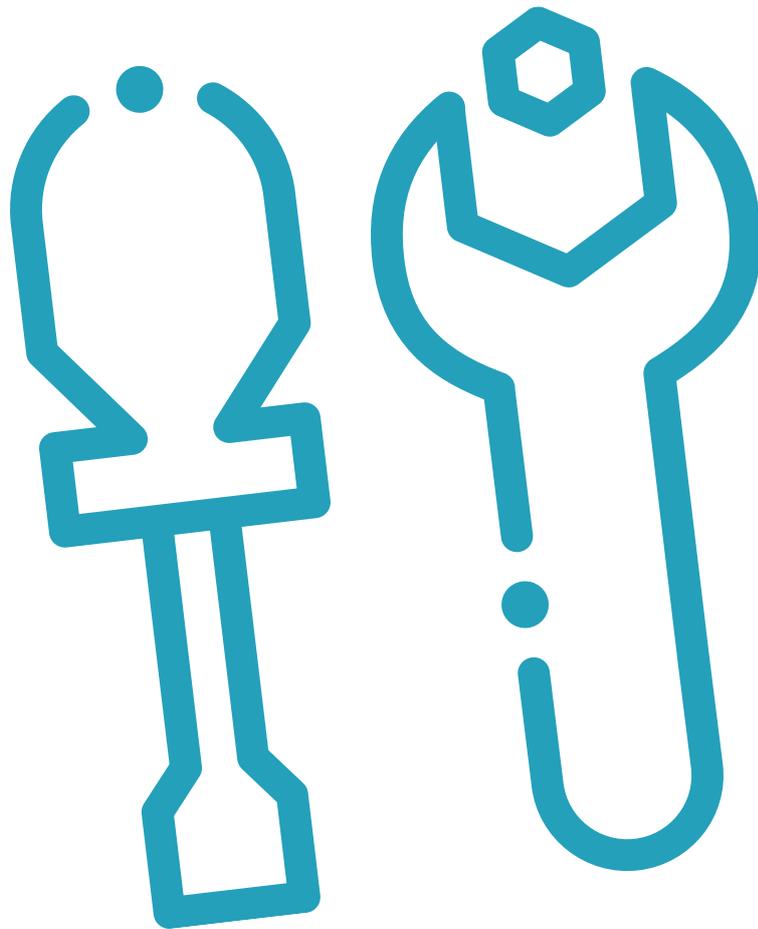


Grŵp Cynefin

Mwy na thai • More than housing



Self Evaluation Report 2016/17

The Self Evaluation Framework and the Key Features

Having a robust Self Evaluation Framework, central to strategic business planning processes and other governance arrangements, is not only key practice for any successful business, it is also one of the expectations of Welsh Government in its Circular RSL 02/15 'Core Principles of Self Evaluation for use by Housing Associations registered in Wales'.

During 2014/15 significant investment was made to develop a fit for purpose Self Evaluation Framework for Grŵp Cynefin that would ensure a model that would set clear accountability, plus a corporate focus on performance and continuous improvement, which would also comply with the requirements of the Circular.

In essence, there were four key features that were core when establishing Grŵp Cynefin's Self Evaluation Framework, based on best practice, namely:

- That self evaluation has a strong and consistent corporate focus across the organisation: That the organisation had established and was driving self evaluation corporately as the key element core to the governance arrangements, and overall strategic/financial planning.
- That self evaluation has a broad and robust evidence base: That the self evaluation is based on robust evidence arising from a wide range of sources, and the principles of good practice are set as part of those individual evaluations.
- That self evaluation is subject to internal and external challenge as part of the decision making process: That the results of self evaluation are challenged and tested internally within the organisation, and externally.
- That self evaluation is a key part of the corporate planning arrangements and the performance management framework: That the outcomes of the self evaluation are used effectively and in a timely manner to support corporate and financial planning, workforce planning and supports a learning culture across the organisation.

Grŵp Cynefin arrangements for self evaluation have been developed with due regard to these key features.

Therefore the key principles of the Self Evaluation Framework are:

- To set the initial responsibility for self evaluation at the operational service level i.e. with the Service Managers
- Accountability for service performance remains at that level, which is key to the findings of the self evaluations
- Initial professional opinion regarding service needs, opportunities, risks and resource requirements for the future are also found at the operational service level which will also form the key elements of the self evaluation findings
- Responsibility for ensuring that the joint findings are core to robust self evaluation evidence and engagement discipline also remains at the operational service level

During January 2017 Welsh Government's Housing Regulation Division introduced a revised and improved method of housing regulation, based on the principles of the Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations registered in Wales introduced in 2011. The key elements of the original Framework remain, such as:

- *Tenants will continue to be core to the regulatory arrangements, with the new method offering improved accountability and transparency to tenants and other stakeholders*
- *The basic principles of the Regulatory Framework – proportionality, being open and transparent,*

- consistency and promoting learning and development – will remain unchanged*
- The regulatory method will continue to be based on co-regulation.*

As part of the package of improvement, Welsh Government has also revised the delivery outcomes, setting new performance standards. The performance standards will reflect the revised implementation method and will provide a much stronger focus on decision making processes, leadership and financial viability of housing associations. The standards will be more consistent with the way effective housing associations actually run their business.

The revised method provides focus on continuous improvement and a clear opinion from the regulator. There will be a new requirement for housing associations to prepare an annual declaration of compliance with performance standards set by Welsh Government, and the regulatory focus will be on strategic risks, as well as more focus on good governance, specifically the way the Board receives assurance that its main responsibility, to ensure that the Association is well run, is being achieved fully and appropriately¹.

Grŵp Cynefin will complete the declaration of compliance against the Performance Standards which will be presented to the Board of Management meeting in June (or earlier if our regulatory assessment date is confirmed as being earlier).

The proposed performance standards have been through a consultation process with the sector, and up to the date of writing this report, we have not received the outcome of the consultation process, or received a copy of the final performance standards. However, we do not foresee that there will be major changes to the standards. A copy of the consultation document on the performance standards was circulated to Grŵp Cynefin Board members via e-mail on 10/02/17, but there is a copy also in Appendix 1 to the report.

¹Welsh Government document ‘A Revised and Improved Method of Housing Regulation’

The Process

The actions and timetable for completing the self evaluation process were reported to the Board of Management on 19/10/16 in relation to the wider business planning process, which included:

- ✓ Every Service Manager to complete a Position Statement about their service by October 2016
- ✓ A process of validating the information as well as feedback to the individual managers October – December 2016
- ✓ Presentation of the key findings as well as an overview of the implementation of the process to a Leadership Team meeting on 5 January 2017
- ✓ Presentation of the key findings as well as an overview of the implementation of the process to a Managers Group meeting on 25 January 2017
- ✓ Business Planning event for members of the Boards of Management, members of the Customers and Communities Committee, members of the Leadership Team and the Managers Group on 27 February 2017 with the focus on scrutinising and challenging services' key conclusions. The event was attended by 38 individuals: 15 Board members (Grŵp Cynefin and subsidiary companies) and members of the Customers and Communities Committee, 6 members of the Leadership Team and 17 Service Managers). Each manager gave a verbal presentation, as well as providing written performance overview statements which included:
 - An overview of the performance of their service
 - The basis for the conclusions (i.e. what evidence?)
 - What were the successes
 - What were the areas for improvementWe will present an overview of the findings of the opinion survey following the event shortly, as well as how we will respond to any comments to ensure continuous improvement.
- ✓ Presenting the self evaluation report for approval by the Board of Management on 22 March 2017
- ✓ Include information about our results on our website, and in the tenants newsletter 'Calon' in April 2017.
- ✓ Submission of the Declaration of Compliance with the Welsh Government Regulatory Service Standards to the Board of Management in June 2017 for approval, and then to the Regulatory Manager, which will be a basis of their regulatory assessment undertaken around July (to be confirmed).

Overview Results

As explained above, each service manager had to undertake a self evaluation exercise on their service during the summer months 2016, based on the Framework principles, completing a narrative Position Statement. There were three sections to the Position Statements:

1. Current performance
2. Planning and Development
3. Demonstrating the key principles of self evaluation

This report provides the main results of the self evaluation of services process in accordance with the strategic aims, namely:

Quality Housing:	We will provide high standard affordable housing that meets local needs
Excellent Services:	We will provide excellent customer services consistently across the group
Improving Lives:	We will provide support and opportunities to people
Sustaining Communities:	We will engage with local communities and be a catalyst for positive change
Effective Management:	We will demonstrate best practice with regards to leadership, governance and management as a group

It was very pleasing to note, from the service managers' responses, that each of the services were clear about how they contribute towards achieving the strategic aims and objectives, whether directly or indirectly, and there were examples and evidence available to support this.

Quality Housing

We will provide high standard affordable housing that meets local needs

How did we perform?

Grŵp Cynefin provides a range of high standard affordable housing to meet local needs and works with the Local Authorities in our operational area to develop general needs schemes, as well as extra care housing scheme for older people.

We had a busy year during 2015/16 completing **58 additional houses** against a target of 50, and ensuring a programme to purchase and develop over 100 further houses as part of our aim to reach our target of 250 over 5 years, and by 2020. We succeeded in fully realising county development programmes financially with this development activity. We started developing our **fourth extra care housing scheme**, i.e. 40 units in Hafod y Gest, Porthmadog, and the £8.5m scheme is progressing well, and on target to be completed within budget. We have also been successful in being selected to work with Denbighshire County Council to develop a further extra care housing schemes – a £11m scheme ‘Pentre Canol’ in Denbigh which will include 52 apartments, including provision for people with dementia, 8 independent living units for people with disabilities and 14 apartments for older people with general needs.

We manage or part own **900 intermediate homes** across seven counties within our operational area, and during 2015/16 the Team reached the target of spending social housing grant funding (intermediate rent units/Homebuy and mortgage rescue) and Welsh Housing Partnership targets with regards to purchasing intermediate rent units.

We continue to invest in our housing stock, and there is a current renewal programme in place that will ensure that we meet the requirements of the **Welsh Housing Quality Standard** by March 2018. There were 660 stock condition surveys undertaken during 2015/16 to facilitate this. At the end of 2015/16, we reported to our Board of Management and to Welsh Government that our properties were fully compliant with the **Standard** against the following components:

- Roofs and associated components
- Windows
- External doors
- Kitchens
- Central heating systems
- Electrical systems
- Smoke detectors operated from the mains power supply
- Gardens and storage areas

We also reported the following compliance percentages for the following components:

- Bathrooms - 71 %
- Energy Rating (SAP) - 88 %

By allowing for the ‘acceptable fails’ (i.e. waiting until it is timely to renew the components), then at the end of 2015/16, we can assess that we are on the threshold of complying with the Standard, with a programme in place to eliminate the acceptable fails by March 2018.

An internal audit was undertaken in March 2016 on the internal arrangements in place in order to meet Welsh Housing Quality Standards, which was given a ‘Reasonable Assurance’ audit opinion.

Quality Housing

We will provide high standard affordable housing that meets local needs

What were our successes?

One of the biggest achievements was meeting and exceeding our development target during the year, thus managing to realise county development programmes. The other successes include:

- Discussions regarding package schemes in Anglesey and Gwynedd
- Discussions about forward buying of land for development in the future
- Discussions to establish a 'Gwynedd Local Housing Scheme' with Gwynedd Council, a model of developing affordable housing that is not grant dependent
- Offer applicants a 'Rightmove' service
- Nominate suitable applicants to developers for affordable housing units
- Collaborate with Local Councils to develop options on improving and reconciling affordable housing lists
- Implement a programme of renewal and improving our properties to the value of £3.6m, which included a 50% in-year increase.

How can we improve?

These were prioritised as the main areas for improvement, which will be included the Departmental operation plans for 2017/18:

- Gathering tenant satisfaction information from tenants of new homes
- Experiment with further innovative development models
- Continue to include community benefit clauses in building contracts, and strengthen the message to contractors to ensure better outcomes
- Establishing a land bank that will ensure sufficient sites for the future, to withstand development competition from others
- Improve the Affordable Housing registration system for prospective applicants
- Producing reports from the system to contribute towards shaping development tendencies
- Developing a Communication and Marketing Plan for Affordable Housing.

Excellent Services

We will provide excellent customer services consistently across the group

How did we perform?

During 2015/16 a **reorganisation of services** to internal and external customers was undertaken, which meant changes to the ways of working. These changes included forming a new Welfare Team with the aim of providing advice and support to those tenants facing the impacts of Welfare Reform.

We have also invested in a new integrated housing management system, '**ActiveH**', provided by 'MIS active management', which will replace the two current housing management systems inherited from the two housing associations after merger. The main aim of this investment is to improve our services to our customers and our partners. The target for completion of Phase 1 has now been revised to November 2017.

The general performance of the key core services was good during 2015/16, with the majority of the performance results showing further improvement compared with the previous year. Specifically:

- We are happy that, despite facing a period of internal change and external factors that we managed to maintain a good level of rental income, which contributed to a total of 80 % of the Association's income (£16.7m). The rent arrears performance during 2015/16 was 2.19 % against a target of 2 %, and the performance has continued to be good during 2016/17.
- 338 properties were let but the performance was disappointing, taking an average of 32 days to let (against a target of 21 days at that time, which has now been amended to 25 days following a decision by the Customers and Communities Committee). The performance has improved in 2016/17 compared to this period.
- We dealt with 432 cases of anti-social behaviour with 100 % dealt with within the response targets. The main anti-social behaviour issues are noise nuisance, nuisance pets and general nuisance on estates. Four official complaints were received regarding anti-social behaviour, all dealt with at Stage 1 of the Complaints Policy.
- During the period January – March 2016, the Welfare Team assisted 69 tenants ensuring permanent welfare benefit gains worth £104,975 per annum, which will make a big difference to their lives. The benefits have continued during 2016/17.
- We continue to gather information about our tenants, and we have an information profile for 90 % of our tenants
- We answered 95 % of calls to the Customer Services Team, which compares more favourably than the national comparison – and 89 % were answered within 30 seconds, which again compares more favourably than the national comparison.
- During 2015/16, we raised 38,866 job orders, with 44 % for inspection and servicing work, 37 % for repair work and 10 % for renewals and improvements.
- 94 % of the repair work was completed within the time priority, with the average number of days for completion of work being 8 days.
- Our tenants satisfaction levels remain high at 98 % for repair work.

The **Tenant Participation Strategy** is vitally important to gain our tenants opinion about our services and to increase the Association's accountability, as tenants are central to everything we do. The various groups met regularly during 2015/16, including:

- The Maintenance Group met to review repair work satisfaction cards, condensation sheet, Contractors Code of Conduct and the content of the Tenants Handbook
- The Publications Group met to review the tenants newsletter 'Calon' and to decide on the concept and content of the calendar

Excellent Services

We will provide excellent customer services consistently across the group

- Tenant Inspectors/Service Standards where they focused on the Grŵp Cynefin Adaptations Work Service Standard, Maintenance Work Acknowledgement Form and the Contractors Conduct Service Standard
- Recruitment Panel – tenants have received training to be members of Grŵp Cynefin's new staff recruitment panel
- The Tenant Participation Working Group reviewed the progress of the Community Initiatives team against the Strategy, and contributed to the process of electing three new tenant members to the Customers and Communities Committee
- We have approved 27 community grants to the value of £11,240 across north Wales
- Developed Llais Cynefin – a new group that will be used for consultation on policies etc.
- We launched a Staff Newsletter to promote the work of the team
- We visited 28 family estates during our 2015/16 roadshow on the theme 'Healthy Living', where we succeeded in speaking to 52 % of our tenants, and the findings and information will feed into our 'Health and Wellbeing' activities during 2016/17
- Steps to Employment Grant launched, and grants worth £855 awarded to support our tenants into work
- An Older People's Conference held to increase digital skills, prevent loneliness. It was attended by 70 individuals, and 57 % expressed an interest in remaining in touch with new friends through 'Click and Connect'.

What were our successes?

One of the main successes during 2015/16 was the reorganisation of services, with the principle of introducing generic housing/maintenance officers within specific areas to foster a close relationship with tenants, to get to know them well, to build up trust thus enabling us to provide a complete service of a high standard. The reorganisation has also meant that specialist teams have been established, such as the Welfare Team, and the early outcomes of the service is excellent, contributing substantially to making a difference to the lives of many of our tenants. The other successes include:

- Maintaining rental income levels during a time of substantial external change and influence, with the impacts of welfare reform and changes such as the bedroom tax and Universal Credit affecting 12.33 % of our tenants. Despite the success, we foresee further changes creating an increasing challenge to us maintaining our rent level during 2016/17 and beyond
- Maintaining high performance levels and satisfaction levels
- Providing Central Customer Services from four offices in response to multi-mode enquiries. The Team has started to monitor the quality of calls in order to ensure consistency and to challenge current practices, and have managed to release the Manager to develop the new integrated housing management system.
- Participation activities and sustaining the Community Initiatives Team's projects.

How can we improve?

These were prioritised as the main areas for improvement, which will be included the Departmental operation plans for 2017/18:

- Managing void properties effectively in order to relet properties within the 25 day target
- Maintain income levels, ensuring that we manage rent accounts effectively providing appropriate information and support to our tenants
- Develop arrangements to better evidence our tenants satisfaction
- Develop policies, procedures and 'lean' processes to provide robust guidance to officers to ensure a

Excellent Services

We will provide excellent customer services consistently across the group

- consistent approach across the operational area and to prepare for ActiveH
- Formulating a Customer Services Strategy and a suitable action plan to establish the Customer Services MPathy+ model, aiming to receive accreditation and excellent customer services standards in due course
- Establishing a system to monitor the work of the Community Initiatives Team
- Build capacity and increase participation within our current tenant groups
- Develop a Health and Wellbeing Programme for our tenants
- Develop the HWB Denbigh community initiative and the Energy Wardens project

Improving Lives

We will provide support and opportunities to people

How did we perform?

Grŵp Cynefin provides 'more than housing', and more than landlord services across north Wales. On 1 July 2015 the Gwynedd and Anglesey Care and Repair agencies merged and relocated to one central office, managed by our subsidiary company, Canllaw.

The main aim of the merger was to facilitate delivering more to our clients for less, and to ensure sustainable services to allow older people to live independently in their own homes.

The legal process of **merging Gorwel and South Gwynedd Domestic Abuse Services** was also in progress during 2015/16, with the merger to be formalised by 1 April 2017. The advantages of the close collaboration between the two agencies during 2015/16 were apparent, with the flagship service 'Caring Dads' being extended to Gwynedd for the first time.

Gorwel was also successful in winning a tender for an Older People's Floating Support project in Anglesey for 460 service users, to provide housing related support as required for 55+ year old individuals to enable them to live as independently as possible.

Elements of the Community Initiatives Team have also contribute to realising this strategic aim, and once again, it is apparent that 2015/16 was a successful year, and it is possible to evidence that the service contributed substantially to making a difference to the quality of life of service users.

Despite all the mergers, and the work involved by relocation and developing service, the core services were maintained in each of the services across the group, and performance was good, with a number of targets exceeded, including:

The performance of the **Conwy and Denbighshire Care and Repair agency** meeting Welsh Government funding requirements and delivered outcomes in accordance with the Action Plan 2015/16. "The Agency met and exceeded the majority of their performance baselines and the required standards with some further progress since the successes of 2014/15. It appears that the process of merging the Agencies, which was managed well, did not have any adverse impact on the performance in 2015/16."

Gwynedd and Anglesey Care and Repair agency's performance also met and exceeded all expectation and Welsh Governments funding requirements. It was reported by Care and Repair Cymru, "*the agency has in all areas exceeded the expectations of WG funding and a positively embraced merger has succeeded to some degree in seamlessly maintaining a strong service base and good local partnerships. The level of innovation and orientation to the growing Health and Housing Agenda is commendable*".

- Despite facing funding cuts, and going through a process of huge change by merging with South Gwynedd Domestic Abuse Services, **Gorwel** has been able to maintain its services without any deterioration to performance and/or to the number of people it served. It has also been successful in winning contracts for new services and has received extensions to other projects and has grown services in some areas. The Gorwel review by the commissioners also expressed high satisfaction with the standard of service provision.
- The **Supported Housing Team** also managed to maintain services and provided a good level of service during a challenging period of external changes. During a period of instability with regards to remodelling services (short term schemes and older people's housing), the team has worked hard to support tenants throughout the changes.

Improving Lives

We will provide support and opportunities to people

What were our successes?

- The subsidiary companies were successfully merged, and relocated to one central office, without detrimental impact on services, stakeholders or staff
- The subsidiary companies continued to deliver effective and excellent services despite the disruption and uncertainty
- Canllaw Field Officer located within the 'Ffordd Gwynedd Team' in Ysbyty Alltwen – the only Third Sector representative within a mixed team of Health and Social Care workers.
- The Supported Housing Team collaborated effectively with a range of Local Authorities, Managing Agents, Gorwel and tenants during an uncertain period of remodelling which including providing supported housing to vulnerable veterans in Conwy – our first scheme in the county.
- The Hafod project jointly with HWB Dinbych won an award in the 'UK Housing Awards'
- Bus Stop Scheme – the project has been extended to Anglesey and Gwynedd and 64 digital skills sessions have been completed, plus 32 Health and Wellbeing sessions, with a total of 612 participants taking part
- HWB Dinbych – 60 currently without a qualification attended further education courses; more than 3,000 people attended courses; 68 have accessed work; more than 12 agencies working out of HWB Dinbych on a weekly basis; Denbigh Employment Group established
- A total of 26 qualifications equivalent to GCSE grade C gained by 26 vulnerable young people
- Steps to Employment Grant - Grŵp Cynefin launched this grant scheme during 2015/16 and supported the awarding of grants worth £855 to support our tenants into work
- Energy Wardens Project – more than 1,507 one to one visits completed, 487 applications for 'Warm Home Discounts' worth £68k, and one of our Energy Wardens received the first prize from 'National Energy Action Cymru' in the 'Heat Hero 2016' competition across Britain. The project has also been extended into Conwy
- Youth Homelessness Project – 26 vulnerable young people gained the 'Housemate' qualification in Conwy, and 5 vulnerable young people facing homelessness received 'Renting Ready' training which prepares them for independent living. Also 4 Hafod tenants completed qualifications through the 'Onwards and Upwards' project
- We won the 'Campaign of the Year award' for developing an educational board game to raise awareness about homelessness amongst young people. The game is now being used in Ireland, Scotland and south Wales.

How can we improve?

These were prioritised as the main areas for improvement, which will be included the Departmental operation plans for 2017/18:

- The subsidiary companies with discuss and review possible areas for collaboration to provide joint services, which will lead to potential cost savings
- Maintain services across the group despite the external uncertainty
- Review sheltered housing and extra care housing services
- Review the Supported Housing Team's procedures and processes to complement the Policies and to prepare for ActiveH
- Review Gorwel's Management and Staffing Structure
- Develop Gorwel's publicity and marketing strategy
- Increase user influence on the day to day management of Gorwel services by receiving their opinion to shape services
- Develop social enterprises will be a priority during the year, HWB Dinbych, Energy Wardens scheme.

Sustaining Communities

We will engage with local communities and be a catalyst for positive change

How did we perform?

Grŵp Cynefin works with a number of organisations, including local authorities and third sector organisations and voluntary groups to meet the individual needs of communities across our operational area.

During 2015/16 Grŵp Cynefin led the discussions to work with Welsh Government, local authorities, housing associations and Snowdonia National Park to secure a financial package to establish a regional **Rural Housing Enablers (RHE)** service for North West Wales. The Team is now in place, including 3 officers who work with local partners to assess housing needs in our communities, who contribute to sustaining communities for the future in areas where house prices are high and the affordable housing stock low.

During the year we also developed a **Community Investment Strategy** which will steer our development activities and decisions in the future, in order to support and facilitate further regeneration and community development activity under the 'more than housing' banner.

During 2015/16 Grŵp Cynefin bought £25,000 worth of shares in a clean energy production scheme for local housing – energy produced from an innovative water powered electricity generation scheme above the Pont Ogwen waterfall, a scheme where the proceeds of the electricity generated could be used to reduce our tenants and other residents' electricity bills. The **Ynni Ogwen** scheme will save around 245 tons of CO2 per year from being released into the environment, and it is expected to produce a profit of £450,000 over the next 20 years – money that will be reinvested in the community and local environmental projects.

Elements of the **Community Initiatives** Team also contribute to realising the Community Investment Strategy, and once again, it is apparent that 2015/16 was a successful year, where it is possible to evidence that the service contributed substantially to supporting communities. One of the successes was receiving confirmation that the lottery bid for £1.1m had been successful to develop the **Meliden Shed** project into a social enterprise, which will support small local businesses and create 4 new posts within the team. In a press release, Rob Pickford, a member of Big Lottery Fund Wales and chair of CAT2, the committee programme, said: *"The programme helps Welsh communities to be stronger and more sustainable by helping them to receive and develop assets and improve their localities. By assisting with transfer of assets to enterprising organisation that benefit the communities they serve, we are ultimately helping more people to benefit from their local community assets, and to create local income and employment."*

During 2015/16 the management of **Congl Meinciau Enterprise Centre** came to Grŵp Cynefin's Regeneration and Sustainability Team, and during 2015/16, staff were appointed to work directly from the Centre. This resulted in an increase in unit occupancy within the centre from 50% to 91% thus by having a constant presence, and through improved marketing. A Strategic Review of the Enterprise Centre was undertaken, with positive outcomes, including employment outcomes since November, where it was demonstrated that companies located in the Centre since November 2011 have employed 39 jobs directly in the building. Research in June 2015 showed that more than 70 local jobs in the Lley Peninsula were connected to the activities of companies working from Congl Meinciau. These figures demonstrate therefore that the Centre made a substantial contribution to the local economy in a rural and marginal area like the Lley Peninsula.

Sustaining Communities

We will engage with local communities and be a catalyst for positive change

What were our successes?

- Assisting with local projects i.e. developing a play area, developing a green area in partnership with Green Towns, Denbigh Museum, Griffiths' Shop etc
- Supporting and membership of over 22 community groups and committees to provide specialist support, organising activities, administration and translation services etc
- Successful with the bid to develop the Meliden scheme
- Creation of a Region Rural Housing Enablers team plus funding to sustain it via new partnerships
- The completion of the Pant yr Eithin scheme in Harlech was completed during 2015/16 (for Grŵp Cynefin), Llangoed scheme in Anglesey (for North Wales Housing Association) and the Bryn Du scheme, Anglesey (again for Grŵp Cynefin), via the support of the RHE
- Increasing occupancy of the Congl Meinciau Enterprise Centre where a programme of successful activities is in place
- Supporting the Ynni Ogwen Scheme

How can we improve?

These were prioritised as the main areas for improvement, which will be included the Departmental operation plans for 2017/18:

- Monitor community outcomes and research new software
- Create a menu for the services that the Rural Housing Enablers Team offer and reconsider the content/format of reports
- Secure Rural Housing Enabler funding from 2017 onwards
- Gather feedback from Rural Housing Enabler service users
- Improve the marketing of the Congl Meinciau Enterprise Centre
- Ensure the tenant satisfaction of current tenants of the Enterprise Centre

Effective Management

We will demonstrate best practice with regards to leadership, governance and management as a group

How did we perform?

It is possible to see that the central services, all of whom contribute to realising this strategic objective, performed well, despite a very busy year as well as having some vacant posts within some teams. The central services contain the Chief Executive's Department and the Business Services Department (Finance, Human Resources and Information Systems).

Here are some examples of the various teams performance:

- The Internal Audit Plan for the year was fully completed, and 100 % of those subject to an internal review of their service said that the audit had been beneficial to offer assurance that there were no major weaknesses in existence
- An opinion survey was conducted amongst our stakeholders led by David Hedges, which demonstrated that Grŵp Cynefin, on the whole, is effective when communicating and engaging with stakeholders
- A group board appraisal process was undertaken, which included individual members being appraisal, collective Board appraisals and a Chair appraisal. The findings of the process fed into developing a group Succession Plan, Member Training and Development Plan, Recruitment Plan and Governance Improvement Plan
- Developed and formalised the current Group Financial Regulations
- Developed an accounting procedure based on FRS, ensuring that management accounts and other finance services are provided on time
- Ensure sufficient Insurance Policies for the group
- The Treasury Management Policy was reviewed and effective financial viability ensured
- Results of the Staff Satisfaction Questionnaire showed that 90 % of staff continue to be satisfied/very satisfied with Grŵp Cynefin as an employer (reduced from 100 % in 2014)
- Results of Grŵp Cynefin staff sickness absence levels compare favourably with the national average
- Staff survey demonstrated that, on the whole, the staff are very satisfied with the IT Systems service
- Availability of IT systems has been good (e-mail, telephone system, databases. Office internet connection).

What were our successes?

- Establishing a Communication Strategy and a Communication Plan and Communication Champions across the Group
- Receiving a regulatory opinion of 'Strong Governance' in our Regulatory Assessment in May 2016, where substantial progress has been made since in formulating a Succession Plan, Board Member Training and Development Plan, Recruitment Plan and delivery of the Governance Improvement Plan
- Fully meeting the Governance Code where an explanation was given to the areas partially-met.
- Appointment of an in-house Translator
- Establishing a self evaluation of services procedure that forms the basis of the business planning and regulatory opinion arrangements
- Prepared Statutory Accounts based on the FRS changes
- Provided additional services in response to the merger of Gorwel and South Gwynedd Domestic Abuse Services, and when Conwy and Denbighshire Care and Repair was established
- Have made better use of finance computer systems/programmes
- Completed the implementation of staff restructuring across Grŵp Cynefin following the merger, which has been vital in order to achieve strategic objectives and sustaining the Association's service provision
- Developed, introduced and implemented a new staff performance appraisal process

Effective Management

We will demonstrate best practice with regards to leadership, governance and management as a group

- Installed a call logging system / Information Systems Helpdesk
- Signed a contract with 'Mis' following detailed and thorough work to choose a new housing management system
- Completed three moving office projects during the year.

How can we improve?

These were prioritised as the main areas for improvement, which will be included in the Departmental operation plans for 2017/18:

- Strengthen governance and corporate accountability between the parent company and the subsidiary companies (and Gorwel) by monitoring service level agreements quarterly
- Develop a method to gain central service users opinions (where appropriate)
- Review the Complaints procedure
- Undertake a health assessment of the Data Protection field
- Further develop the use of the existing computer system to ensure effective use with the new housing management system
- Develop guidance for ensuring that the Register of Assets and Liabilities is kept up to date and current
- Develop and implement a Staff Training and Development Strategy
- Agree on and use a Behaviours Framework for managers and the rest of the staff
- Investing in a human resources database, standardise Human Resources policies, processes and systems
- Marketing of Grŵp Cynefin as an employer by attending careers fairs in local schools and colleges
- Increase the IT Team's capacity
- Changes to the data-storing infrastructure
- Ensure the success of the ActiveH project
- Review and implement changes to our data retention infrastructure.

The Next Steps

The Business Planning Event held on 27 February has already considered and scrutinised the conclusions of the self evaluation of services, and the Leadership Team, as well as the Managers Group, will now proceed to further prioritise coming to firm conclusions about the strategic objectives for 2017-18, as well as the priorities that will be included in Departmental operational plans.

The draft Corporate Plan 2017-20 will be presented to the Board of Management in March 2016 for approval, plus the Business Plans of the subsidiary companies and Gorwel.

It is an expectation that Housing Associations, in accordance with Circular RSL02/15 “Core Principles of Self Evaluation for use by Housing Associations registered in Wales” publish their self evaluation, and we will do so, developing a version in infographics format for our website soon.

There is no requirement for us to share our self evaluation report with the Regulatory Manager any more. Instead, we will complete the ‘Compliance Statement’ (as referred to earlier in the document) following receiving approval from the Board of Management in June 2017.

Helen Wyn Jones
Governance and Compliance Manager
10 March 2017