

ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED
REPORT OF THE BOARD MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 19 MARCH 2013 AT 10:30 AM
AT ALBYN OFFICES, INVERGORDON

Board Members Present

Mrs I McLaughlan (Chair)	Mr G Sinclair	Mrs M Cairney
Mr B Summerfield	Mr D Russell	Miss C Cameron (<i>Agenda Items 1-3</i>)
Mr G Kelman	Mrs S Slimon	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 MacRae, Ms Smith and Mr Convery for this meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 Minutes of Previous Board Meeting: 22 January 2013

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

3. DECISION MAKING PAPERS

3.1 Governing Body Succession Planning

3.1.1 The Chief Executive's paper proposed a governing body succession planning process and timetable. This was based on the requirements detailed by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

3.1.2 It was noted that one Board member has indicated their intention to stand down at the next Annual General Meeting. Therefore the succession planning process will be implemented to address this.

3.1.3 It was noted that the Institute of Chartered Accountants has a list of people interested in joining Boards and possibly other professional bodies had such lists. It was suggested that an article be placed in suitable central belt-based newspapers.

3.1.4 The first step will be to identify where skills gaps might be within the Board. A skills audit for Board members will shortly be taking place which should help with this process. The Board members' appraisals in June / July should also help. A media awareness campaign will take place at the same time. Suitable candidates will then be identified in time for the Annual General Meeting in August.

3.1.5 The Board approved the timetable contained in the paper.

3.2 Business Plan

- 3.2.1 The Chief Executive referred to the draft Business Plan which had been circulated. There were still some areas of the Plan which required further work, as highlighted in the document. The Plan needs to be in place by the end of March for submission to the banks and so needs to be agreed at this meeting.
- 3.2.2 The performance targets action plan has been removed from the Business Plan. This will instead become part of the quarterly report to the Performance Committee. The Risk Scenario Planning Tables have been reduced to the headline information only. The detailed information will continue to be used internally as a working document.
- 3.2.3 The business planning process will start again at the October Strategy Day, when the Board will consider issues such as the risks facing the Society.
- 3.2.4 With the amendments discussed at the meeting, the Board approved the draft Business Plan.

3.3 Budget: 2014-18

- 3.3.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director took the Board through the main points contained within the Budget paper.
- 3.3.2 In response to query regarding the Scottish Housing Quality Standard surveys, it was confirmed that approximately half of the surveys have been carried out. This data needs to be audited and cleansed to ensure that the right information is being provided. The remaining surveys can be carried out over the next few years but in the meantime the data from the completed surveys will be extrapolated.
- 3.3.3 The Board approved the Budget for 2014-18.

3.4 Approval and Authority Limits: 2013

- 3.4.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director's paper requested the Board's approval of the authority and approval limits proposed for 2013. This will then be used to inform staff of their signing powers and their financial boundaries.
- 3.4.2 After some discussion and agreed amendments, the Board approved the Authority and Approval Limits for 2013.

3.5 Performance Committee Remit

- 3.5.1 The Customer Services Director's paper highlighted minor revisions to the Performance Committee's remit to take account of the decisions to include tenant members on the Committee.
- 3.5.2 The Board approved the revised remit for the Performance Committee.

4. POLICY PROPOSALS & REVIEW

4.1 Whistleblowing Policy

- 4.1.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director's paper sought approval for the Whistleblowing Policy that Albyn is required to have.

4.1.2 It was noted that this is a serious but friendly invitation to staff to raise any issues that they are concerned about, offering protection and confidentiality if possible, depending on the issue raised.

4.1.3 The Board approved the Whistleblowing Policy, to be reviewed in the light of guidance from the Regulator and/or the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations on the Code of Conduct. Otherwise it will be reviewed after the usual three years.

4.2 Fraud Register Policy

4.2.1 This paper sought approval for the Fraud Register Policy and Procedure which is a requirement of the Scottish Housing Regulator.

4.2.2 The Board approved the Fraud Register Policy and Procedure.

4.3 Consent to Disposal of Land and Assets Policy

4.3.1 This paper sought approval for the Consent to Disposal of Land and Assets Policy. This supported the Regulator's guidance on the subject.

4.3.2 The Board approved the Consent to Disposal of Land and Assets Policy.

4.4 Unacceptable Behaviours Policy

4.4.1 This paper sought approval for the Unacceptable Behaviours Policy. Tenants had been consulted with and their responses confirmed that they were supportive of the proposals.

4.4.2 The Board approved the Unacceptable Behaviours Policy.

4.5 Openness and Confidentiality Policy

4.5.1 This paper sought approval for the Openness and Confidentiality Policy. Tenants had been consulted with and their responses confirmed that they were supportive of the proposals.

4.5.2 The Board approved the Openness and Confidentiality Policy.

4.6 Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy Review

4.6.1 The Customer Services Director's paper summarised proposed changes to the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Allocations Policy Review. All six Boards of the HHR group are considering the same paper.

4.6.2 The Board approved the proposed changes to the Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy.

5. AVIEMORE BIOMASS SYSTEM

5.1 The Asset Management & Investment Director had provided the Board with a paper which updated them on the current situation regarding the Aviemore Biomass heating system.

- 5.2 Mr Lockhart confirmed that residents had been provided with an update on the issues via a posting on Albyn's Facebook page. An independent audit is due to be carried out which will provide recommendations for action to address the issues. It is expected that the issues will be resolved before next winter. The audit report is due in early May. A report will be provided to the next Board meeting.
- 5.3 The Chair updated on the meeting with residents which she had attended. She reported that the residents had been frustrated, concerned and upset that they had been paying so much for a troubled heating system. Mr Lockhart noted that additional staffing resource had now been implemented to help address this issue. Ongoing problems required daily or weekly support.
- 5.4 The Board discussed the issues surrounding this heating system. The Board members noted the report provided by the Asset Management & Investment Director.

6. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

6.1 Audit Committee: 15 January 2013

- 6.1.1 The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 15 January 2013 were noted.

6.2 Performance Committee: 5 February 2013

- 6.2.1 The Board noted the minutes of the Performance Committee meeting held on 5 February 2013.

6.3 Health and Safety Committee: 12 February 2013

- 6.3.1 The Board noted the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 12 February 2013.

7. STANDING ITEMS

7.1.1 Calbyn

The Chief Executive updated that work continued on registering the company. The procurement element for Calbyn is now out for tender with responses due by 8 April.

7.2.1 Welfare Reform

The Customer Services Director had provided a written update on the subject. Ms Barton also circulated a letter from the Scottish Government which detailed the Minister for Housing and Welfare's views on the "bedroom tax".

- 7.2.2 Ms Barton noted that the funding Highland Council had received to support this issue was a significant increase compared to last year's budget, but as it applies to all landlords across all tenures it will not be enough to meet the requirements.

- 7.2.3 Counsel's opinion had been obtained on what is a bedroom, and the main outcome of that opinion is that it is up to the landlords to agree with their tenants what is and is not a bedroom. This fits with the Government's own advice. There would have to be good reason to reclassify a bedroom and a case would need to be made. This might be useful in perhaps a handful of cases.

7.2.4 Some of the 300 affected tenants would be willing to downsize. Some tenants are exchanging with others, rather than transferring.

7.2.5 The Board noted the report.

8. PAYMENT FOR BOARD MEMBERS

8.1 The Chief Executive noted that information provided by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator now permits payments to some, but not all, of the Board members. Few, if any, Registered Social Landlords provide payment to Board members. It may help to support Board members who are office bearers in recognition of the additional work they do. The Board was asked to consider whether limited payments to Board members were suitable.

8.2 The Board members discussed this issue. Some thought that those Board members who were office bearers (for example the Chair, Vice Chair) should receive payment in recognition of the extra work they do. Some members thought payment should be made to all Board members, and not just some. However, it was noted that payment could not be given to all Board members, but only less than half of them. Some Board members did not support any payment being made, particularly in the light of the recent rent increase tenants have received, and the effect on some of Albyn's tenants of the welfare reforms.

8.3 This issue will be discussed again once the Code of Conduct being drafted by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations is available.

9. HEALTH AND SAFETY

9.1 There was nothing to report on this item.

10. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

10.1 No leaves of absence were requested.

11. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

11.1 Recording of Phone Calls

It was noted that with the BT line now in place an upgrade of the phone system will take place. This will provide the ability to record phone calls and this is something that will be given due consideration, taking into account the legal aspects and data protection issues.

11.2 Open Market Shared Equity Programme

The Chief Executive reported that Albyn had been unsuccessful in its bid to continue this work in the Highlands. *After the meeting it was confirmed that the tender had been subsequently offered to and accepted by Albyn Housing Society.*

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 The next meeting is due to take place on 21 May 2013 in Invergordon.