

ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED

REPORT OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 21 MAY 2013 AT 10:30 AM AT KINCRAIG CASTLE HOTEL, INVERGORDON

Board Members Present

Mrs I McLaughlan (Chair)	Mr G Sinclair	Mrs S Slimon
Mr B Summerfield	Mr D Russell	Miss C Cameron (<i>Agenda Items 1-3.4</i>)
Mr G Kelman	Mr J Oag	Mrs I MacRae
Mr J Convery		

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 Ms Smith and Mrs Cairney for this meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 19 MARCH 2013

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

2.1.1 Action Items

The Chief Executive confirmed that Board member recruitment advertising has now started. It was anticipated that new Board members will be identified in time for the Annual General Meeting on 13 August.

2.1.2 The Finance & Corporate Services Director confirmed that tenants will be informed about the recording of phone calls at both of Albyn's offices in the next tenant newsletter, due out shortly.

3. DECISION MAKING PAPERS

3.1 Annual Performance and Statistical Return: 2013

3.1.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director's paper asked the Board to approve the submission of the Annual Performance and Statistical Return (APSR) for 2013. Mr Nairn circulated some revised pages at the meeting and explained the changes that had been made.

3.1.2 The Board approved the submission of the APSR for 2013.

3.2 Business Plan for Factoring and Service Charges

- 3.2.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director's paper asked the Board to approve the transfer of the factoring and service charge activity to Albyn Enterprises Ltd. This activity was detailed in the business plan provided with the meeting papers.
- 3.2.2 Factoring is provided to LIFT owners, owner / occupiers and shared owners. Service charges apply to tenants.
- 3.2.3 Mr Nairn confirmed that the factoring work would be re-tendered over the winter of 2014-2015. The revised contract will clearly cover performance delivery and monitoring. Mr Nairn hoped that service users would assist with monitoring the contract.
- 3.2.4 Mr Nairn also confirmed that in future all service users will receive a written statement which will outline what is covered by the charge. The Factoring Act ensures that everyone within a development, even those who may not have had any dealings with Albyn before, will be covered by its contents. It was suggested that discussions be held with tenants to determine what sort of service they wanted.
- 3.2.5 Mr Nairn expected that the Key Performance Indicators will be transferred into the contracts with external contractors to ensure that the customers' requirements are met. There may be tenant involvement in determining contracts with the external contractors.
- 3.2.6 The Board approved in principle the recommendations contained in the paper.

3.3 Rent Consultation

- 3.3.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director's paper asked the Board to approve changing the method which Albyn uses to review the Society's rents on an annual basis so that it uses the Society's business objectives. The paper also asked for the Board's approval for the proposed consultation exercise.
- 3.3.2 There was discussion about this issue and what the consultation exercise should cover. Communication needed to ensure that the right message is passed on to tenants. It was suggested that a group of tenants be consulted on how to communicate the message. Mr Nairn confirmed that the focus group was being considered.
- 3.3.3 The Board approved the recommendations contained in the paper.

3.4 Cyclical Painting

- 3.4.1 The Board was asked to approve an increase to the original cyclical painting budget to take account of the additional work that was tendered and the results of the tendering exercise.
- 3.4.2 The paper outlined the reasons why the costs had increased. This included a regular repainting cycle for fences at Milton. The Asset Management & Investment Director explained that this had been investigated to see if another, cheaper option was available, but none had been found. Contractors will be carefully monitored and value for money ensured.
- 3.4.3 It was confirmed that the re-painting of windows and door frames at Milton will take place within the contract.

3.4.4 It was noted that nearly all of the problems identified in the paper could perhaps have been avoided. The Asset Management & Investment Director agreed that lessons will be learnt from this to ensure that such problems did not arise again in the future.

3.4.5 The Board approved the increase to the budget as proposed, and accepted the tender prices received.

3.5 Board Skills Audit: 2013

3.5.1 The Board was asked to note the outcome of the recent skills audit which had been carried out by Board members, with input from the Directors.

3.5.2 The key issue arising from the audit was the identification of training needs. These will be fed into the current training programme, along with the results of the upcoming appraisals.

3.5.3 The Board discussed options for training. It was agreed that Tuesdays were good days to arrange events. Various training requirements could be booked throughout a day and Board members could attend as many as they wished. This will be progressed.

3.5.4 The Board noted the outcomes of the skills audit.

3.6 Eviction Approval

3.6.1 This paper was tabled at the meeting by the Customer Services Director. The Board was asked to approve the enforcement of court decree for the recovery of possession. The Board considered the case made by Ms Barton.

3.6.2 The Board approved the proposal to enforce the court decree for the recovery of possession.

3.7 Caithness Staffing Resources

3.7.1 This paper noted that there was currently an allowance in Customer Services to provide part-time staffing at Caithness. Ms Barton's paper requested approval to increase the position to a full-time generic post, with the post-holder providing additional support to Customer Services elsewhere for the other days during the week.

3.7.2 The post-holder would have a desk at the Pulteneytown People's Project (PPP) offices at Wick. Basic administrative support will also be provided.

3.7.3 The Board approved the proposals contained in the paper.

4. **POLICY PROPOSALS & REVIEW**

4.1 There were no policies this cycle.

5. **AVIEMORE BIOMASS SYSTEM**

5.1 The Board considered the Asset Management & Investment Director's paper which provided the Board with a further update on this issue.

- 5.2 Mr Lockhart reported that work has been taking place since 8 May to identify the major leak referred to in the paper but the main leak has not yet been found. Work on this continues.
- 5.3 The consultant's report has just been received. The report and proposed rectification plan will be discussed internally and the options for action will be brought back to the Board for consideration.
- 5.4 Mr Lockhart confirmed that tenants were being updated using Facebook, along with letters to affected tenants. Mr Lockhart had also attended evening meetings with customers.
- 5.5 The Board noted the report.

6. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

6.1 Audit Committee: 26 March 2013

- 6.1.1 The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 26 March 2013 were noted. The document detailing the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Control, which had been produced for the Audit Committee meeting, was noted. This document will be reviewed annually.

6.2 Albyn Enterprises Ltd: 4 April 2013

- 6.2.1 The Board noted the minutes of the Albyn Enterprises Ltd Board of Directors meeting held on 4 April 2013.

6.3 Board Working Group: 9 April 2013

- 6.3.1 The Board noted the minutes of the Board Working Group meeting held on 9 April 2013. The minutes contained recommendations for the Board to consider.
- 6.3.2 It was agreed that the issues raised will be progressed between meetings and a paper will be prepared for the June Board meeting.

6.4 Staffing Committee: 23 April 2013

- 6.4.1 The Board noted the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 23 April 2013.

7. STANDING ITEMS

7.1.1 Calbyn

The Chief Executive had provided a written update on this subject.

- 7.1.2 The Chairperson of Calbyn has stood down from this role so that he can focus on the more detailed work of the Project Team. A new Chairperson has been identified and will be confirmed shortly. Funding is being sourced to create a Project Director post. It is anticipated that this will be recruited to during the summer.

- 7.1.3 The Board noted the report.

7.2.1 Welfare Reform

The Customer Services Director provided a verbal update on this issue.

- 7.2.2 The Universal Credit pilot scheme has been extended, although it is still due to be rolled out in the Autumn. High levels of non-payment have been identified through the pilot scheme and this needs to be addressed, which may lead to a delay. The Scottish Welfare Fund has now been launched. Local uptake has been limited, although this is expected to increase in time.
- 7.2.4 370 of Albyn's tenants are likely to be affected by the tax. 314 of them will have a 14% deduction (an average just over £10 per week) and 43 will have a 25% deduction (an average just over £20 per week). Tenancy Sustainment officers are providing what assistance they can.
- 7.2.5 Disabled people seem to be particularly badly hit and there are no smaller properties for them to move to. A survey was carried out on 20 May with a sample of Albyn's tenants. Of those, fewer than 15% of tenants affected by bedroom tax have been able to pay.
- 7.2.9 The scope for re-categorising bedrooms appears to be limited. There has been one case recently regarding a severely disabled tenant who is now being considered by the benefits team as their single bedroom is needed to store their equipment. Consideration for re-categorising bedrooms will continue on a case-by-case basis.
- 7.2.10 Ms Barton confirmed that Albyn's policy remains as previously discussed; that eviction will only ever be considered as a last resort, but it will remain as an option.
- 7.2.11 The Board noted the report.
- 7.3.1 **Staffing Structure Update**
Mr Macaulay had provided a written update on this subject. The refurbishment works at the Invergordon office started on 20 May and should take approximately five weeks to complete.
- 7.3.2 The works are primarily to create enough space for all of the Customer Services area team to be accommodated in the same part of the building. During the period of the alterations Reception has been located at the rear of the building, with access from the office car park.
- 7.3.3 The Board noted the report.

8. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 8.1 It was noted that two Board members had recently been involved in a car accident on the way to an Albyn meeting. It was clarified after the meeting that this did not require to be reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

9. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- 9.1 There were no requests for a leave of absence for the Board meeting on 25 June 2013.

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

10.1 Annual General Meeting

Mr Macaulay confirmed that the AGM on 13 August will be taking place at the Drumossie Hotel in Inverness at 7.00pm. To date, three Board members had indicated that they would be standing down at the AGM. Consideration is being given to a theme for the meeting, and one that the Board thought should be pursued was some form of debate around the so-called "bedroom tax" issue.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 The next meeting is due to take place on 25 June 2013 in Invergordon.