

On the 6th of November 2020, the tenant representatives from Mid Wales Housing Associations Tenants and Residents Forum and the Tai Ceredigion Monitoring Group joined together to form the Barcud Monitoring Group (BMG). Both former Groups jointly agreed to adopt the former Tai Ceredigion Monitoring Groups previous practices and at our request, Barcud agreed to the Group being an independent tenant's body as previously with the Tai Ceredigion Monitoring Group.

The BMG, unlike many other tenant groups across Wales, is run by tenants and leaseholders and not the housing association. All the members are either tenants or leaseholders who volunteer their time freely to work with Barcud as part of a team to ensure services, standards and its culture are tenant focused.

From the outset, the Group recognised the importance of having tenant representatives from as many Towns and Villages as possible from both Ceredigion and Powys. Thankfully, as more tenants have become aware of the Group our membership has continued to grow and we have members stretching from Pont Robert to Cardigan. Although the Covid pandemic has prevented us from having physical meetings we, as many others, have moved over to online meetings which has enabled us to continue and, in some cases, increase our activities.

The past year has been extremely busy for the Groups members following the merger as we have been heavily involved with Barcud as it identifies good practices, services from both former associations, and implements them.

So, what have your fellow tenants been doing? Oh my, where to begin?

- ✓ Created a video for Barcuds staff training on the new culture for Barcud.
- ✓ Gave a presentation to the Barcud Board on the importance of tenant involvement and its continued working relationship with the Group.
- ✓ Attended two Business Planning events with the Board, CEO, Directors and Operational Managers to set out the priorities for Barcud over the next 5 years.
- ✓ Attended six bi-monthly Tenant Liaison Panel Strategy meetings with the CEO and Directors (Leadership Team).
- ✓ Attended six bi-monthly Tenant Liaison Panel Operational meetings with the Operational managers from Housing and Maintenance.
- ✓ Attended twelve monthly Group meetings at which we also invited guests, such as the Chair of the Barcud Board, the Senior Housing Regulator, Barcud CEO and the Directors of Finance & IT, and Commercial Services.
- ✓ Engaged with the Head of the Customer Services Authority and Barcud on its new 2-stage Compliments, Comments & Complaints policy, which is now called "Tell Us' - Comments, Compliments, Concerns and Complaints Policy".
- ✓ Engaged directly and independently of Barcud with the Senior Housing Regulator during their Regulatory Assessment of Barcud.
- ✓ Submitted views from a tenant's perspective on the Welsh Governments consultations on their proposed "Model Contracts" and "Regulatory Framework Review." Unlike other tenant groups, due to the Groups independent status, we

can take part in local and national consultations without censorship or amendments or permission from our landlord.

- ✓ Reviewed and approved many policies such as the Rent Setting policy prior to their submission to the Barcud Board for approval and adoption.
- ✓ Reviewed and approved Barcuds new Health & Safety & Wellbeing policy which included tenant representation on the Barcud Health & Safety forum.
- ✓ Conducted our own Service Charge review and submitted our recommendations to Barcud which will be implemented in the coming financial year.
- ✓ Reviewed and updated our Void Inspection checklist.
- ✓ Conducted numerous inspections on Void properties before they are relet.
- ✓ Reviewed and updated our Estate Management Inspection checklist.
- ✓ Conducted estate management inspections in the Newtown area.
- ✓ Reviewed, amended, and updated various specifications for planned works in the Powys area.
- ✓ Participated in the first of many Decarbonisation meetings at which we explored the current heating systems available to identify the cheapest way of heating our homes. Tackling and preventing fuel poverty is of the highest priority for Barcud and us. We are also looking at how Barcud can play its role in tackling climate change with the support of the “Carbon Trust.”
- ✓ Hosted Barcuds first Tenants Liaison Forum. This was also Barcuds first online tenants’ event and took place in May.
- ✓ Hosted and set the theme for Barcuds first Tenants Conference, which was also hosted online.
- ✓ Attended a wealth of online events with tenants from across Wales. These events were hosted by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Cymru (TPAS Cymru) and enabled tenants to share good practices as well as meet with other bodies such as the Regulatory Board for Wales, Housing Regulation Team and Customer Services Authority. The events were varied and included Decarbonisation, Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS), the Tenants Disability Network, areas which tenants should be involved with and the future of tenant engagement
- ✓ Gave a presentation at a TPAS Cymru event on tenant involvement in Health & Safety and how Barcud has involved the BMG in this key area.
- ✓ Participated in a Task & Finishing group reviewing the “Out of Hours Emergency Repairs” Service and standards.
- ✓ Approved several “Local Lettings” policies prior to approval by the Board.
- ✓ Reviewed and amended the Barcud Tenant Involvement Action Plan.
- ✓ Reviewed and proposed additional questions for Barcuds first “STAR” Survey of Tenants and Residents.

Financial Report.

For the Group to manage itself it has its own Bank Account and a funding agreement with Barcud. The Group maintains accurate accounts which are presented to Barcuds Finance Team for annual auditing. These funds are used to cover travelling expenses, the hire of meeting rooms, attendance at conferences and out of pocket expenses such as stationary. When the Group was formed, it was agreed to transfer the existing funds from the Tai Ceredigion Monitoring Group to the BMG. On the 6th of November 2020, the group

started with £2610.44, and the balance today stands at £2660.44. Due to the Covid situation all the Group's main meetings have taken place online and consequently we have spent £0.00. The only income the Group has had is a £50 compensation payment from Lloyds Bank arising from the difficulties we experienced when engaging with the bank. The past year has provided us with examples of how we as a Group can keep our expenditure to a minimum and we will learn from this experience. Personally, when considering the hours donated by all the members, I can safely say that we are Value for Money. We would like to extend our gratitude to Barcud for providing us with the necessary IT equipment to enable us to meet online and for covering the costs of the TPAS Cymru events, some of which were not free.

The year ahead is already looking to be another busy one. One of the biggest tasks facing Barcud and the Group is the implementation of the Renting Homes Act 2016 (Wales). This will see the Welsh Government introducing its own housing regulations specifically for Wales which will include the replacement of all tenancy agreements with a new "Occupational Contract." This will require a huge amount of work for Barcud, and the Group and we will have to commence work shortly as the Welsh Government has indicated that it will be implemented in the Spring of 2022. The Group has many concerns regarding the new act and contract, and we are currently in the process of writing a report highlighting our concerns which will be sent to senior Welsh Government ministers and other bodies involved with housing.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the members both past and present for their selfless dedication, and time which has enabled us to be actively involved since November, thank you. On behalf of the Group, I would also like to extend our gratitude to Barcud for respecting our request to remain an independent tenants' group, for providing us with the opportunities to be involved at both a strategic and operational level and for treating us as valued members of the team. To be a genuine tenant focused landlord, the culture must be from the top and we are grateful to Steve Jones (CEO), The Barcud Board, The Leadership Team (Directors), Operational Management Team and all the Barcud staff for their pro-active approach to true tenant involvement. I know the Group would also insist that I give special recognition to Sue Thomas (Senior Tenant Involvement Officer) for her unwavering support, kindness and respect, thanks Sue, you are our Tenants Champion.

Paul Clasby,
Chairperson,
Barcud Monitoring Group.