



Cymdeithas Tai  
**AELWYD**  
Housing Association

**AELWYD HOUSING ASSOCIATION  
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**2017**

## 1. AELWYD'S STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aelwyd is a charitable housing association, which is formed for the benefit of the communities it serves, and aims to:

- Provide high quality, well maintained, affordable accommodation for our tenants.
- With the help of our tenants, ensure a continually improving tenant-orientated service.
- Consider opportunities to develop the business, whilst maintaining long-term viability as a registered social landlord.
- Maintain and develop Aelwyd's Christian identity.
- Ensure Aelwyd is well managed by continuing to review and develop its governance, financial and operational structures.
- Ensure that wherever possible, any money spent by the Association has a positive economic impact within the local community.
- Foster a working environment that ensures each and every member of staff has a keen sense of ownership of these objectives.

**"Demonstrating Christian care by addressing housing needs in communities throughout Wales"**, is Aelwyd's mission statement.

## 2. WHAT IS CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT?

All housing associations have a duty to secure continuous improvement and learning through reviewing the whole of their organisation's activities on a rolling basis, and identifying the best ways in which its business practices and the services it provides can be improved. In this context, Aelwyd aims to:-

- Promote continuous improvement in its business processes and service delivery.
- Encourage, develop and ensure the influence of tenants on the delivery of services.
- Deliver cost effective, efficient and effective services.

The Association's commitment to Continuous Improvement is driven by the Board of Management but ultimately is perhaps best evidenced by Aelwyd's 'Organisational Action Plan' (OAP). The Organisational Action Plan amalgamates all 'recommendations for action', arising from the various business processes outlined in Section 3 and assists us in the review and management of our service delivery and business practices.

This Plan provides a summary of performance over the previous year whilst identifying a number of 'actions' that we feel will help to improve performance (See Sections 4 & 5). *'The Continuous Improvement Statement'*, a summary of these particular sections, is issued in conjunction with the Annual Report and made available to all tenants and members of the Association. This Continuous Improvement Plan is also available to other interested parties, such as contractors and local authorities, upon request.

## 3. HOW DOES AELWYD ADDRESS CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT?

Previously, detailed service reviews, covering every aspect of the Association's business, were held on a cyclical basis. Carrying out such reviews proved to be impractical for an organisation of Aelwyd's size and limited resources, often resulting in a limited return for the time invested. It was therefore decided that, whilst close scrutiny of specific aspects of service delivery and/or business processes would occasionally be necessary, it would also be useful to explore alternative methods for ensuring, and measuring, continuous improvement.

It was recognised that the Association already employed a number of different practices that, directly or indirectly, inherently addressed matters of 'Continuous Improvement'. Any practice that reviews or

evaluates a process or service, for whatever reason, must ultimately aspire to improving that process or service if room for improvement is identified. Therefore, rather than rely solely on 'Service Reviews' the Board of Management concluded it was in accordance with the key principles of best value to utilise and harness existing current practices that might support the continual improvement process. Provided below is a summary of the key practices that Aelwyd draws upon for this purpose:-

- **Internal Assurance Services**

Aelwyd employs an external consultant to add value and improve the organisation's operations. The assurance provider is engaged by the Board of Management to ensure that the Association's activities are conducted in an efficient and effective manner. In practice this is done by the assurance provider assessing the way the Association carries out its key business processes and delivers its services. They have a duty to ensure appropriate controls and procedures are in place and to alert the Board of Management as to any concerns. Inevitably this process introduces the concept of comparison with good practice examples as utilised by other Associations or defined within published guidance.

On completion of a Topic Audit, a report is issued by the consultant to the Board of Management. Within the report, if considered necessary, recommendations are made as to how the Association might improve its performance and/or ensure compliance with prevailing regulations and good practice. By addressing these recommendations it naturally follows that the Association is endeavouring to improve its business processes and/or service delivery. Progress in addressing any recommendation arising is monitored by the Association's Finance and Audit Committee via the Internal Audit Action plan and all recommendations are amalgamated into the Organisational Action Plan.

It should be noted that, given its size, Aelwyd is not obliged to 'buy-in' such internal audit services but has chosen to do so as a matter of good business practice.

- **Strategic Planning Committee**

The Strategic Planning Committee was specifically set up by the Board of Management to carry out an ongoing strategic view of all matters relevant to Aelwyd's future direction and its status in relation to its defined mission. The Committee is made up of Board members and members of the management team. The Committee monitors progress against strategic objectives, via an 'Action Plan', and also identifies and reviews specific issues of concern that have the potential to prevent the Association's strategic objectives being met. The Committee's role has evolved and today it tends to focus on Continuous Improvement related matters and ensuring that any recommendations arising from reviews are properly implemented. It oversees the Equality & Diversity and Good Governance action plans. All such recommendations which might arise from the considerations and deliberations of the committee are amalgamated into the Organisational Action Plan.

- **Self-Assessment**

Whilst to date, (due to its size), Aelwyd has not been obliged to formally undertake 'Self-Assessment' it has not shied away from assessing and challenging its performance and identifying potential weaknesses. Due to changes in Regulation for smaller associations it is expected that self-evaluation measures will become more formalised during the coming year.

## Tenant Consultation & Participation

The Association regularly consults and seeks feedback from residents on the quality of its service delivery - e.g. management and maintenance. This 'feedback' can take many forms including surveys and questionnaires, staff/tenant scheme meetings and perhaps more importantly, the continuing dialogue held with tenants during regular scheme visits by staff. Any feedback received is either reported via the relevant Key Performance Indicators or where appropriate, referred to a suitable forum for further consideration. Over the years the Association has worked closely with Tenant Participation Advisory Services Cymru to develop participation opportunities which culminated in the establishment of three Regional Tenant Groups. The Associations' Tenant Participation Strategy is to be reviewed in 2017.

- **Risk Register**

The Association has established a comprehensive register to ensure that any key risks associated with the business of the Association, and the sector in general, are categorised and evaluated. The *Risk Register* is reviewed at both Management Team and Finance & Audit Committee meetings. Such meetings provide an opportunity for an on-going assessment of existing and potential risks and the identification of any action necessary to ensure the risk in question is mitigated. Where appropriate the recommendations for action arising will feed into the Organisational Action Plan.

- **Departmental /Board / Staff meetings**

All internal meetings held by the Association provide an opportunity for review, training, discussion and debate - all with the aim of improving, where possible, business processes and service delivery. Any recommendations arising from Board of Management meetings, staff meetings and departmental meetings can feed into the Organisational Action Plan.

- **Working Parties and Task Groups**

From time to time Board of Management will constitute a group made up from Board Members and staff to consider specific topics. In 2017 this will include a group to review Fire Safety. The findings and resultant recommendations can feed into the Organisational Action Plan.

- **Value for Money Reviews**

The Association has completed five 'Value for Money' reviews, as part of the development of the Association's Value for Money Strategy. The Association is committed to targeting specific topic areas where improvements in service and efficiency are perceived to be most beneficial. The findings and action points arising from such reviews further evidence the Associations commitment to continuous improvement.

- **Key Performance Indicators**

These are statistical indicators that help Aelwyd measure progress against defined goals and are regularly reported to the Board of Management. These indicators can identify 'trends' in performance and act as an 'early warning system' should indicators show a decline. Any concerns identified as a consequence will be considered by Board and remedial action proposed.

Aelwyd is committed to ensuring that the existing culture of continuous improvement within the organisation will continue to be nurtured and developed.

#### 4. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS SINCE PREVIOUS REPORT – CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT STATEMENT 2017

Ensuring a high standard of service delivery, financial viability and good governance are all key to Aelwyd's future as a Registered Social Landlord. Listed below are some examples of action taken and practices introduced, or developed, since the publication of the last Continuous Improvement Plan, that have helped ensure we continue to maintain or improve standards. The Welsh Government has recently introduced a new set of 'Performance Standards' that Associations are expected to aspire to. Included below are selected examples 'Performance Standards' we consider we have, or will have, met when an 'Action Point' is implemented; ( in many instances more than one 'Performance Standard' will have been met but not all of them are listed here). The list is by no means exhaustive and minor changes and improvements to working practice continue to be made on an on-going basis:

<i>Action Taken</i>	<i>Resulting achievements, changes &amp; difference made.</i>	<i>Example Performance Standard Met</i>
<i>Members of the Tenant 'Home Readers Group' have been consulted and involved in reviewing the Association's Equality &amp; Diversity Strategy and the revised Lettings and Allocations Policy.</i>	<i>Greater tenant involvement in shaping services. Tenants have a wide variety of means by which to participate and directly influence service provision. Tenants have a better understanding of how the Association operates.</i>	<i>Demonstrates how tenants are effectively involved in strategic decision making and shaping services in ways appropriate for tenants and the organisation.</i>
<i>Planned Works with a value in excess of £200,000 were undertaken during 2016/2017.</i>	<i>Replacement bathrooms and kitchens resulting, respectively, in safer environments within which to bathe and prepare meals. New front doors improving the security and wellbeing of tenants.</i>	<i>Ensures that all homes meet required standards of design and quality.</i>
<i>Monitoring of Responsive Maintenance Feedback – During 2016/17 an average 98.5% of residents consider the service received in respect of responsive maintenance to be either "Very Good" or "Good". (Approx. split 88% 'V Good' 12% 'Good').</i>	<i>High level of satisfaction maintained but recognition that the service must continue to be reviewed and assessed with a view to making further improvements where appropriate to do so.</i>	<i>Demonstrates how the board assures itself of current service performance, including tenant satisfaction, and drives continuous improvement.</i>
<i>The Association has continued to work closely with local fire authorities and consultants to further develop its Fire Safety Strategy. Further Fire Risk Assessments were undertaken.</i>	<i>Components within properties continue to be checked and, where necessary, upgraded to ensure that the wellbeing of our tenants continues to be protected at all times.</i>	<i>Meets all applicable statutory requirements providing for the health and safety of the occupants in the home.</i>
<i>Value for Money reviews, in respect of five key service areas, were completed.</i>	<i>The potential for improved efficiencies and enhanced service delivery.</i>	<i>Delivering value for money in all areas of the business</i>
<i>A detailed review of compliance with the CHC published 'Code of Governance' was undertaken by the Board of Management.</i>	<i>The Board of Management is fully aware of its responsibilities and obligations and is able to discharge its responsibilities appropriately. The identification of weaknesses and areas for improvement.</i>	<i>Effective Board and executive management with a clear and ambitious vision for the Registered Social Landlord</i>

<i>Action Taken</i>	<i>Resulting achievements, changes &amp; difference made</i>	<i>Example Performance Standard Met</i>
<i>In consultation with tenants, Phase 1 of a detailed 'root and branch review' of Service Charge contracts was undertaken.</i>	<i>To ensure Value for Money is achieved. To ensure tenants directly influence the type, nature and frequency of the communal services they receive.</i>	<p><i>Demonstrates how tenants are effectively involved in strategic decision making and shaping services in ways appropriate for tenants and the organisation.</i></p> <p><i>Comprehensive assessment of the business impacts of current and emerging risks. .... with robust risk management arrangements.</i></p>
<i>Scheme Enhancement projects completed at a number of properties.</i>	<i>To ensure that all dwellings are located in an environment to which residents can relate and in which they can be proud to live. To improve the wellbeing of residents and to ensure that the health and safety of residents is protected.</i>	<i>Ensures that all homes meet required standards of design and quality.</i>

## 5. WHAT DO WE INTEND TO DO TO CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THINGS OVER THE COMING YEAR.

<i>Action Proposed</i>	<i>Aims.</i>	<i>Example Performance Standard Met</i>
<i>To carry out and further develop the 'Well-being visits' undertaken annually for all our tenants.</i>	<i>To ensure the properties we provide are suitable for our tenants and to be responsive to the views and needs of the people who use our services.</i>	<i>Meets all applicable statutory requirements providing for the health and safety of the occupants in the home.</i>
<i>To continue with the comprehensive review of all Service Charges levied at all our properties.</i>	<i>To ensure that any Service Charge costs incurred represent Value for Money for our tenants. To ensure the way in which service charges are set is wholly transparent and achieved via through consultation.</i>	<i>Demonstrates how tenants are effectively involved in strategic decision making and shaping services in ways appropriate for tenants and the organisation.</i>
<i>To implement the revised Waiting List, Lettings and Allocations policy and procedure.</i>	<i>To ensure Aelwyd is transparent in its decision-making and that properties are let as efficiently as possible.</i>	<i>Demonstrates how lettings make the best use of available housing, compatible with the core purpose of the Registered Social Landlord.</i>
<i>To continue to engage external consultants to scrutinise and report independently on the Association's key areas of business.</i>	<i>To ensure Aelwyd is transparent in its decision-making and exercises proper control over the range of Association activities, and acts in the best interest of the organisation and its tenants.</i>	<i>Demonstrate how the Board assures itself of current performance and drives 'Continuous Improvement'.</i>
<i>To act upon and implement those recommendations arising from the review of compliance with Community Housing Cymru's 'Code of Governance' for Housing Associations.</i>	<i>To ensure the Board of Management is fully aware of its responsibilities and obligations and is discharging its responsibilities appropriately.</i>	<i>Effective Board and executive management with a clear and ambitious vision for the Registered Social Landlord.  Complies with governing documents including adopting, and complying with, an appropriate code of governance.</i>
<i>To Review the Tenant Participation Strategy</i>	<i>To ensure we remain accountable to our tenants and service users and involve them in shaping our services, reviewing our performance and developing our plans for the future.</i>	<i>Effective and appropriate tenant involvement and high quality and improving services.</i>
<i>To implement the recommendations arising from the review of the Association's Equality and Diversity Strategy as identified within the associated Action Plan.</i>	<i>To ensure our activities and services reflect the diversity of the communities where we operate and to be free from discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.</i>	<i>Compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements and guidance.</i>
<i>To continue to further develop Aelwyd's Fire Safety Strategy; to convene an ad-hoc committee to review the approach being undertaken. .</i>	<i>To heighten awareness of fire safety issues for all tenants. To ensure tenants are clear on what action to take in the event of a fire and to develop a policy that ensures individuals who might find it difficult to leave their home in the event of a fire are identified, consulted and appropriately advised.</i>	<i>Meets all applicable statutory requirements providing for the health and safety of the occupants in the home.</i>

<i>Action Proposed</i>	<i>Aims.</i>	<i>Example Performance Standard Met</i>
<i>To wherever possible enhance the local scheme environment by encouraging, involving and supporting tenants in the development of communal areas within our housing schemes in an attractive manner in accordance with their aspirations and wishes.</i>	<i>To ensure that all dwellings are located in an environment to which residents can relate and in which they can be proud to live.</i>	<i>Effective and appropriate tenant involvement and high quality and improving services.</i>
<i>To implement the revised policy and procedure to improve the way in which cases, or potential cases, of Anti-Social Behaviour are managed.</i>	<i>To improve tenant confidence; to protect the well-being of all stakeholders and, through early intervention, reduce the call upon Housing Management resources.</i>	<i>Compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements and guidance.</i>
<i>To develop existing in-house knowledge through training. To be aware of other third sector organisations that can provide support and guidance for both existing and potential tenants.</i>	<i>To ensure, wherever possible, tenants receive accurate, constructive and helpful advice/ guidance, including signposting, at the first point of contact.</i>	<i>Meets all applicable statutory requirements providing for the health and safety of the occupants in the home.</i>

## 6. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

Whilst making statistical performance comparisons with other Welsh housing associations might be useful, due caution should be exercised as such comparisons can, on occasion, be either disproportionately favourable or disproportionately adverse for a variety of reasons including size and the different types of tenancies provided. Such information is not currently available but is expected to be available in the near future.

In the absence of such information we have included below a summary of Aelwyd's performance in relation to these particular indicators over the last 6 years:-

Performance indicator	Aelwyd 2011/12	Aelwyd 2012/13	Aelwyd 2013/14	Aelwyd 2014/15	Aelwyd 2015/16	Aelwyd 2016/17	Trend Indicator
<b>Vacant Units</b>							
Rent loss during the year as a result of vacant units	£14,445	£9,988	£7710	£22,372	£17,077	<b>17,995</b>	
Rent loss during the year as a percentage of rent due.	1.41%	0.93%	0.69%	1.99%	1.48%	1.70%	
<b>Rents</b>							
Rent collected as a percentage of total rent collectable during the year.	97.07%	97.77%	96.82%	97.02%	96.45%	96.98%	
*Rent arrears owed by current tenants for the year to 31 March as a percentage of total rent collectable during the year.	0.42% (£4,333)	0.42% (£4,483)	0.58% (£6,381)	0.31% (£3570)	0.51% (£5890)	0.43% (£4,900)	
Rent arrears owed by former tenants as percentage of rent collectable. (Excluding write-offs)	0.20% (£2,050)	0.15% (£1,626)	0.14% (£1,502)	0.44% (£4879)	0.32% (£3670)	0.17% (£1939)	
<b>Repairs</b>							
Average number of calendar days to complete emergency repairs.	0.5 days	0.5 days	0.6 days	0.6 days	0.7 days	0.6 days	
Average number of calendar days to complete Urgent repairs.	2.5 days	2.5 days	3.1 days	3.3 days	2.7 days	3.7 days	
Average number of calendar days to complete Non-urgent repairs.	13 days	12.8 days	12 days	13.83 days	13.34 days	13.89 days	
<b>Housing Management</b>							
**Average number of calendar days taken to let lettable units.	31.6 days	40 days	28 Days	34 Days	48 Days	37 Days	

\* This figure excludes 'technical' arrears created as a consequence of the timing of payment cycles from Local Authorities and tenants.

\*\* Given the relatively low turn-over of vacant properties this 'average' figure can be distorted if one property remains vacant for an extended period.