

**ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED**  
**REPORT OF THE BOARD MEETING**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 22 JANUARY 2013 AT 10:30 AM**  
**AT ALBYN OFFICES, INVERGORDON**

**Board Members Present**

Mrs I McLaughlan (Chair)  
Miss C Cameron  
Mr G Kelman

Mrs I MacRae  
Mr D Russell  
Mr J Convery

Ms M Smith  
Mr B Summerfield  
Mr J Oag

**Staff Members in Attendance**

Mr C Macaulay: Chief Executive

Mr R Nairn: Finance &  
Corporate Services Director

Ms H Barton: Customer  
Services Director

Mr D Lockhart: Asset Management  
& Investment Director

Miss C Lawrie: Corporate  
Officer (Minutes)

**1. APOLOGIES**

1.1 Apologies had been received from Mrs Slimon, Mrs Cairney and Mr Sinclair for this meeting.

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

2.1 Minutes of Previous Board Meeting: 27 November 2012

The minutes for the Board Meeting were agreed as a true record.

2.2 Minutes of Business Planning Meeting: 27 November 2012

The minutes of the Business Planning meeting were agreed as a true record.

**3. DECISION MAKING PAPERS**

3.1 Rent Increases: 2013

3.1.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director's paper sought approval from the Board on the level of increases for rents, management fees and service charges that are to be charged by the Society for the year to 31 March 2014. The paper proposed an increase in rent of 1% over RPI for December 2012. It was noted that as RPI for December 2012 is 3.1% it was proposed that the rent increase should be 4.1%.

3.1.2 Rent increases at other Scottish housing associations vary between 3.5% and 5%. Therefore the proposal for Albyn of a 4.1% increase is about average. Mr Nairn outlined all the considerations which had been taken into account in producing the proposal.

3.1.3 There was discussion around the next rent setting policy review. It was agreed that this should include consideration of how each property's energy efficiency might be reflected in future rents. This process will include tenant consultation.

- 3.1.4 Feedback had been received from tenants following consultation regarding rent increases. There had been an increase in the comments received, and an increase on how many were negative (39 of the 169 responses disagreed with the proposal). This showed that people were taking more interest in their rent versus the other costs they had within the household.
- 3.1.5 It was noted that from the tenants' comments there might be some lack of understanding about why the rent increases are necessary. It was agreed that tenants should be provided with more information and that the message given to tenants needed to be improved.
- 3.1.6 The Board approved the recommendations contained in the paper as follows:
- Increase the rent by RPI plus 1%
  - Increase the service charge by RPI plus 1%
  - Increase the Management Fee for shared ownership properties by £6.00pa
  - Maintain any remaining furniture charges at current rates
  - Maintain garage rates at £13 per month; and
  - Consult with Albyn's tenants about a move to CPI as a base on which rent rises will be considered in future years.

### 3.2 Pension Provision

- 3.2.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director's paper updated the Board on the current situation regarding the staff pension scheme. Mr Nairn sought confirmation from the Board to continue to be members of the scheme, and to maintain a watching brief concerning the issues surrounding the scheme and Albyn's options. The Society's staff left the meeting whilst discussion took place and a decision made. The minute secretary remained.
- 3.2.2 It was agreed that a working group be instigated, comprising both Board members and senior staff. The working group will obtain independent advice regarding the pension situation.
- 3.2.3 The Board approved the recommendations contained in the paper as follows:
- To confirm that Albyn continue as a member of the pension scheme until the Actuarial Statement is produced in the Spring and options are prepared by the Pensions Trust regarding the future of the scheme; and
  - To confirm that a watching briefing will be maintained concerning the issues surrounding the scheme and Albyn's options.

### 3.3 Salary Award: 2013/14

- 3.3.1 The Society's staff remained out of the meeting whilst discussion took place and a decision made.
- 3.3.2 The Board approved the recommendation to implement a pay award as part of a three year pay deal agreed between Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH) and the union. It was noted that the Scottish Housing Regulator recommended EVH's salary structure to registered social landlords as an example of good practice. A thorough review of the Society's Terms & Conditions of Employment will be conducted during 2013/14, including consultation with staff and the recognised trade union.

Albyn staff rejoined the meeting at this point.

## **4. POLICY PROPOSALS & REVIEW**

### **4.1 ICT System Security and Acceptable Use Policy**

4.1.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director reported that the ICT System Security and Acceptable Use Policy had been considered by the Staff Consultative Forum at their meeting on 13 March 2012. The policy had been subsequently amended as agreed by the SCF and the Board's approval was now sought.

4.1.2 After some discussion the Board approved the ICT System Security and Acceptable Use Policy.

## **5. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

### **5.1 Albyn Enterprises Limited Meeting: 22 November 2012**

5.1.1 The minutes of the Albyn Enterprises Ltd meeting held on 22 November 2012 were noted.

## **6. VERBAL UPDATES**

### **6.1.1 Calbyn**

The Chief Executive updated that progress continues to be made on the hotel project. Calbyn is working with UHI on the Stage C design work for the hotel and the UHI building.

6.1.2 A gateway review has been carried out and recommendations from that include producing a financial funding strategy and implementing a Project Director to oversee the bigger business project.

### **6.2.1 Welfare Reform**

The Customer Services Director reported that she had attended a Parliamentary Enquiry on Welfare Reforms on behalf of Albyn and had provided evidence on the issue. She had also been asked to provide additional information and case studies.

6.2.2 Staff will be contacting tenants deemed most at risk from the welfare reforms to offer guidance and assistance as required. Mail shots had already been sent to those most at risk of the bedroom tax and follow up phone calls had been made. More follow up on this was required and this was being progressed.

6.2.3 Staff recently attended a training session provided by a housing benefit expert and this had been well received by the staff.

## **7. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

7.1 There was nothing to report on this item.

## **8. LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

8.1 Mr Convery requested a leave of absence for the Board meeting on 19 March 2013.

## **9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

### **9.1 Dalmore Project**

In answer to a query from the Board, the Asset Management & Investment Director updated on progress with this project. Detailed planning consent had now been received, with some minor road works required. Mr Lockhart noted that there are challenges with the infrastructure which will involve significant upfront costs.

### **9.2 Enforcing Entry for Planned Maintenance**

It was confirmed that consultation is due to take place with tenants on the issue of making forced entry if necessary during the implementation of energy efficiency contracts. With regards the installation of heating systems at Milton and Tain, it was noted that specific permission had been sought from the Board at their October meeting to gain entry if required. Tenants are advised if this action is going to be taken.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is due to take place on 19 March 2013 in Invergordon.

## **11. BOARD TRAINING**

11.1 The Board received an update on the new organisational structure from the Chief Executive.

## **12. BUSINESS PLANNING**

12.1 It was agreed that this item will be deferred to the March Board meeting.