

# ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED

## REPORT OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28 JANUARY 2014 AT 10:30 AM AT ALBYN'S OFFICES, INVERGORDON

### Present

Mr D Russell (Chair)  
Mrs S Slimon  
Ms M Smith

Mr G Sinclair (Vice-Chair)  
Mr J Oag  
Ms K Williams

Mrs P Dingwall  
Mr B Summerfield

### 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 for this meeting had been received from Mrs McLaughlan, Ms Grant, Mr Convery and Mr Solle.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Two conflicts of interest were noted for this meeting.

### 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1 Minutes of Board Meeting: 26 November 2013

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

#### 3.1.1 Green Deal

In relation to Mr Solle's suggestion at the last meeting, the Asset Management & Investment Director noted that stock condition surveys needed to take place to identify properties which might benefit from a Green Deal assessment. The surveys are taking place on 40% of the stock, the information from which is then extrapolated over the rest of the stock by relevant unit / scheme type.

### 4. DECISION MAKING PAPERS

- 4.1 Rent Proposals: 2014-15

- 4.1.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director spoke to his paper which proposed the following for the year to 31 March 2015:

- That rent be increased by CPI plus 1% (a total of 3%);
- That the service charge be increased by 3%;
- That the Management Fee be increased by £6.00 pa;
- That the furniture charges be maintained at current rates; and
- That the garage rents be maintained at £13 per month

4.1.2 Mr Nairn reported that Albyn's proposal for the rent increase was at the lower end of the general increases expected across the country. He was confident that Albyn would be in the bottom quartile of Registered Social Landlords in relation to the rate of rental increase.

4.1.3 Much discussion took place around the proposed rent increases. Board members considered whether the increase was appropriate to generate the funding that Albyn would need. If the proposed increase was reduced then cutbacks in other areas, such as maintenance, might need to be made. It was noted and understood that any increase meant that tenants had to find the additional money each month.

4.1.4 One Board member's opposition to the proposed rent increase was noted; otherwise the decision to approve an increase of CPI plus 1% (a total of 3%) was unanimous.

4.1.5 The Board also approved the proposals for the service charge to be increased by 3%; the Management Fee to be increased by £6.00 pa; and the furniture charges and garage rents to be maintained at their current rates.

#### 4.2 Proposed Options for Future Pension Provision

4.2.1 Staff were absent from the meeting for this item. The Chair's paper provided the Board with the results of the pension consultation exercise. The Board considered the proposals that were contained within the paper for future provision of a pension scheme for employees.

4.2.2 The Board approved the proposals contained in the Chair's paper.

#### 4.3 Temporary Additional Human Resources

4.3.1 The Chief Executive's paper requested that the temporary human resources arrangements that are currently in place continue until the end of March 2014.

4.3.2 The Board approved the extension of the current temporary human resources arrangements until end March 2014.

#### 4.4 Mid-Market Rent Proposal: Tain

4.4.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director's paper sought the Board's approval to lease one property in Tain to Albyn Enterprises Ltd under the mid-market rent scheme.

4.4.2 The Board approved the lease of the property in Tain to Albyn Enterprises Ltd.

#### 4.5 Evictions Approval

4.5.1 Ms Barton tabled a request to approve the enforcement of a court decree for repossession of a tenancy due to rent arrears.

4.5.2 The Board discussed the case. After consideration the Board approved the enforcement of the court decree for repossession of the tenancy due to rent arrears.

## **5. REPORTING PAPERS**

### **5.1 Organisational Change: One Year Review**

- 5.1.1 The Chief Executive's paper provided the Board with a review of the organisational change process.
- 5.1.2 The Board members were grateful to the staff for taking the changes on board and working well within the new system.
- 5.1.3 The Board noted the report.

### **5.2 Complaints Annual Report: 2013**

- 5.2.1 The Board members were provided with a report on the complaints received by Albyn during 2013.
- 5.2.2 It was noted that follow up work would be helpful to identify trends within the complaints. The complaints received so far were wide-ranging, although there were recurring themes around communication and contractors (though not a specific contractor). It was agreed that this information will be provided in future.
- 5.2.3 The staff were thanked for dealing with the complaints received.
- 5.2.4 The Board noted the report.

## **6. POLICY PROPOSALS AND REVIEW**

### **6.1 Assisted Garden Maintenance Service: Review**

- 6.1.1 The Customer Services Director's paper asked the Board to consider changes to the assisted garden maintenance service to focus on lower income, older households, with an option to provide subsidised services to other vulnerable tenants. This followed consultation with tenants regarding the service, and their feedback had been included in the review proposals.
- 6.1.2 There was some discussion on this matter. It was noted that often the service provided was only part of the maintenance required for a garden.
- 6.1.3 The option of volunteering was suggested and Ms Barton said that this would be considered in the long term, in partnership with other social enterprise organisations. Other discussion took place around who should receive the service for free, and whether others might be willing to pay a small charge for the service.
- 6.1.4 The Board approved in principle the proposals for a new service with tighter criteria, with referral to other available schemes; and approved the running of a test service, as well as exploration of further service development.

## **7. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

- 7.1 There were no minutes for approval this cycle.

## **8. STANDING ITEMS**

### **8.1 Welfare Reform**

- 8.1.1 The Customer Services Director reported that the number of tenants affected by bedroom tax has remained reasonably constant. It is difficult to calculate the overall level of debt caused by the so-called “bedroom tax” as this has become more complicated as the year has progressed.
- 8.1.2 A loophole has been found in the system which has recently received a lot of publicity. However, due to the number of criteria involved it is expected that this loophole will only apply to a very small number of Albyn’s tenants.
- 8.1.3 Universal Credit is now live. However, due to the criteria involved there are very few people who immediately fit the requirements of the new system. This will increase steadily over the next 3-4 years.
- 8.1.4 The Board noted the verbal update.

### **8.2 Aviemore Heating System**

- 8.2.1 The Asset Management and Investment Director’s paper updated that Phase 1 of the rectification plan was now complete and had been within budget. The planning and design work for Phase 2 were now underway. The paper detailed the lessons learned from the project.
- 8.2.2 Mr Lockhart confirmed that the timescale for Stage 2 of the work should be complete by the Spring / Summer this year. It was noted that consideration would need to be given to increasing the price per unit at some point, to more accurately reflect the costs involved.
- 8.2.3 The Board noted the report.

## **9. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- 9.1 The Asset Management & Investment Director, as the Director responsible for health and safety, reported that a health and safety audit had been carried out by an external organisation the previous week. The report from that audit had now been received and was generally very positive about Albyn’s processes and procedures. The health and safety team was congratulated for their work in this area, and Mr Summerfield was thanked for his work with the staff and the Health and Safety Committee.

## **10. LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

- 10.1 No requests for a leave of absence for the next Board meeting were received.

## **11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

### **11.1 Health and Safety Policy and Responsibilities: Review**

The sections from Albyn’s health and safety manual regarding Albyn’s health and safety policy and the Board’s health and safety responsibilities were circulated for consideration.

The Board approved both documents and signed their acceptance of their health and safety responsibilities.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

12.1 The next meeting is due to take place on 18 March 2014 in Invergordon.