

Bron Afon Community Housing
Recruitment of Independent Members for the
Board

Information and Application Pack
May 2011

Tŷ Bron Afon
William Brown Close
Llantarnam Industrial Park
Cwmbran, Torfaen
NP44 3AB

www.bronafon.org.uk

Board Membership

Thank you for expressing an interest in becoming a Board member of Bron Afon Community Housing. This pack sets out what being a Board member would involve; how Board members will be recruited; and what you should do if you want to become a Board member.

In the Introductory Letter and on our website you will find more information about Bron Afon Community Housing and what we are trying to achieve. (www.bronafon.org.uk)

Being a Board member is an exciting and challenging role. If selected, you will be taking part in making major decisions about how the homes and neighbourhoods owned by Bron Afon in Torfaen, South East Wales will be managed in the future. The Board oversees an annual turnover approaching £50 million and investment programme is predicted to be more than £500 million over a 30-year period for the improvement of homes and communities. We have made a commitment that we will secure additional benefits for people in Torfaen with the use of this money. This is the largest investment programme in Torfaen for many years and will mean that decisions the Board makes will have a major impact on the homes and in particular in the lives of over 8,000 householders living in our properties in Torfaen as well as many other residents.

Board membership is unpaid but reasonable out of pocket expenses properly incurred will be reimbursed. In addition, please note that there are restrictions on the ability of Bron Afon to make any payment or grant any benefit to you or a close relative or a business in which you or a close relative play a significant management role or have a significant financial stake. This effectively disqualifies you or any business of yours from entering into business contracts with Bron Afon if you are a Board member. If you think these restrictions might affect you please ring Duncan Forbes, Chief Executive on 01633 620118 for more information or email him at Duncan.forbes@bronafon.org.uk

The Current Board

Details of the current Board are shown on the website www.bronafon.org.uk The Board consists of 5 tenants (all of whom are elected by the 8,000 tenants of Bron Afon), 5 Councillors appointed by Torfaen County Borough Council and 5 Independent Members. We are currently looking to recruit Independent Members.

The Role of the Board

The Board is the ultimate decision making body and is therefore legally responsible for what happens within Bron Afon. Bron Afon employs staff to implement decisions made by the Board, and the primary function of the Board is to lead the organisation by providing strategic direction and operational governance. Board members are there to critically evaluate and constructively challenge officers to ensure that Bron Afon delivers on values and

commitments, maximises all available resources and strives for excellence in all that it does. Standing Orders which can be found on the website show more specific responsibilities of the Board. (www.bronafon.org.uk).

Our Role within the Community

Bron Afon is what is known as a “Community Mutual”, the key point is that it is community owned and members of the community are deeply involved in the development and shape of the direction of the organisation. This is a key thread running through all we do.

If you decide to join us, you will be enjoying us at an exciting time. Our first Corporate Plan was in the form of the Offer Document which you will find on our website (www.bronafon.org.uk) setting out commitments to the tenants who used to be housed by Torfaen County Borough Council of the changes that would take place if they voted to transfer to Bron Afon. Most of those commitments are now completed or are well in hand so we are now looking for the future, deciding how we want the organisation to develop over the next 3-5 years. You will, therefore, be joining us at a time when you can play your part in developing this new Corporate Plan, setting out how Bron Afon can develop to make a bigger impact to improving the quality of life of residents in Torfaen. The current Aims of Bron Afon are:

- To provide high-quality, energy efficient, affordable homes, high-quality communal areas, and excellent services to tenants and leaseholders in Torfaen.
- To promote and support vibrant, safe, clean and healthy communities working in close partnership with residents and the Council.
- To run an open and democratic organisation with high levels of community involvement.
- To use the resources we have to best effect in maximising other benefits to the community, including creating and sustaining local jobs, increasing skills, and minimising negative impact on the environment.
- To provide support for people who need it.

The Values of Bron Afon

Tenants and Staff developed the Values of Bron Afon for the kind of organisation they wanted to be as an employer and landlord. Our Values are set out below:

- *Cares about people and communities*
- *Is passionate about excellent service delivery*
- *Is innovative and creative and willing to take risks*
- *Listens and learns*

- *Respects and values diversity and promotes equality of opportunity*
- *Is trustworthy open and honest about performance and in all its dealings and is accountable to the communities it serves*
- *Welcomes constructive challenge*
- *Involves people in decisions that affect them*
- *Has sustainability at the heart of its thinking*
- *Is proud to be a non profit making social business delivering a public service*

Making these Values a Reality

We are trying to imbed these values in everything we do. We want to be measured against them and we test them through feedback from tenants and staff and self-evaluation. Members of the Management Team are appraised on the basis of behaviour in line with the values. We are planning to expand this to other managers within the organisation.

Skills we need from the Board

The members of the Board need to have a range of different experiences, knowledge and skills so that they can direct Bron Afon effectively. Tenant members on the Board are elected by tenants and bring many skills from their own backgrounds and experience of work and voluntary activity and in addition bring knowledge of local neighbourhoods and a community orientated approach to sorting out problems. Council nominated members are Councillors and as well as their experience, too, from work and voluntary activity they bring the experience they have gained through their Councillor role as well as a wide knowledge of local neighbourhoods.

The Board are seeking to further strengthen and increase its range of skills and experience through the appointment of independent Board members.

Typically, the skills that independents might bring include legal, financial, construction industry, housing management, property management and community development skills, but it is also likely that tenant or councillor members will already have some of these skills. Different Board members will bring different skills to the board. All of them will be vital to the Board's successful running and it is unlikely that any one individual member would have all the skills needed to make the Board run effectively.

Why become a board member?

This is a great opportunity for someone who wants to work with the staff, members, tenants and resident of Torfaen to make a real difference for people in Torfaen. In exchange board members get an exciting personal development opportunity to broaden their skills and experience. They also receive support and access to a comprehensive learning and development programme which can be tailored to meet their needs.

How are Independent Board Members selected?

The Independent Board members will be selected by other members of the Board following an interview and assessment process and will be appointed on merit reflecting the skills that the Board requires. We are particularly keen to try and recruit someone who has experience of running a significant private, public or not for profit sector business because we are a large business ourselves.

More about being a Board Member

The Board have recently been through a self-appraisal process and made some decisions around the job description of a Board Member, training and development and how they will approach Board meetings and behave as Board members. Details of this are available on the website. In particular, once appointed although Board members are appointed by different routes, they then have equal status at Board meetings. Board members do not introduce themselves as “Tenant Board Member”, “Councillor Board Member” or “Independent Board Member” at Board meetings because the method by which they are appointed is irrelevant. The Board acts as a whole

How often does the Board meet?

The Board meets monthly (but usually not in August and December). There are 2 Sub-Committees (Staffing and Audit & Ethics) which tend to meet 2 or 3 monthly and a Community Investment Sub-Group. In addition, there are occasional Task & Finish Groups and 1 or 2 awaydays on a Saturday during the year. There is also an opportunity to attend Conferences and Seminars for training and development purposes for Board members.

Are you the right person to become a Board Member?

The first thing that will make someone right for being a Board member will be their general abilities, commitment, and personal qualities. The table below sets out what will be essential

General Abilities	Attitudes
Team working Able to assess plans and policies Strategic thinking Ability to assess paperwork Understanding of figures A confident and constructive approach	Respect for the views of other Board members Positive support for Board decisions and for the organisation An understanding of the need for accountability, effective governance, value for money and good performance A non-discriminatory, non-judgemental, fair and balanced approach
Commitment	Personal qualities
Commitment to the values of Bron Afon. Commitment to the principles of community involvement and engaging people in decisions that affect their future. Commitment to Public Services	Excellent communication skills Sound judgement Decisiveness Integrity and honesty Reliability Tolerance

Commitment to equal opportunities and diversity Willingness and ability to attend meetings and training sessions Willingness to take on the responsibilities of being a Board member of a registered social landlord	Support and respect for others Ability to remain calm under pressure A good sense of humour
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In addition to these general attributes, as an independent member you will need to bring experience and skills in one or more of the following areas to add to the expertise of the Board:

- Business planning and business management
- Financial management, capital financing and treasury management
- Project management
- Law
- Construction and building and maintenance of properties
- Asset management
- Project management
- Staff and organisational development and human resources management
- Community and economic regeneration
- Grant funding and programme management
- Housing management
- Sheltered and supported housing
- Community involvement and community development
- Information technology
- Social economy and enterprises
- Equal opportunities and diversity
- Public relations, media and communications

There are legal and other reasons why some people can't be registered as a Board member of an industrial and provident society or registered social landlord (see Appendix A – *Eligibility Criteria for Board Members*) and applicants who cannot sign the declarations statement (*Section ** of the Board member application form*) will have to be rejected.

Once a person becomes a Board member, they will be governed by a Code of Conduct that sets out expected standards for behaviour of Board members. A copy of the Good Practice Guidance on Governance published by the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations is available on the website.

Board members will be required to complete a declaration of their interests in a register of interests maintained by the organisation and to declare any interest that arises in relation to items of business before the Board.

What do you have to do if you want to stand as a Board Member?

If you want to stand as a Board member, you will need to complete the enclosed *board member application form*.

You will need to return your completed application form to Gwyn Lloyd, Governance Support Officer, Bron Afon Community Housing, William Brown Close, Llantarnam industrial Park, Cwmbran, NP44 3AB no later than 1 September 2010. You can email it to Gwyn.Lloyd@bronaon.org.uk. If shortlisted, you can sign a hand copy of the application at the time of interview. If you wish to have an informal discussion about your application, please contact one of the following: Tamsin Stirling, Chair of the Board on 07817 507814 Tamsin.Stirling@board.bronafon.org.uk or Duncan Forbes on 01633 620118 Duncan.Forbes@bronaon.org.uk

Your application will be considered by the other existing Board members

Appendix A – Eligibility Criteria for Board Members

A person who falls into the following categories cannot become an independent Board member.

Advice about the various categories below may be obtained from the Chief Executive, Duncan Forbes on 01633 620118 Duncan.Forbes@bronafon.org.uk.

Once a person is a Board member, they will be governed by a Code of Conduct. A person who

- has been adjudged bankrupt or has made a voluntary arrangement with creditors
(LGA 1972 & Hsg Act 1996 Sch 1 Pt II)
- has within five years of day of election/nomination been convicted of an offence and had a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) passed on them of not less than three months without the option of a fine
(LGA 1972)
- is disqualified under Pt III Representation of the People Act or Audit Commission Act 1998
(LGA 1972)
- is subject to a disqualification order under the Company Directors' Disqualification Act 1986
(Hsg Act 1996 Sch 1 Pt II)
- is subject to an order under S429(2) of the Insolvency Act 1986
(Hsg Act 1996 Sch 1 Pt II)
- is disqualified under Section 72 of the Charities Act 1993 from being a charity trustee
(Hsg Act 1996 Sch 1 Pt II)
- is incapable of acting by reason of mental disorder because either (i) is admitted to hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983; or (ii) has a Court Order made relating to the illness or to appoint someone to look after their property or other affairs
(Hsg Act 1996 Sch 1 Pt II)
- a tenant of Bron Afon Community Housing*
- a councillor of Torfaen County Borough Council or a person who has been a councillor of Torfaen CBC within the past four years*
- an employee of Bron Afon Community Housing or a person who has been an employee of Bron Afon Community Housing/or a company controlled by Bron Afon in the past four years

The two categories marked * have their own categories of appointments to the Board.

Application form for prospective Board Members

Please complete this form (in BLOCK CAPITALS and in BLACK INK) if you wish to be considered for one of the independent Board member places.

Information from your application form will be circulated to the five tenant and five Council representatives on the Board.

Section A – Personal details

Name:	Date of Birth:
Home Address:	Tel. No. Home:
	Tel. No. Work:
	Mobile
Post Code:	Email address:

If working, please indicate whether we may email or phone you at work

Email at Work Yes/No

Phone at work Yes/No

Please return your completed application form to. Gwyn Lloyd, Governance Support Officer, Bron Afon Community Housing, William Brown Close, Llantarnam industrial Park, Cwmbran, NP44 3AB. Information from the application form will be used as the basis on which to select an initial shortlist for *independent* board members.

Section B: Details of any current employment/business or voluntary role

Name of business/organisation	Type of business/organisation:
Address of business/organisation:	Your position or role
Post Code:	
Brief description of your responsibilities:	

Section C Your experience

Please give details of your professional/career background (continue on a separate sheet if necessary) and in particular provide details of any involvement on a paid or voluntary basis in a senior capacity in any business or voluntary organisation and the size and scope of the business or voluntary organisation concerned.

Section D Your assessment of areas of expertise

Your experience cont'd					
How experienced do you rate yourself in the following areas on the basis of the organisations you have been involved with (1 being very experienced and 5 being not experienced at all)? We are not expecting you to be an expert in all these areas!					
	1	2	3	4	5
Housing issues					
Registered social landlords					
Social housing and related policy issues					
Management of housing					
Management of housing with care and support					
Housing design					
Management of building construction programmes					
Housing law					
Management of improvement or repairs programmes					
Business					
Management of business strategy					
Business planning and business management					
Financial & treasury management					
Capital financing and banking					
The private business sector					
Staffing and organisational development and human resources management					
Public relations ,media and communications					
Information technology					
Procurement					
Project management					
Marketing & Sales					
Tenant and community issues					
Community involvement initiatives					
Community development					
Tenant participation					
Other					
Equal opportunities and diversity practice					
Commercial and business law					
Community regeneration					
Economic regeneration					
Grant funding					
Social economy and enterprise					

Section E – Qualifications

Please list any particular qualifications you may have which are relevant to your board membership application.

Qualification	Level	Where gained	When

Section F – what will you bring to the Board?

Why do you want to be a Board Member?

Please tell us about why you want to be a board member. In completing this section, please refer to the Board member characteristics set out in the box on pages 5 and 6 of this Pack and think about what has prompted you to consider board membership.

What do you think you will bring to the Board?

Please tell us about the qualities, abilities and skills you think you will be able to contribute to the Board. Particularly tell us about how your previous experiences will help you to be an appropriate Board member. In completing this section, you might want to refer to the Board member characteristics set out on pages 5 and 6 of this Pack. You may want to highlight how your experience and/or qualifications make you particularly suited to being on the Board.

Please continue on one further sheet if necessary

Section G – declarations

There are certain people who cannot be or might not be suitable to be members of a board (see Appendix B – *Eligibility Criteria for Board Members*). Please place your signature against each one of the following declarations and provide extra information where requested.

Declaration	
1	I am not bankrupt and I have not made a voluntary arrangement with creditors.
2	I have/have not* been convicted of a serious criminal offence (in particular, any offence involving dishonesty or any offence involving imprisonment whether suspended or not). <i>If you have declared that you have been convicted of a serious criminal offence please give details on a separate sheet. Some criminal convictions do not need to be disclosed under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. If you are in any doubt, you should seek legal advice or speak to the Citizens Advice Bureau.</i>
3	I am not disqualified under Pt III Representation of the People Act 1983 or Audit Commission Act 1998.
4	I am not disqualified by the Department of Trade and Industry from being a company director.
5	I have/have not* been a director of a company which has gone into solvent liquidation. <i>If you have declared that you have been a director of a company which has gone into insolvent liquidation, please give details on a separate sheet.</i>
6	I am not disqualified under Section 72 of the Charities Act 1993 from being a charity trustee.
7	I am not incapable of acting by reason of mental disorder for which I am admitted to hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983 or have a Court Order relating to the illness or to appoint someone to look after my property or other affairs.
* Delete whichever does not apply to you	

I declare that the above information on this form is correct and understand that if appointed, I will be liable to action including removal from the board and / or criminal action should I knowingly give false information.

Signature: **Date:**.....

Applicant Monitoring Questionnaire

CONFIDENTIAL

Please complete this form so that we can monitor the diversity of those applying for board membership. This form will be kept separate from your application form, and has no part in the selection process.

Surname:
Forename(s):

Please tick appropriate boxes

Ethnic Group

Do you regard yourself as:

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black – African | <input type="checkbox"/> Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> White |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black – Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> Other
(please describe) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black – Other (please describe) | | |

Gender

I am:-

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Male |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|

Disability

Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|