

ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED

REPORT OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 26 JANUARY 2016 AT 10:30 AM AT ALBYN'S OFFICES, INVERGORDON

Present

Mr D Russell (Chair)
Ms M Smith
Mr J Convery

Ms K Williams
Miss G Linden
Mr A McMaster

Mrs I McLaughlan
Mrs P Dingwall

In Attendance

Mr C Macaulay: Chief Executive

Mr R Nairn: Chief Operating
Officer

Mr J Banks: Customer Services
Manager North (Item 4.4)

Ms H Cameron: Asset Management
& Investment Manager (Items 4.4,
4.5 & 4.6)

Ms S Watson: Finance &
Corporate Services Manager
(Items 4.1 & 4.3)

Ms L Fraser: Head of Innovation
(Item 4.7)

Miss C Lawrie: Corporate Officer
(Minutes)

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Mrs Grant, Mr Sinclair and Mr Solle for this meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Ms Smith noted any potential conflicts of interest in relation to her role as a Highland Councillor. Mr Convery noted a potential conflict of interest for item 4.7 regarding the "Someone Who Does" project. Miss Linden noted her status as a tenant in relation to item 4.1 regarding rent increases.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.1 Board Meeting: 24 November 2015

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

3.1.1 **Action Items**

A written update on the action items had been provided.

3.1.2 **Matters Arising: Fuel Poverty**

Mr Macaulay reported that he will provide a paper mid-February to include a proposed action plan to proactively promote the issue within the political arena. The Chair believed that the Society needed to support its tenants on this matter.

3.2 Extraordinary Board Meeting: 15 December 2015

This meeting had been held to discuss the awarding of the contract for the Aviemore Biomass system. The Board members had agreed to award the contract to Angus Biofuels. The minutes were agreed as a true record.

3.2.1 **Action Items**

A written update on the action items had been provided.

3.2.2 **Matters Arising: Contract Signing**

Mr Macaulay updated that the contract signing ceremony with Angus Biofuels is due to take place on 28 January.

3.2.3 **Matters Arising: Meeting with Customers**

Mr Macaulay reported that he had met with a small group of customers on 22 January, along with Mr Drew Hendry MP. The full meeting with customers will take place on 28 January, alongside the signing ceremony. Mr Macaulay commented that there had only been three occasions when the system had completely failed. The most recent of these had been early in the new year, when both the main boiler and the back-up system failed at the same time.

4. **DECISION MAKING PAPERS**

4.1 Rent Increase Proposal: 2016

Ms Shannon Watson, Finance & Corporate Services Manager, joined the meeting for this item.

4.1.1 Ms Watson's paper sought approval from the Board for increases to rents, management fees and service charges for the year from April 2016. It was confirmed that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for December 2015 was 0.2%. Therefore a 1.2% increase in rental charges was proposed.

4.1.2 The proposed charges were to:

- Increase the rentals by 1.2%
- Increase the service charges by 1.2%
- Continue to increase the Management Fee for shared ownership properties by £6.00 per year
- Maintain any remaining furniture charges at the current rates; and
- Maintain garage rents at £13 per month

4.1.3 Mr Macaulay referred to the matter of service charges. With the transfer of work to Albyn Enterprises Ltd (AEL), Albyn's statutory obligations as a Factor are now being met. Accurate costs for rented stock are still required. The process to provide such information will require a further year of work.

4.1.4 The Board approved the proposed charges to:

- Increase the rentals by 1.2%
- Increase the service charges by 1.2%
- Continue to increase the Management Fee for shared ownership properties by £6.00 per year
- Maintain any remaining furniture charges at the current rates; and
- Maintain garage rents at £13 per month

4.2 Financial Arrangements: Endorsement of Chair's Approval

4.2.1 Ms Watson remained for this item. The Board was asked to endorse the Chair's approval given to progress the application for an extension to the existing Royal Bank of Scotland loan facilities. This was in order to provide funding as a short-term measure prior to the Society seeking Private Placement funding later in the year.

- 4.2.2 Mr Nairn stated that this arrangement would provide a flexible way of funding the future when actual costs are unknown.
- 4.2.3 The Board endorsed the Chair's approval to progress the application for an extension to the existing Royal Bank of Scotland loan facilities.
- 4.2.4 Ms Watson was thanked for attending for this and the previous agenda item. At this point Ms Watson left the meeting.

4.3 Eviction Approvals

Mr Banks, Customer Services Manager (North) joined the meeting for this item.

- 4.3.1 The Board was asked to consider requests to enforce two decrees for evictions.
- 4.3.2 The two eviction requests were considered and discussed by the Board members.
- 4.3.3 Mr Banks commented that the effects of the new tenancy management system now in place are beginning to be felt. It should ensure that any problems that tenants begin to experience are identified and addressed much earlier.
- 4.3.4 The Board approved the requests to enforce the two decrees for evictions.
- 4.3.5 Mr Banks was thanked for attending. At this point he left the meeting.

4.4 Radon Testing: Update and Options

Ms Cameron, Asset Management & Investment Manager, joined the meeting for this item.

- 4.4.1 Ms Cameron's paper provided the Board with an update on the pilot radon gas testing which had taken place in Fort Augustus during 2015. The paper proposed that testing now takes place on the 103 properties which have a more than 5% risk of radon exposure.
- 4.4.2 Ms Cameron confirmed that the three Albyn properties which had been identified with elevated radon levels requiring remedial action were all within Albyn's original housing stock in Fort Augustus. Remedial action which could be taken was primarily to improve circulation within the property, such as the installation of additional ventilation bricks.
- 4.4.3 Ms Cameron confirmed that to date tenants had co-operated with Albyn in order for the tests to be carried out. It was anticipated that this would continue to be the case, as the tests are very unobtrusive. All homes within the identified group would need to be tested.
- 4.4.4 The Board approved the proposal for the next stage of radon testing.

4.5 Asset Management and Investment: Appointment of In-house Surveyor

- 4.5.1 Ms Cameron remained in the meeting for this item. Her paper requested the appointment of an in-house surveyor to carry out the work that would otherwise need to be performed by an external surveyor. There is a requirement to survey approximately 600 properties per annum.
- 4.5.2 Ms Cameron believed that an in-house surveyor would take ownership of the data and ensure that it remains high quality. There would also be consistency across the board when using someone in-house.

4.5.3 The Board approved in principle the proposal to appoint an in-house surveyor.

4.6 Major Repairs Partnering Contractor: Endorsement of Chair's Action

4.6.1 Ms Cameron remained in the meeting for this item. The Board members were asked to endorse the Chair's action to appoint a contractor as partnering contractor for the next four years. This proposal follows a two stage tender process to commission a partnering contractor for the Society's major repairs and improvements over the period 2016-19.

4.6.2 Ms Cameron explained that approval between meetings had been sought in order to allow partnering work to start with the contractor as soon as possible.

4.6.3 The Board endorsed the Chair's action to appoint a contractor as Albyn's partnering contractor for major repairs and improvements over the period 2016-19.

4.6.4 Ms Cameron was thanked for attending the meeting for this and the previous two agenda items. At this point Ms Cameron left the meeting.

4.7 "Someone Who Does" Project (Formerly Innovate UK)

Ms Lucy Fraser, Head of Innovation, joined the meeting for this item.

4.7.1 Ms Fraser's paper updated the Board on progress with the project previously known as Innovate UK "My Life" project, and now known as the "Someone Who Does" project. Approval was sought from the Board to progress the "Smarter Communities" bid. Approval in principle was also sought for 100% ownership of the project. It was anticipated that the project would progress in collaboration with NHS Highland and Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE).

4.7.2 Ms Fraser reported that the outcome to the Smarter Communities bid should be known by April. If the bid is successful, the developer anticipated that they would have a minimum of 100 people using the system within a year. It was also anticipated that the first of the housing provision should be ready by the end of the calendar year.

4.7.3 Work continues to find a piece of land in Inverness which can be used for the project. Ms Fraser noted that discussions continue with DataLab, the data innovation arm of the Scottish Government.

4.7.4 The Board approved the project's inclusion in the Smarter Communities bid and the proposed collaboration with NHS Highland and HIE. The Board also approved in principle Albyn's 100% ownership of the Someone Who Does project.

5. **MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

5.1 There were no reports this cycle.

6. **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

6.1 There were no items to raise in relation to health and safety.

7. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

7.1 There were no requests for a leave of absence for the 15 March Board meeting.

8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

8.1 Grant Levels for Social Housing

Mr Macaulay reported that the Scottish Government is increasing its grant per social rented unit. Further detail of the grant per unit size and social tenure will follow.

8.2 Inverbreakie Drive, Invergordon: House Fire

Mr Macaulay referred to the house fire which had broken out on Boxing Day in one of Albyn's properties. Thankfully, no-one had been injured and the family had subsequently been re-housed.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 The next meeting is due to take place 15 March 2016 at Invergordon.

10. POLICY PROPOSALS AND REVIEW

10.1 There were no reports this cycle.

11. INFORMATION PAPERS

11.1 Key Actions and Future Activity

This paper had been circulated separately by email to Board members.