

**MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF THE
WELSH TENANTS' FEDERATION**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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HACAS Chapman Hendy was appointed by the National Assembly for Wales in September 2001 to carry out a Management Review of the Welsh Tenants' Federation. The fieldwork for the Review took place from November 2000 to January 2001 and was followed by the preparation of a report and executive summary.

The executive summary outlines the aims and objectives of the Management Review, describes how the research was carried out and sets out the main findings and conclusions.

1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The aims of the management review are to:

- “review the management and organisation of the Welsh Tenants' Federation and the role played by Management Committee members and staff in ensuring effective strategic leadership and control of policy, finances and delivery of services”: and
- “review the structure, systems and procedures employed by Management Committee members to ensure that their legal responsibilities are met whilst ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and value for money are achieved from National Assembly for Wales grant funding in the operational delivery of services”.

The objectives of the management review are to:

- examine the process for developing, agreeing, monitoring and reviewing the strategic and operational objectives of the organisation, including the roles, responsibilities, composition and terms of reference and conditions of the various sub-committees: the relationships between the sub-committees; and the relationship between the sub-committees and the Management Committee;
- examine the process for decision-making and the respective roles, responsibilities and working relationships between the Management Committee members and employed staff;
- examine the arrangements for reporting progress to Management Committee members and the National Assembly for Wales on achievement of objectives and the related work programme;
- establish the extent to which the current structure and mode of operation enables the Federation to deliver its objectives;

- examine the arrangements for the monitoring and allocation of financial resources; the financial policies and procedures and operational controls over income and expenditure; and the arrangements for reporting progress on expenditure to Management Committee members and the National Assembly for Wales;
- examine the arrangement for the agreement of management protocols between the staff and Management Committee members, and systems to ensure their monitoring and quality assurance;
- examine the arrangements for the ongoing training and development of:
 - Management Committee members to meet business objectives and legal responsibilities;
 - Staff to meet business objectives and help staff fulfil their potential; and
 - Tenants and tenants' groups to meet specific local needs and objectives
- examine the personnel management and employment practices of the organisation including the chain of line management; equal opportunities policies and practices;
- Advise on how the current dispute between an individual and the Welsh Tenants' Federation can best be resolved, including how arbitration can best be accessed, to ensure a fair outcome
- Advise on an appropriate framework for resolving disputes between tenants and their local tenants organisation, including the role Welsh Tenants' Federation might play in such disputes
- Make recommendations on the need for a Welsh Tenants' Federation code of conduct for its affiliated member organisations/individuals, and what it should contain.
- produce a report on the findings and recommendations of the management review.

2 METHOD

The Review processes have been as follows:

- Examination of documentation provided by the National Assembly and the Welsh Tenants' Federation
- Preparation of a survey questionnaire to all tenant members of the Welsh Tenants' Federation, and analysis of the responses
- Preparation of a letter to landlords and representative bodies, and analysis of the responses
- Interviews with Welsh Tenants' Federation staff
- Interviews with the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the Welsh Tenants' Federation

- A meeting with the Welsh Tenants' Federation's auditors
- Four meetings with tenant members of the Welsh Tenant Federation, one in each of the four regions
- A meeting with an individual who has an ongoing dispute with the Welsh Tenant Federation
- Two meetings of the National Assembly Steering Group

We would like to thank the Welsh Tenants' Federation for their full co-operation with the Review and particularly for their assistance in organising meetings in the four regions. The Welsh Tenant Federation staff, officers and members have given generously of their time and views, along with the comments of other interested parties. We are very grateful for the contributions of all concerned.

3 MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident that the Welsh Tenants' Federation has already taken much action to address the problems which were a cause of concern to the Assembly in commissioning this review. Overall, however, there is much to commend in the way that the Welsh Tenants' Federation is operating.

We are particularly impressed by the nature of the contributions which Welsh Tenants' Federation members are making to the policy agenda in Wales and the training which Welsh Tenants' Federation offers its members.

We summarise below our main recommendations for changes by the Welsh Tenants' Federation, the National Assembly and other organisations with whom it deals.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WELSH TENANTS' FEDERATION

We recommend that the Welsh Tenants' Federation should:

On governance issues

- Revise its Memorandum and Articles of Association, including revising the descriptions of the regions to be consistent with current local authority boundaries, and update the Standing Orders.
- Review its structure, particularly the number of sub-committees, update and make more specific the Terms of Reference of Committees
- Prepares Job Descriptions for the officers, i.e. the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer
- Annually provide training for National Committee members in their roles and responsibilities as Directors, the training to be given by a person with a legal background
- Clarify its representative structure so that individuals are seen to represent groups rather than act in their own right

- Keep the minutes of the National Management Committee and Regional Committees in all regional offices and a master copy kept at Head Office. Head office should also keep copies of the minutes of all sub-committee meetings
- Ensure that the National Management Committee note/take action on minutes from sub-committees
- Give further thought to standard agenda items as an aid to conducting business, including an item to cover performance against the business plan and Section 16 grant issues
- Include in the Directors' Handbook the Terms of Reference of the National Management Committee and the Regional Committees; details of the role of the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer; a copy of blank forms which Directors have to complete for Companies House and advice on declaration of interests
- Advise National Committee members on their responsibility to report back to regions. Likewise, Regional Committee members/nominated representatives should be given guidance on their responsibility to report back to groups
- Include reference in the Code of Conduct to the role of the Chair in encouraging participation and the expectation that committee members will disseminate information

On communication matters

- Produce Tenant Outlook as a bilingual publications
- Include in Tenant Outlook the list of representatives for each committee
- Seek advice from, and maintain a dialogue with the National Assembly, over its business planning strategic and operational documents
- Provide new groups with an information pack to tell them what information is available from where, how to get it etc., e.g. National Committee minutes, reference library, entitlement to attend regional meetings. This is in addition to the existing information on setting up a new group
- Ensure that the Office Administrator gives priority to keeping the mailing list up to date
- Further explore the opportunities to improve communication by the use of new technology
- Consider ways in which it can better promote itself to social landlords

On management and training issues

- Provide suitable training for Officers responsible for managing staff
- Prepare an annual training plan for staff training
- Prepare policies for training, quality management, harassment and grievance and write up the policies for membership and complaints which are conveyed in Tenants Outlook. All policies and procedures should be dated and the name of the author stated
- Review the disciplinary policy
- Extend the equal opportunities policy to cover recruitment of staff and introduce an equal opportunities monitoring form
- Extend the Health and Safety policy to cover COSHH and the National Assembly, a Council or RSL landlord should provide advice and guidance on Health and Safety matters

On financial matters

- Incorporate the training procedures for treasurers into a more formal document for financial policies and procedures
- Invite the auditors to carry out an interim audit for 2000/01 to test whether the new procedures are effective
- Consider the format of reporting actual against budget in the financial management reports
- Consider the cost/benefit of purchasing some simple accounting package to record payments and receipts and report outcomes
- Consider extending the responsibilities of the Administrative Assistant to reduce the Treasurer's administrative work and change standing orders to avoid duplication in the case of the same person being a National and Regional Treasurer
- Discontinue the Treasurer's role of checking the returns of the South West Region for which he is also Treasurer
- Consider forecasting the year's out-turn on a quarterly basis and explaining variances between actual and budget, estimate income and expenditure and prepare a budgeted balance sheet
- Consider budget profiling to assist in managing expenditure patterns

On handling disputes

- try to bring their dispute with an individual to a close as soon as possible, either using a mediator or seeking arbitration
- Reiterate their advice that every tenants' group should have a constitution, terms of reference, set of standards and/or rules and, in addition, recommend that there should be a disputes resolution procedure in a group's constitution/standing orders, which includes reference to mediation and/or arbitration
- Train tenants in understanding procedural matters
- have a limited role in disputes between tenants and their member associations. The Welsh Tenants' Federation could prepare a typical example of a dispute resolution procedure to include in the Starter Pack and try and define the types of disputes where they might get involved

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

We would recommend that the National Assembly:

- Continues to support the Welsh Tenants' Federation in its role in developing confident tenants, able to articulate their needs both at a local and national level
- Continues to invite the Welsh Tenants' Federation to contribute to the development of housing policies in Wales
- Provides three year funding, rather than annual allocations, to assist the Welsh Tenants' Federation with its development
- Recognises that the voluntary efforts of Welsh Tenant Federation members provides matched-funding in kind rather than financial resources
- Encourages a secondment to the Welsh Tenants' Federation from within its own staff or by a social landlord to gain a direct insight into tenant participation on the ground

We would recommend that TPAS (Cymru) and the Welsh Tenants' Federation:

- Work together and with the National Assembly to develop protocols to clarify respective roles