

ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED
REPORT OF THE BOARD MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 23 JUNE 2015 AT 10:30 AM
AT ALBYN'S OFFICES, INVERGORDON

Present

Mr D Russell (Chair)	Ms M Smith (Up to 4.5 + 4.8 and 4.9)	Mrs I McLaughlan (Up to Item 4.9)
Mrs P Dingwall	Miss G Linden	Mr A McMaster (Up to Item 4.9)

In Attendance

Mr C Macaulay: Chief Executive	Mr R Nairn: Chief Operating Officer	Ms S Watson: Finance and Corporate Services Manager (Items 4.1 - 4.3)
Mr J Banks: Customer Services Manager North: (Item 4.5)	Ms H Cameron: Asset Management & Investment Manager (Items 4.8 & 4.9)	Mrs Y Simpson: Asset and Investment Officer (Item 4.9)
Miss C Lawrie: Corporate Officer (Minutes)		

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies had been received from Ms Williams, Mrs Slimon, Mrs Grant and Messrs Convery, Sinclair and Solle for this meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2.1 Ms Smith noted any conflict of interest that may arise in her capacity as a Councillor.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 26 MAY 2015

3.1 The minutes were agreed as a true record.

3.2 Action Items

A written update on the action items had been provided.

3.3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. DECISION MAKING PAPERS

4.1 Report of the Board and Financial Statements: 2015

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

- 4.1.1 Ms Watson's paper sought approval from the Board for the Report of the Board and Financial Statements for Albyn for the year ended 31 March 2015; the Letter of Representation to the external auditors; the online submission of the accounts information to the Scottish Housing Regulator; and the Final Audit Findings report for submission to the Regulator. The documentation had been reviewed by the auditors. The documentation had also been discussed in-depth by the Audit Committee at its 9 June meeting. The Audit Committee members had subsequently approved all of the documentation for submission to the Board.
- 4.1.2 Ms Watson spoke to a tabled summary of the main elements of the Report of the Board and Financial Statements which gave the Board an overview. The Board members discussed and considered the documentation.
- 4.1.3 Mr Macaulay noted that the auditors had provided a positive report due to the work by the staff involved. The Board members thanked Ms Watson and the staff for their hard work.
- 4.1.4 The Board approved the Report of the Board and Financial Statements for Albyn for the year ended 31 March 2015; the Letter of Representation to the external auditors; the online submission of the accounts information to the Scottish Housing Regulator; and the Final Audit Findings report for submission to the Regulator.

4.2 Loan Portfolio: 2015

- 4.2.1 Ms Watson's paper sought approval from the Board for the submission of the Loan Portfolio Return for 2015 to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The document provided detailed information on Albyn's current borrowings and associated issues such as fixed interest rate loans and effective interest rates paid in the year to 31 March 2015.
- 4.2.2 The Board discussed the documentation.
- 4.2.3 The Board approved the submission of the Loan Portfolio Return for 2015 to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

4.3 Five Year Financial Projections for the Regulator

- 4.3.1 Ms Watson's paper sought approval for the final amendments to the Society's Budget for the five years ending 31 March 2020 and approval to submit the Five Year Financial Projections to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The first draft of the budget had been considered by the Board at its March meeting. At that time it had been noted that some figures may change due to the restructuring and the budget has now been updated as a result. The provisional surplus highlighted in March had also been changed.
- 4.3.2 Ms Watson was thanked for her attendance for the financial items.
- 4.3.3 The Board approved the final amendments to the Society's Budget for the five years ending 31 March 2020 and gave approval to submit the Five Year Financial Projections to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

At this point Ms Watson left the meeting.

4.4 Rent Arrears: Presentation

- 4.4.1 Mr Nairn made a presentation to the Board on progress with the rent arrears review.

- 4.4.2 Mr Nairn referred to the percentage gross arrears of rent due. According to the Scottish Housing Regulator, Albyn was the tenth worst performing of some 160 registered social landlords (RSLs). It was clear that the performance is due to the way that Albyn's procedures work to collect rent.
- 4.4.3 Mr Nairn reported on the internal audit's recommendations regarding rent arrears, which he summarised as: the need for an escalation procedure; the need for better use of the housing management system; improvements to communication (including the provision of rent statements); system training; and utilisation of the notes function and early intervention. The consultant Peter Docherty had also identified that a staff development programme was required.
- 4.4.4 In answer to a query, Mr Nairn confirmed that about half the tenants contacted about rent arrears in the early stages do then go on to repay the arrear and bring their account up to date. He was asked whether there was any other help or support that could be offered to tenants, before the situation got so bad that a tenant had to be evicted. Mr Nairn responded that much of the situation was helped with good communication between the Customer Services Assistant, Housing Services Officer and the tenant. In this way the amount of arrear could be regularly checked and reviewed to ensure that repayments are being made, or that amended repayment agreements are made.
- 4.4.5 Mr Nairn detailed the proposals for further work and the timescales required.
- 4.4.6 The Chair thanked Mr Nairn and the staff who had helped Albyn review the rent arrear activity over the past few months and for all the hard work which had taken place around the issue. The Board thanked Mr Nairn for his presentation. It was noted that the process would be considered in detail through the Performance Committee.

4.5 Eviction Approval and Homologation

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

- 4.5.1 The Board was asked to consider a request to enforce five decrees for evictions. The Board was also asked to homologate the Chair's approval to enforce one decree for eviction.
- 4.5.2 It was noted that one case had been processed in a shorter timescale than the other cases, thereby reducing the amount of arrears that had built up. It was agreed that this was a good case study for the future process of dealing with rent arrears.
- 4.5.3 The Board discussed and considered each case. The Board approved the requests to enforce court decrees for eviction for the five cases. The Board also homologated the Chair's approval for one case.
- 4.5.4 Mr Banks was thanked for his attendance at the meeting.

Ms Smith and Mr Banks left the meeting at this point.

4.6 Audit Committee: Annual Report 2015

- 4.6.1 The Board was asked to note the Annual Report from the Audit Committee for the work carried out during the 2014/15 financial year.

4.6.2 Mr Nairn confirmed that the audit findings relating to Landlord Health and Safety had been referred to the Staffing, Health & Safety and the Environment Committee, the members of which had agreed what action was required to address this area.

4.6.3 The Board thanked the Audit Committee for their assistance over the year. The Board noted the Annual Report from the Audit Committee for the 2014/15 financial year.

4.7 Annual General Meeting: 2015

4.7.1 The paper detailed the arrangements for the Annual General Meeting taking place on Tuesday 18 August at 7.00pm at the Kingsmills Hotel in Inverness. Three Board members required to stand down for re-election, and these are: Mrs McLaughlan; Ms Smith and Mr Convery. All three wished to stand for re-election. In addition, the two co-opted Board members, Miss Linden and Mr McMaster, wished to stand for election.

4.7.2 The Board noted the arrangements for the meeting.

4.8 Asset Management Strategy: Draft

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

4.8.1 The paper sought the Board's approval of the principles contained within the draft Asset Management Strategy.

4.8.2 Mr Nairn commented that the document required to be completed and this work will take place over the next two months. He asked for any comments from the Board to feed into this process. The final document will be brought to the September Board meeting.

4.8.3 It was suggested that all relevant documents be linked into the Strategy. It was also suggested appendices which could be updated on an annual or frequent basis, whereas the strategy document could remain relatively static. This was agreed as a suitable way forwards.

4.8.4 Ms Cameron was thanked for attending for this item.

4.8.5 The Board approved the principles contained within the draft Asset Management Strategy.

At this point Mrs McLaughlan and Mr McMaster left the meeting.

4.9 Aviemore Biomass System

Ms Cameron, Asset Management & Investment Manager and Mrs Simpson, Asset & Investment Officer, joined the meeting for this item.

4.9.1 The paper sought the Board's approval on further upgrading of the district heating system, subject to certain conditions being fulfilled.

4.9.2 This matter was discussed in detail and the Board considered what the options might be.

4.9.3 It was agreed that further work on options available will take place and the issue brought back to the Board as soon as possible thereafter. All Board members will be invited to a further meeting.

4.9.4 Ms Cameron and Ms Simpson were thanked for their attendance for this item. Both then left the meeting.

5. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

5.1 Staffing, Health & Safety and the Environment Meeting: 12 May 2015

The Board noted the minutes from the meeting which took place on 12 May 2015.

5.2 Performance Committee Meeting: 19 May 2015

The Board noted the minutes from the meeting which took place on 19 May 2015.

5.3 Audit Committee Meeting: 9 June 2015

The Board noted the minutes from the meeting which took place on 9 June 2015.

5.4 Albyn Enterprises Ltd Board Meeting: 11 June 2015

The Board noted the minutes from the meeting which took place on 11 June 2015.

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 Board meeting taking place on 15 September 2015.

8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

8.1 There was no other competent business.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 The next meeting is due to take place on 15 September 2015 in Invergordon.

10. POLICY PROPOSALS AND REVIEW

10.1 There were no reports this cycle.

11. INFORMATION PAPERS

11.1 Scottish Water: Update

It was agreed that this will be an agenda item for discussion at the next meeting.

11.2 Eviction Process

The Chair noted that he was interested to find out what happened to cases involving children once they were evicted. It was agreed that additional information on this will be provided for the next meeting.

11.3 **Aviemore Biomass System: Update**

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

11.4 **Renewable Energy: Proposal**

This paper was tabled at the meeting.

11.5 **Customer Satisfaction Survey: Outcomes**

It was noted that there had been an excellent response to the survey from tenants. It was suggested that next time the tenants should be asked how they would prefer to participate (email, online, printed form, and so on). Mr Nairn commented that an exercise was due to take place to ensure that Albyn held the correct contact information for tenants. One idea was to agree “default” phone numbers to be held on record.