing for people with support needs					
1.6.1	Associations should make housing available for people who have support needs and ensure they have access to appropriate services.	<p>We have some 900 plus sheltered housing properties which is intended to meet the needs of older and in some cases vulnerable people. A review of our provision is underway</p> <p>At every sign –up the Community Housing Officer uses their judgement to assess whether the signee is likely to require some form of support in order to sustain their tenancy from our Tenancy Support Scheme (TESS). We currently have Over 200 tenants receiving support from TESS</p> <p>We have a number of properties with disabled adaptations which are allocated as appropriately as possible.</p> <p>For our sheltered tenants we undertake annual risk assessments and produce support plans that enable us to provide the best housing related support we can ourselves, and help our tenants access the support they require from other agencies’ home visits – S.P Mapping Needs/Assessments forms.</p> <p>We have a small number of intermediate care properties. Sheltered housing officers undertake home visits/needs assessments on prospective tenants.</p> <p>We have a control room/community alarm service that provides support to over 2000 vulnerable people.</p>	<p>We need to develop a register of adapted properties (see above).</p> <p>We need to complete the Sheltered housing review and control centre review and launch a new support and housing service for older people.</p> <p>We need to increase the amount and range of accommodation that could be suitable for people of all ages who have support needs.</p> <p>Allocation of sheltered housing needs to be changed to reflect support needs.</p>	<p>Collect data on adapted properties and make available to applicants.</p> <p>Launch new housing and support service for older people and new allocation policy that reflects support needs.</p> <p>Increase the provision of telecare and lifeline services to all those who need them.</p>	<p>Jan 2009 and ongoing</p> <p>Mar 09</p> <p>Mar 09</p> <p>Feb 2009</p>	Scope for considerable improvement

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
		<p>Bron Afon works in partnership with a number of agencies across Torfaen [Age Concern, Women's Aid ,Mind Gofal etc] providing much needed support to vulnerable tenants. The support is provided through the TESS scheme and covers a diverse range of support needs, focusing primarily on enabling people to live independently and helping them sustain their tenancies.</p>				

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
1.6.2	Associations should apply all key expectations equitably to customers who require support, tailoring service delivery to meet their specific needs.	<p>We have an Equality and Diversity policy We have introduced needs and risk assessments and subsequent support plans for all our tenants in sheltered accommodation. The results of this will enable us to tailor the level of support to an individual's needs. This will be constantly reviewed.</p> <p>Other tenants who require support but do not come into the sheltered category are currently assessed and referred to Torfaen's Tenancy Support Scheme.</p> <p>We assess the support needs of each household prior to carrying out internal improvements to ensure that we cater for people's needs when working intensively in their homes.</p> <p>We have a vibrant Sheltered Housing Forum which is well attended where we are working with tenants to complete the review and come up with proposals for the future.</p> <p>Tenants with support needs participate in our Member Forums</p>	<p>We do not have a comprehensive database of tenants needs.</p> <p>We do not yet assess all tenants needs at sign up.</p>	<p>Introduce tailored support for sheltered housing tenants.</p> <p>Collect comprehensive needs data on all our tenants and monitoring information for equalities purposes.</p> <p>Improve the tenancy sign up process so that we identify all support needs better and extend this beyond those eligible for TESS</p>	<p>June 2009</p> <p>No later than Dec 09</p> <p>Dec 09</p>	Scope for considerable improvement

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2	Associations should operate accountable, financially sustainable, and efficient businesses.					
2.1	Openness and accountability					

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.1.1	Associations should conduct all their affairs openly and accountably.	<p>Our Board meetings are open except for confidential business e.g. staffing matters.</p> <p>We publish all non confidential Board papers.</p> <p>We have a Membership Committee representing members of Bron Afon who consider Board papers and provide comments on proposals before the Board considers the matter. They can carry out reviews of services.</p> <p>We use Task and Finish Groups of staff, Board and membership to discuss and make proposals on major policies and strategies.</p> <p>Members and staff of Bron Afon were involved in the appointment of the Management Team and have been involved in recruitment of other new staff.</p> <p>Our Quality and Design Forum members are involved in contractor selection and monitoring of contractor performance.</p> <p>Board and membership committee have ICT access and can access the intranet.</p> <p>We have a membership of over 1200 many of whom are actively involved. Our AGM was attended by over 150 members.</p>	<p>We need to make fuller use of the website and also publish more information on performance for tenants in newsletters etc</p> <p>We need to produce a full annual report after year end</p>	<p>Develop website and information boards at our offices</p> <p>Include performance information in newsletters</p> <p>Produce annual report</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>From June 2009</p> <p>July 09</p>	Good
2.1.2	Associations should work in an open and constructive way with the Assembly.	We have maintained good working relationships with WAG and have approached them for advice on several occasions which we have followed.	None	None	Not applicable	Good

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.2	Relationship to residents					

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.2.1	Associations should provide readily accessible, clear and accurate information and advice for residents.	<p>We have a well used free phone telephone Help Desk and three offices where advice is available to tenants.</p> <p>We distribute a regular newsletter to all tenants and leaseholders with information about services and advice. These are also available on our website.</p> <p>We have a strong corporate approach to the use of simple documentation and plain English and have reviewed most of our written communication with residents.</p> <p>In our tenants survey:</p> <p>86% of tenants contacted us using the free phone; 84% found it easy to get hold of the right person to talk to; 77% felt that we could deal with their problem; 85% felt Bron Afon was very or fairly good at keeping them informed.</p>	<p>The tenant handbook and the supporting information sheets need to be finalised and published.</p> <p>Leaflets need to be widely available and highly accessible to all tenants.</p> <p>We need to look at making our information available in different formats to make sure the needs of tenants and members are fully taken into account.</p> <p>We need a programme of staff development to improve communication with tenants.</p> <p>Our Data protection policies are not yet complete</p> <p>We have not yet fully developed new working relationships with advice agencies</p>	<p>Finalise tenants handbook plus the supporting information sheets.</p> <p>Continue to finalise new housing management and maintenance policies e.g. recharges.</p> <p>Progress work on DVDs for tenants.</p> <p>Review accessibility of information for tenants with particular needs.</p> <p>Implement a staff development programme on customer care and communication.</p> <p>Secure money advice and welfare benefits advice for tenants.</p> <p>Complete data protection policies</p>	<p>Jan 09</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Dec 09</p> <p>June 09</p> <p>Dec 09</p> <p>Dec 09</p>	Scope for considerable improvement

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2.2.2	Associations should be answerable to residents for the quality of services provided.	<p>Bron Afon is heavily membership driven and we have a highly developed and inclusive membership structure. Our involvement wheel is appended to this self assessment.</p> <p>We have tenants who attend the Quality Design Forum who help make decisions regarding the materials/products that we use for installation within our homes and monitor performance of contractors and our in-house workforce.</p> <p>We have an active sheltered housing forum.</p> <p>We have tenant inspectors who post inspect repairs to ensure that the work has been done satisfactorily. We operate a complaints service for all types of service related issues through our liaison officer and this has proved very effective. Complaints can progress through the Board to WAG but none have even progressed to the Chief Executive to date.</p> <p>We are in the early stages of developing community monitors.</p> <p>The Membership Committee scrutinises the work of the Board and had a presentation on our first six months performance in December 2008. Area Forums get local performance information. Their presentation is attached</p>	<p>We don't yet publish performance information to all tenants.</p> <p>We don't yet have adequate measures of quality of service that are significant for tenants in all areas and need to develop new measures for repairs following the redesign.</p>	<p>Publish performance in our newsletter</p> <p>Develop better ways of measuring quality of service especially for repairs</p> <p>Report on local service quality to community forums when developed</p> <p>Restart the leaseholder forum</p> <p>Formal programme of community walkabouts across the Borough</p> <p>Increase the number of community monitors</p>	<p>June 09</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing as established</p> <p>Jan 09</p> <p>June 09</p> <p>ongoing</p>	Satisfactory

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.2.3	Associations should ask for, listen to, and take account of the views of residents.	<p>We have over 1200 members of Bron Afon. Many of them are actively involved in shaping and developing Bron Afon and our services. Our suite of involvement arrangements is shown on the diagram attached. In addition we have carried out extensive consultation with residents in Blaenavon as a pilot to enable us to work with the community to develop proposals for communal areas that we own.</p> <p>All complaints and representations from active members are recorded and reviewed by the Chief Executive. Lessons learnt for service improvement are noted and implemented.</p> <p>In November 2008 survey, 61% of our tenants agreed with the statement that Bron Afon listens and learns and 68% considered us accountable. 61% felt we welcomed constructive challenge and 73% felt we involved people in decisions that affect them.</p> <p>We received the award for Empowering and Involving Communities in the Welsh CIOH awards.</p> <p>We have a Community Investment strategy that sets out our commitments and actions to ensure we listen to and take account of residents views and some elements are incorporated into our Rules as a community mutual</p>	None at present though our systems are constantly evolving and developing.	Continue to implement the Community Involvement and Excellence Strategies.	ongoing	Good
2.2.4	Associations should encourage resident involvement.	See above as question 2.2.3. 3200 tenants voted in the last Board election of tenant Board member	We have not yet explored external funding to support involvement	Review and secure external funding to support involvement	Dec 09	Good

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.3	Equal opportunities					
2.3.1	<p>Associations should actively promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respect for diversity; • equality of opportunity; • the elimination of discrimination in all their activities; and • Good relations between people of different racial groups. 	<p>We have an Equality and Diversity policy and strategy affecting services and employment.</p> <p>Currently we monitor ethnicity and disability within our recruitment processes and will be using this to better understand and improve our selection.</p> <p>We are providing staff with specialist equipment via access to work and part of a key physiotherapy pilot to support people to remain in the work place. At present offer one disabled person a work placement .</p> <p>Clear competency based recruitment processes which encourage objectivity and reduce likelihood of discriminatory selection and appointment-monitoring in place.</p> <p>We comply with legislation on equalities</p>	<p>Need to evaluate recruitment monitoring and more proactively target opportunities for people from disadvantaged groups to secure employment.-</p> <p>We do not currently monitor our services from an equalities point of view.</p>	<p>Need to impact assess policies and procedures to ensure that no hidden discrimination.</p> <p>Establish a group of staff and members to do this.</p> <p>We need to establish a database that enables us to monitor the equality of service provision and our tenants needs more effectively.</p>	<p>Dec 09</p> <p>Mar 09</p> <p>Dec 09</p>	<p>Scope for considerable improvement</p>

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.3.2	Associations should treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality.	We adopted our draft Welsh Language Policy for submission to the Welsh Language Board in November 2008. . The policy will encourage staff to learn Welsh to be able to deal with members of the public who wish to communicate with us in Welsh and ensure that those using Welsh as a first language can access our services and jobs.	<p>Obtain approval of policy and implement it.</p> <p>Offer course in Welsh to staff and membership.</p> <p>Ensure translation services rapidly available.</p>	<p>Obtain approval of policy and commence implementation.</p> <p>Translate access documents and web page into welsh and forms.</p> <p>Provide language skills training.</p> <p>Compile database of welsh speaking staff</p> <p>Monitor demand for communication in Welsh from tenants/residents</p>	<p>Mar 09</p> <p>Feb 09</p> <p>From Feb 09</p> <p>Feb 09</p>	Fail to meet Regulatory Code

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.4	Financial and risk management					
2.4.1	Associations must be financially viable and have adequate resources to meet both current and future business and financial commitments.	<p>Our 30 year financial projection demonstrates long term viability, reflects accurate stock condition information, meets the requirements of the Asset Management Strategy, demonstrates loan covenants can be met; includes future funding strategies both short and long term and has been subject to detailed sensitivity analysis.</p> <p>Annual Review of Business plan.</p> <p>The progress of Bron Afon against the Business Plan is assessed annually by WAG and Lenders to ensure financial viability. Any new Business Plan has to be approved by Lenders.</p>	5 year Corporate plan supported by 30 year financial model to be developed which identifies the strategic objectives and priorities and demonstrates that we have sufficient resources to meet our commitments.	5 year Corporate Plan to be developed.	April 2009	Good

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.4.2	Associations must identify and manage business and financial risks.	<p>Risks are actively and effectively managed by the close day to day supervision of senior staff A comprehensive Treasury management policy is in place and proved particularly effective during the recent uncertainty over UK banking institutions.</p> <p>Risk Management Officer post created.</p> <p>Risk Policy being developed and in draft.</p> <p>Risk Management Framework Implementation Plan in place.</p> <p>Risk Panel set up .</p> <p>Internal Auditor being appointed.</p> <p>Audit & Ethics Committee in place, terms of reference include a report of all recommendations made and implemented.</p> <p>Draft Business Continuity Plan in place.</p> <p>Finance team restructured and new roles defined.</p> <p>Treasury Management Strategy in place and operated which covers borrowing & investment and minimises exposure to risk. Current investment policy to spread the risk of holding all funds in one account.</p> <p>Appropriate Insurance cover in place, level of £1000 excess on property insurance claims allowed to deliver more effective settlement service to Tenants and in the long term reduce premiums.</p>	<p>Risk Management framework not yet fully implemented and no complete risk register as yet.</p> <p>New approach not yet embedded across the organisation. Insufficient focus by middle managers on health and safety of staff in some areas.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>Implement Risk Management framework and develop risk register covering strategic and operational risks.</p> <p>Project Risk Assessment Framework including financial viability to be developed and implemented.</p> <p>Programme of staff development to establish a new approach to project management. Managing of health and safety and managing of other risks.</p> <p>Terms of Reference for the Audit & Ethics Committee to be reviewed and updated.</p> <p>Insurance cover being reviewed.</p> <p>Finalise and test the Business Continuity Plan.</p> <p>Arrange training for Board on identifying and managing risk</p> <p>Annual review of Insurance cover</p>	<p>Phase 1 completed by March 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>Commence Feb 2009 and ongoing</p> <p>Mar 09</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>Jan 09</p> <p>Dec 09</p>	<p>Scope for considerable improvement</p>

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.4.3	Associations must protect public investment and safeguard their assets.	<p>Bron Afon's rules clearly outline what areas of activities can be carried out and all new proposals are assessed against these.</p> <p>Business Development advisory post has been establish with role to develop expertise amongst staff on appraisal of new business development opportunities</p> <p>Funding provided by WAG under Gap Funding agreement is being used for the purposes for which it was awarded</p> <p>We do not currently undertake any non housing activities that might place assets at risk</p>	Need to ensure staff assess the impact of proposals on Bron Afon.	Project appraisal and financial appraisal framework and associated training to be provided to key staff .	December 2009	Satisfactory

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.4.4	Associations should have efficient and effective financial management and control.	<p>Financial statements comply with SORP.</p> <p>Financial Accounts for 2008 have been approved by External Auditors</p> <p>External Auditors appointed and timescale for 08/09 Audit planned.</p> <p>Standing Orders and Financial regulations approved at transfer and are to be reviewed annually.</p> <p>Board received regular and timely financial information and monthly management accounts produced.</p> <p>Audit and Ethics Committee in place with detailed terms of reference and work plan.</p> <p>Budget for 2009/2010 in process of being developed.</p> <p>Resources Director – Finance Officer direct access to the Board.</p> <p>3 qualified accountants within the Finance Team. A number of Finance staff working towards financial qualification.</p> <p>Procurement Policy in place.</p> <p>We have complied with all timetables for returns required</p>	<p>Detailed Financial Policies and Procedures need to be documented and implemented across organisation.</p> <p>Format of Financial reports need to be improved.</p> <p>STO and Fin Regs need to be reviewed and updated following first year of operation.</p> <p>Management Account format needs to be reviewed. Cash Flow forecast developed.</p> <p>Anti Fraud Policy and Procedure needs to be developed.</p> <p>Whistle Blowing Policy being developed.</p> <p>Budget reports being developed.</p>	<p>Finalise and implement Delegation Scheme.</p> <p>Finalise and implement Finance Policies and procedures throughout organisation.</p> <p>Annual review of Fin Regs and STO.</p> <p>Review format of accounts.</p> <p>Detailed cash flow to be developed.</p> <p>Draft Anti Fraud Policy and Procedure.</p>	<p>March 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>January 2009</p> <p>January 2009</p>	Satisfactory

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.4.5	Associations should show the highest standards of probity in all their activities.	<p>Bron Afon sees Corporate Governance as an important responsibility of the Board, its members and SMT. It discharges this responsibility through a number of different channels.</p> <p>We have a Board Code of Conduct for the Board and a policy on gifts and hospitality. Offers, including those declined are recorded in a register. The staff code of conduct is being drafted.</p> <p>The terms of reference of the Audit and Ethics Committee has a wider title to reflect the importance of ethics and probity.</p> <p>We have a standing list of declarations of interest at the front of Board papers which is public.</p> <p>We ensure compliance with schedule 1 in allocations and employment.</p> <p>Our whistle blowing policy is in draft.</p> <p>We investigate any concerns raised with us by members of Bron Afon or staff about probity issues giving these very high priority.</p> <p>Our procurement policy and strategy requires separation of roles during procurement</p>	<p>Need more training and development on additional policies.</p> <p>Staff code of conduct not yet implemented.</p> <p>New Board members and staff need further training including Schedule 1 requirements.</p> <p>We do not ensure that staff are not shareholding members (of which we have over 1200)</p>	<p>Staff code of conduct to be finalised and implemented.</p> <p>Whistle blowing policy to be finalised and implemented.</p> <p>Schedule 1 register to be more formally developed.</p> <p>Ensure all gifts and hospitality offered to all staff is registered.</p> <p>Review membership to identify staff who are members. Discuss with WAG</p>	<p>Mar 09</p> <p>Feb 09</p> <p>Jan 09</p> <p>June 09</p> <p>June 2009</p>	Scope for considerable improvement

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.4.6	Associations should deliver value for money in all activities and services.	<p>We have a procurement policy that ensures that we use competitive process to achieve value for money where appropriate.</p> <p>We collect a monthly suite of management information that includes data on costs and benefits and we seek to compare performance information through Housemark. The Chief Executive, Membership Committee, Quality and Design Forum and Board scrutinise performance information.</p> <p>We are just starting to identify the real costs of services we have inherited from the Council for the first time</p>	<p>As it is early days in our development and our improvement programme is not up to full speed, we do not have comprehensive costs data for monitoring yet.</p> <p>As we are not members of a consortium we do not have access to detailed comparative data that membership would offer.</p> <p>The services we receive from the Council under three year contracts do not all represent good value for money and have not been subject to competition. In addition, we have inherited services from the Council that are not good value for money at present.</p>	<p>Join a consortium and share detailed data.</p> <p>Continue to improve the range and reliability of costs data as we build up more information.</p> <p>introduce project management disciplines into improvement programme to help tracking of costs.</p> <p>Continue reviews of services inherited from the Council to identify accurate costs of service provision and secure value for money.</p> <p>Complete review of highways responsibilities and renegotiate arrangements for the provision of grounds maintenance with the Council.</p>	<p>April 2009</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>April 2009</p>	Satisfactory

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.5	Board responsibilities					
2.5.1	Associations should have Boards capable of exercising an appropriate level of governance.	<p>The Board provide challenge to proposals from the Management Team and scrutinise performance in key areas.</p> <p>Standing Orders contain the terms of reference for the Board and Audit & Ethics Committee,</p> <p>The Audit and Ethics Committee has responsibility for risk management and will be receiving regular reports.</p> <p>The Board receives quarterly management accounts and performance reports.</p> <p>The Board has had to dedicate considerable time to change and development since transfer and have ensured that they have the necessary information and understanding to make relevant decisions.</p> <p>There are excellent working relationships between the Board and the Management Team.</p> <p>We are developing a new system of Board and Strategic management Team appraisals to support our governance</p>	<p>No Board appraisal yet carried out.</p> <p>Further independent Board member not yet recruited.</p> <p>Ongoing training programme for the Board not yet in place.</p> <p>Not yet carried out appraisals of Board members and Management Team</p>	<p>Develop a system for Board appraisal and start to implement it</p> <p>Recruit further independent Board member and vacancy for tenant Board member (arising in December 2008)</p> <p>Develop annual training programme for the Board</p>	<p>April 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>Feb 09</p>	Satisfactory

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.6	Staffing					
2.6.1	Associations should have efficient and effective organisational structures with appropriate employment and staffing practices.	<p>Appropriate organisational structures are in place and constantly being reviewed and updated to ensure fit for purpose.</p> <p>There are significant changes taking place in key services and these are being managed carefully and effectively working closely with staff involved.</p> <p>We have good working relationships with the trade unions representing staff with both formal and informal contact to resolve any concerns.</p> <p>We have appropriate employment and staffing practices in place.</p> <p>We are working in close partnership with the Council to complete the job evaluation exercise necessary to introduce single status and all new roles have been benchmarked to ensure they meet job evaluation requirements.</p>	<p>We do not yet have many completed staffing policies.</p> <p>We do not yet have Career progression opportunities for all staff.</p> <p>We have not yet implemented single status to ensure we have an equally pay structure.</p>	<p>Complete job evaluation and implement changes following consultation and approval.</p> <p>Complete primary staffing policies.</p> <p>Continue to develop career progression frameworks for more groups of staff.</p>	<p>By Summer 09</p> <p>Mar 09</p> <p>ongoing</p>	Scope for considerable improvement
		Comprehensive recruitment process completed and so far more than 70 people appointed, process include involving tenant members in interview and selection and develop innovative competency based assessment approaches	Currently Monitor equal opportunities but need to use the information to develop more targeted approaches to recruit people from disadvantaged groups.	Develop and implement a recruitment training package for all appointing officers.	July 09	

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.7	Working with others					
2.7.1	Associations should maintain organisational independence and have appropriate working arrangements with other organisations.	<p>We operate independently from but have a range of strong working arrangements with the Council including membership of the Strategic Housing Forum.</p> <p>The Chief Executive stressed independence from the Council in induction sessions with all staff and does so in correspondence with Councillors and Council officers if required.</p> <p>We have a joint union recognition agreement in place with Unison and GMB which is working well.</p> <p>We are members of all the Communities First Boards in Torfaen and a member of the Local Children Safeguarding Board, Communities First Partnership and Intermediate Care Group.</p>	We are not members of the Local Service Board or other strategic partnerships.	<p>Seek membership of Health Social Care and Wellbeing partnership and Children and Young persons framework partnership.</p> <p>Seek membership of the Local Service Board.</p>	<p>Jan 09</p> <p>ongoing</p>	Good

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.8	Strategic direction					

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.8.1	Associations should have a clear strategic direction.	<p>The Offer Document to tenants before transfer provides our strategic direction for 2008/09</p> <p>We have made good progress in delivering the commitments in the Offer Document which are reflected in our current business plan</p> <p>We have core strategies and policies in place for Service Excellence, Sustainability, Community Investment, Community Involvement, Equality, Treasury Management and procurement and a 30 year business plan to deliver the commitments in the Offer Document.</p>	<p>We do not yet have a 5 year Corporate Plan reflecting choices about future strategic direction</p> <p>We do not yet have an understanding throughout the organisation of the wider role we intend to play in improving quality of life for Torfaen residents</p>	<p>Produce first Corporate plan with supporting financial plan for delivery.</p> <p>Further programme of staff development on organisational aims and future plans.</p>	<p>Apr 09</p> <p>Mar 09 onwards</p>	Satisfactory

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	Key Expectations	Strengths	Areas for improvement	Proposals	Target date	Self assessment
2.9	Performance management					
2.9.1	Associations should ensure that they deliver good quality services.	<p>We place a strong emphasis on delivering excellent services to tenants not mediocre services. We have a strategy for delivering excellent services which is being implemented.</p> <p>The Tenant survey results have been quoted above and demonstrate significant improvements in satisfaction levels since the last survey carried out by the Council before We have placed an emphasis on staff behaviours that improve the experience of tenants and that has been reflected in the satisfaction levels on staff attitudes and helpfulness.</p> <p>We collect management information on a monthly basis for all front line services and use these to secure improvement where necessary.</p> <p>We have introduced and plan to introduce significant changes to services in order to secure improvement in close consultation with our members and staff affected. The Strategic Management Team meets weekly for four hours ensuring we progress these changes.</p>	No improvement required provided we maintain the continuous progress towards improving key services.	We have no specific proposals. Service improvement is core business.	Not applicable	Satisfactory
2.10	Continuous improvement					
2.10.1	Associations should seek to deliver continuous improvement in all their activities and services.	See 2.9.1 we have an intensive programme of service improvement in place and ongoing.	None provided we maintain the current programme and add additional services whenever necessary	None. This is core business	N/A	Good