

# ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED

## REPORT OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 10:30 AM AT ALBYN'S OFFICES, INVERGORDON

### Present

Mr D Russell (Chair)	Mr G Sinclair	Mrs I McLaughlan
Mr T Solle	Miss G Linden	Mr A McMaster (except Item 4.2)
Mr J Convery	Mrs P Dingwall (up to Item 10)	Mrs E Grant (up to Item 10)

### In Attendance

Mr C Macaulay: Chief Executive	Ms H Cameron: Asset Management & Investment Manager (Items 4.3 & 4.6)	Mr J Banks: Customer Services Manager North: (Item 4.4)
Ms L Fraser: Head of Innovation (Items 4.7 & 4.9)	Miss C Lawrie: Corporate Officer (Minutes)	

## 1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Ms Williams, Ms Smith and Mr Nairn for this meeting.
- 1.2 The Chair referred to Mrs Slimon's resignation from the Board, which had been offered during Mrs Slimon's appraisal. The Chair had reluctantly accepted her resignation which had subsequently been recorded at the Annual General Meeting. Mrs Slimon's contribution over many years was acknowledged and appreciated and the Board members were very sorry to lose such a valuable colleague.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed Miss Linden and Mr McMaster to their first meeting as full Board members, having been voted onto the Board at the Annual General Meeting.
- 1.4 The Chair thanked the staff concerned for the arrangements for the Annual General meeting. He noted the interesting presentation which had been provided by Mr Matt Stevenson, Managing Director of Carbon Dynamic.

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Mr Solle noted a potential declaration of a conflict of interest regarding one of the information papers.

## 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

### 3.1 Board Meeting: 23 June 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: Eviction Process**

The Chair acknowledged the information provided within the action items on this subject. He asked that this matter be remitted to the Performance Committee for more information to be provided.

## 3.2 After AGM Board Meeting: 18 August 2015

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

### 3.2.1 **Matters Arising: Vice-Chair Election**

This matter had been postponed from the Annual General Meeting to be discussed when more Board members were available. Mr Sinclair, as the retiring Vice-Chair, proposed Mrs Grant as the new Vice-Chair. This nomination was seconded by Mr Russell. Mrs Grant was therefore approved as the new Vice-Chair.

## 4. **DECISION MAKING PAPERS**

### 4.1 Election to Committees and External Bodies

4.1.1 Mr Macaulay's paper asked the Board to decide on representation on Albyn's three Committees and on external bodies.

#### 4.1.2 **Audit Committee**

Membership of the Committee was agreed as: Ms Williams, Mrs Dingwall and Messrs Convery, Sinclair and McMaster.

#### 4.1.3 **Performance Committee**

It was agreed that membership would continue as: Mrs Grant, Miss Linden, Mrs McLaughlan and Messrs Russell and Convery.

#### 4.1.4 **Staffing, Health & Safety and the Environment Committee**

Representation was confirmed as: Mrs Grant, Miss Linden, Mrs McLaughlan, Ms Williams, Ms Smith and Mr Russell.

#### 4.1.5 **Highland Small Communities Housing Trust**

A new representative was required for this Trust. It was agreed that further information on the organisation would be circulated to Board members.

#### 4.1.6 **Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH)**

It was noted that Albyn is an associate member of EVH. Mrs Dingwall agreed to continue with this role.

#### 4.1.7 **Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA)**

Mrs McLaughlan was content to continue with this role.

#### 4.1.8 **Albyn Enterprises Ltd**

It was agreed that representation would continue as: Mrs McLaughlan, Mrs Dingwall and Messrs Convery, Sinclair and McMaster. Ms Smith will continue in her role as Albyn's representative on the Board.

#### 4.1.9 **Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)**

Miss Linden was agreed as the new representative.

4.1.10 **Rural & Islands Housing Association Forum (RIHAF)**

It was agreed that Mr Macaulay will be Albyn's representative on the Forum.

4.1.11 **Highland Housing Alliance (HHA)**

It was noted that Mr Macaulay remained as Albyn's representative on this body.

4.1.12 The Board approved the representation on Albyn's Committees and external bodies as noted above.

4.2 Society Membership

4.2.1 Mr McMaster left the meeting for this item. The Chief Executive's paper sought Board approval for the removal of five Society members from the Register. It also asked the Board to homologate the addition of one new Society member.

4.2.2 It was noted that the five members to be removed comprised two members who had requested to end their membership because they no longer lived in the area; one member who had passed away; and two who had not attended or given apologies for five consecutive annual general meetings.

4.2.3 Between meetings Mr McMaster had been approved as a Society member by email vote. The Board was asked to formally homologate Mr McMaster's membership.

4.2.4 The Board homologated Mr McMaster's membership. The Board also approved the removal of the five Society members.

4.3 Scottish Water: Update

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

4.3.1 Ms Cameron's paper updated the Board on the current situation regarding the recovery of money owed to Albyn by Scottish Water. It also sought Board approval to continue with the exercise to adopt water and sewage systems and to continue to pursue the monies owed to Albyn.

4.3.2 The Chair thanked Ms Cameron and her team for the work to date. It was agreed that a letter would be sent to the Chief Executive of Scottish Water regarding this matter.

4.3.3 The Board approved the request to continue with the exercise to progress the adoption of water and sewage systems and to continue to pursue monies owed to Albyn.

*At this point Ms Cameron left the meeting.*

4.4 Eviction Homologation and Approvals

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

4.4.1 The Board was asked to homologate the Chair's approval to enforce one decree for eviction. The Board was also asked to consider requests to enforce four decrees for evictions.

- 4.4.2 It was noted that in some of these cases the arrears had begun to build up almost from the start of the tenancy. Mr Macaulay commented that Albyn was not allowed to make a decision based on someone's capacity to pay. The benefits system should assist those who were on low incomes and provide a safety net. As a social landlord, Albyn is obliged to provide housing to all.
- 4.4.3 Mr Macaulay referred to a previous Board discussion regarding the potential to provide tenants with a credit history in partnership with the organisation Experian. The Board had decided at that point not to progress this project because some tenants would inevitably receive a negative report and this could have a damaging effect on their life. It was agreed that this project will be reviewed as part of the new approach to rent arrears, as well as considering credit checks for potential new tenants.
- 4.4.4 The Board discussed and considered each case. The Board homologated the Chair's approval to enforce one decree for eviction. The Board also approved the requests to enforce four decrees for evictions.

*Mr Banks left the meeting at this point.*

4.5 Board Paper Provision

*This paper had been withdrawn from the agenda.*

4.6 Asset Management Strategy

*Ms Cameron re-joined the meeting for this item.*

- 4.6.1 The paper sought approval for the adoption of the Asset Management Strategy. It was noted that the Board had previously considered the draft strategy which had been updated following the Board's discussion at that time.
- 4.6.2 After discussion the Board approved the Asset Management Strategy as a work in progress.

*At this point Ms Cameron left the meeting.*

4.7 Diversification Strategy

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

- 4.7.1 Mr Macaulay's paper asked the Board to hold an initial discussion regarding a Diversification Strategy. This was in advance of Board members considering at their October Strategy Day the strategic part diversification plays in Albyn's plans for the future.
- 4.7.2 It was agreed that Mr Macaulay would return to the November Board meeting with a first draft of the strategy.
- 4.7.3 The Board noted the paper.

*At this point Ms Fraser left the meeting.*

#### 4.8 Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy – Initial Consideration

- 4.8.1 Mr Macaulay's paper provided the Board with information on the model Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy published in July by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA). It was noted that the Rural, Islands & Highlands Housing Association Forum (RIHAF) had carried out work on this matter. The Forum had raised concerns about how the provisions such as the use of contractors and so on could work in rural communities.
- 4.8.2 The paper asked the Board to consider whether the model policy was reasonable in the circumstances in which Albyn operates. It was noted that RIHAF was due to provide its own policy for consideration.
- 4.8.3 It was noted that all the Board members were trained to understand and follow the requirements for conflicts of interest and so on. However, it would be virtually impossible to abide by the section of the policy regarding the use of contractors and suppliers. It stated that Board members should avoid using any contractors or suppliers used by Albyn or, if they had to, then they had to obtain approval first. At its worst this could be a constraint of trade.
- 4.8.4 Board members agreed that the policy was impractical and unworkable. It could in fact mask any real conflicts of interest. Contractors and suppliers could even receive less work as a result. It was agreed that the policy should be simple. The ethos and culture within Albyn ensured that Board members followed the right path on such matters.
- 4.8.5 It was agreed that the Board would await the policy provided by RIHAF.

#### 4.9 Innovate UK: "My Life Project"

*Ms Lucy Fraser re-joined the meeting for this item*

- 4.9.1 Ms Fraser's paper updated the Board on a bid that Albyn Group had made to Innovate UK under the heading "My Life Project". The project offered a housing model designed to allow people with illnesses and disabilities to live in their own home for as long as possible.
- 4.9.2 The project will be brought back to the Board at each step to obtain approval and keep the Board members up to date.
- 4.9.3 The Board homologated the Chair's approval of the bid submission.

#### 4.10 SHAPS Bulk Transfer Proposal

- 4.10.1 Mr Nairn's paper updated the Board following a meeting of Albyn's pensions working group in July and the work undertaken since that date. It asked the Board to approve the working group's decision to continue to move the proposal towards a successful conclusion as soon as possible.
- 4.10.2 The Board approved the continuation of the work as proposed.

#### 4.11 Homologation: Sale of Properties

- 4.11.1 Ms Watson's paper asked the Board to homologate the Chair's approval to sell two properties in Inverness.

4.11.2 The Board homologated the Chair's approval to sell the two properties.

## **5. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

### **5.1 Performance Committee Meeting: 11 August 2015**

The Board noted the minutes from the Performance Committee meeting which took place on 11 August 2015. As Chair of the Committee Mrs McLaughlan commented that work was progressing in the right direction and that the staff were carrying out good work.

### **5.2 Albyn Enterprises Ltd Meeting: 27 August 2015**

The Board noted the minutes from the Albyn Enterprises Ltd meeting which took place on 27 August 2015. As Chair of the AEL Board Mr Convery referred to AEL's annual report which had been provided as an information paper. This gave a good flavour of the Board's work through the year. The main challenge was to ensure that the factoring business was up and running.

## **6. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

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

## **7. LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

7.1 It was agreed that the proposed Strategy Day should be re-scheduled to 27 October.

## **8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

8.1 There was no other competent business.

## **9. DATES OF NEXT MEETING**

9.1 The next meeting is due to take place on 24 November 2015 in Invergordon.

*At this point Mrs Grant and Mrs Dingwall left the meeting.*

## **10. POLICY PROPOSALS AND REVIEW**

10.1 There were no reports this cycle.

## **11. INFORMATION PAPERS**

### **11.1 Results of Policy Updates**

This paper had been circulated separately by email to Board members. The Board noted its contents.

### **11.2 Albyn Enterprises Ltd: Annual Report**

This paper had been circulated separately by email to Board members. The Board noted its contents.

- 11.3 **Highland Housing Register: Annual Report**  
This paper had been circulated separately by email to Board members. The Board noted its contents.
- 11.4 **Aviemore Biomass: Update**
- 11.4.1 This paper had been circulated separately by email to Board members. The Board members discussed this matter.
- 11.4.2 It was agreed that an options appraisal was required. This needed to be considered by the Board working group in the near future. All Board members should be invited to this meeting.
- 11.5 **Governance Effectiveness Review Action Plan: Update**  
This paper had been circulated separately by email to Board members. The Board noted its contents.
- 11.6 **Website Redevelopment**  
This paper had been circulated separately by email to Board members. The Board noted its contents.
- 11.7 **Update on Credit Unions and Pre-paid Meters**  
This paper had been circulated separately by email to Board members. The Board noted its contents.