



Self-Evaluation

March 2024



Tai Calon's Self-Evaluation - March 2024

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The process

This self-evaluation covers the 16 months ended 31st March 2024, approved in March. It demonstrates the Board's diligence in the evaluation of the quality of Tai Calon's governance, service delivery to our customers, and financial viability in the delivery of our Corporate Plan 2025.

The self-evaluation has been an ongoing process through the period. Listening to the voice of the customer is always important, such as when the Board considered progress on customer satisfaction in its meeting in February 2023 looking at the survey results from the Institute of Customer Service. That demonstrated a significant increase in overall satisfaction from 57.5 to 68.1, and an improvement in the ease with which customers can transact with Tai Calon. In the summer of 2023, Tai Calon won the TPAS Tenant Voice award.

At the Board Away Day in May 2023, time was set aside to reflect on the Board's approach to developing the business. Working with Altair, who challenged the prevailing approach to business planning. From that the Board established their red lines in readiness for the October 2023 re-refresh of the Corporate Plan. In June the Board undertook a detailed review of Tai Calon's compliance with the CHC Code of Governance, concluding that the organisation fully complied. That was disclosed within the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2023.

Finally, at the March 2024 Board meeting, there was a review and approval of a detailed longform self-evaluation, covering all 9 Regulatory Standards. That document presented supporting evidence, which was subjected to the "so what" test, to support the opinion of compliance with the Regulatory Standards. That meeting also agreed a series of recommendations for improvement.

The Evidence

In undertaking the self-evaluation, the Board places more reliance on externally sourced evidence, to that generated from within the organisation. When evaluating services, then the wealth of evidence directly from customers through Rant and Rave, which provides instant feedback on any customer facing transaction, is persuasive. That feedback is complimented by mechanisms within the Customer Voice strategy.

With the improvements in the organisation's approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I), then the challenge provided by Tai Pawb has been beneficial, validated by the positive internal audit review.

Finally, with financial viability, Tai Calon can demonstrate value for money with Housemark benchmarking data of comparable housing associations.

All the above assurance was in addition to internally generated feedback, and key performance indicators.

Customer needs understood and considered in the self-evaluation

customers have been involved in the review of the self-evaluation by those who sit within the governance structure, both the Board and the Homes and Communities Committee. Further the processes by which the organisation understands and reflects the views of customers is comprehensive, such that those mechanisms provide the Board with clear insights of where customers see the need for improvement. Tai Calon uses three survey methods. The bi-annual STAR survey, the continuous Rant and Rave surveys, and the annual Institute of Customer Service survey (noted above). All these seek to provide on-going customer satisfaction data to the Board (and in more detail to the Homes and Communities Committee, the chair of which provides a written report and verbal updates at the meeting of the Board). Finally, there was a series of consultation events and a focus group review of the self-evaluation, with the views of the Board on compliance being endorsed by those residents attending.

That wealth of customer feedback data provides a good insight into the customer's perspective of where improvements are required.

Further there are a variety of consultation methods to get insights as to what the wider customer group expect from Tai Calon. Examples have been around our approach to communications, use of food bank vouchers, estate improvements, and addressing social isolation in sheltered housing. However, as noted within our improvement plan, there are areas where our approach to hearing the voice of the customer can be improved.

How the Board knows the organisation complies with each regulatory standard including reference to key performance data and sources of assurance.

In undertaking the self-evaluation, the Board considered each Regulatory Standard, together with the supporting requirements as described in the Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations registered in Wales. So, for example, when considering Regulatory Standard 1 on leadership and governance, the Board also considered the seven sub-headings that supported that overall standard. So, for each sub-heading, the Board used one of the following three possible gradings of compliance, partial compliance, or non-compliant.

Summary

In summary there are the following improvement recommendations.

Regulatory Standard 1

Leadership and governance. This standard has 7 sub-headings. Tai Calon complies with 4 of those, partially complies with 2, and in March 2024 became non-compliant with Standard 1g because of the administrative error of not posting electrical certificates to customers who had converted to contract holders under the Renting Homes (Wales) Act.

The assessments of comply were based on the externally supported away days, detailed review of the CHC Code of Governance, and the rich customer feedback data. The partial compliance assessment was based on the need to increase tenant ED&I data and reporting in that area, both noted in the improvement plan.

Regulatory Standard 2

Risk and assurance. Tai Calon complies. There has been a culture of continuous improvement around assurance and risk management. An example would be the recent adoption of the National Housing Federation best practice guide on the use of deep dives to gain assurance. There is also the continued use of the comprehensive assurance dashboard by the Audit and Risk Committee. See section on strategic risks below. There is Board led focus on landlord health and safety (including damp and mould risks) to protect customers. This includes quarterly reporting to the Board, with demonstrable accountability, through the governance structure and the rest of the organisation.

Regulatory Standard 3

Tenant Satisfaction: Tai Calon complies. Health and safety compliance, including Tai Calon's approach to damp and mould, is within a robust framework. On satisfaction levels, there was strong operational key performance indicators, i.e. 2023 STAR overall satisfaction at 79%, Institute of Customer Service significantly increased from 57.5 to 68.1, and Rant and Rave showing satisfaction at levels above 90%. However Tai Calon needs to do more to demonstrate good delivery to meet the diverse needs, hence Standard 3b is assessed as partial compliance. Finally, a strong culture for improvement (in line with the Mission in the Corporate Plan 2025), and demonstrated through the incremental process/cultural improvements supported by Easier Inc. Finally steady reductions in the level of customer complaints.

Regulatory Standard 4

Tenants empowered and influence design of services: Overall Tai Calon complies. The evaluation had three areas as comply and one as partial compliance. The Board have assurance from the good performance around the level of involvement, however felt there was a partial compliance on standard 4 d with recommendations to widen our engagement to under-represented groups. There is also a recommendation on implementing new ways of understanding our tenants, based on best practice from other sectors.

Regulatory Standard 5:

Rent and service charges: Tai Calon complies. The evaluation score reflects the positive consultation feedback from tenants, and STAR survey on value for money of rent, (undertaken in the previous year). There was insufficient time for tenant consultation in the autumn of 2022 because of the lateness of the Welsh Government rent increase notification.

Regulatory Standard 6:

Value for money: Tai Calon complies. Evaluated as good given the strong metrics from the procurement activity within Tai Calon, and when benchmarked with others.

Regulatory Standard 7:

Financial planning: Tai Calon complies. Evaluated as good given Tai Calon has robust financial planning. This is demonstrated in the Board annual review of the 30-year business plan, approved by our debt funders. Also validated by the £105m re-financing during the year. Financial management techniques (such as net present values) are applied to investment decisions, and the business plan to help understand the impact of long-term decisions on the financial value of the organisation.

Regulatory Standard 8:

Assets and Liabilities are well managed: Overall Tai Calon complies. Of the three areas within this standard, the Board evaluated two as comply, and one as partial (i.e. to complete the work on the stock condition survey). The Audit & Risk Committee regularly review the assets and liability registers.

Regulatory Standard 9:

The organisation provides high quality accommodation: Tai Calon complies. This standard as evaluated complying, given that Tai Calon's housing stock meets the Welsh Homes Quality Standard (at November 2023). Continued compliance with the standard is checked and reported to the Board annually.

Identify key strategic risks and associated controls or signpost to other documentation where the key risks are articulated.

Evaluation of strategic risks and mitigations is an ongoing process with the key governance focus with the Audit and Risk Committee, which is then reported to the Board. In addition, the Board regularly considers risk and risk appetite, and at every meeting there is an agenda item that promotes the discussion of any emerging risks facing the organisation. The risk map, which is interactive within our Decision Time system, is available to Board Members, fully documents all the strategic and operational risks, controls and mitigations.

Improvement plan

There is a detailed improvement plan that flows from the Board's evaluation of compliance with the Regulatory Standards.