

ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED
REPORT OF THE BOARD MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2012 AT 10:30 AM
AT ALBYN OFFICES, INVERGORDON

Board Members Present

Mrs I McLaughlan (Chair)	Mr G Sinclair	Ms S Slimon
Mr D Russell	Mr J Oag	Mr B Summerfield
Mr J Convery	Mrs M Cairney	Miss C Cameron

Staff Members in Attendance

Mr C Macaulay: Chief Executive	Mr R Nairn: Finance & Corporate Services Director	Ms H Barton: Housing & Communities Director
Mr D Lockhart: Development Director	Mr J Clarke: Property Maintenance Director	Miss C Lawrie: Corporate Officer (Minutes)

Others in Attendance

Ms J Dickie, Regulation Manager, Scottish Housing Regulator

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies had been received from Ms Smith and Mrs MacRae for this meeting.

2. PRESENTATION FROM JANET DICKIE, SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR

2.1 The Chair introduced Ms Janet Dickie from the Scottish Housing Regulator, and welcomed her to the meeting. Ms Dickie thanked the Board for inviting her to the meeting.

2.2 Ms Dickie referred to the Board papers she had received for this meeting. She thought they showed that the Board was very engaged in Albyn's work. The most recent regulation plan published in April by the Regulator had highlighted the substantial investment Albyn was involved in. Services to tenants were of interest to the Regulator. Ms Dickie congratulated Albyn on providing the Regulator with its five year projections very early in the process.

2.3 From the Regulator's perspective the financial position was acceptable, but caution and prudence are still required to ensure the right information is provided and that all the scenarios are considered.

2.4 Ms Dickie noted that Albyn dealt with a significant number of homeless people. She was pleased to note that tenancy sustainment has improved by about 10% over the years. Welfare reform is an issue and there needs to be discussion about how this will impact on Albyn. There will be a human impact, as well as people having to manage their own budgets. There will be a financial impact for Albyn through issues such as difficulty in collecting rent, property abandonment with monies owed, and a rising cost in collecting rent.

2.5 Issues such as fuel poverty across the country will be considered by the Regulator. Monitoring of the Housing Charter will also be important.

2.6 The Chair thanked Ms Dickie for her comments.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 Minutes of Special Board Meeting: 14 August 2012

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

3.1.1 There were no matters arising from these minutes.

3.2 Minutes of Previous Board Meeting: 11 September 2012

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

3.2.1 Action Items

The Chief Executive updated that the Board's core competencies were discussed in detail at the Board Strategy Day. He will report back on progress once the work has started.

3.3 Minutes of Board Strategy Day: 23 October 2012

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

3.3.1 Action Items

The Chief Executive updated on the draft Openness and Confidentiality Policy, which had been sent out to tenants for consultation. 99 replies had been received. 88 of those respondents had said "yes" to the consultation; 1 had answered "no" and 10 had not responded. On that basis the policy will be implemented.

4. DECISION MAKING PAPERS

4.1 Organisational Change: Proposals

4.1.1 The Chief Executive provided a verbal update on progress with organisational change.

4.1.2 The changes previously agreed are now being implemented. The Chief Executive confirmed that Mr Nairn remains as the Finance & Corporate Director, Ms Barton is now the Customer Services Director, and Mr Lockhart is the Asset Management & Investment Director.

4.1.3 Mr Macaulay reported that Ms Watson continues as Finance & Corporate Manager, Ms Naughton and Mr Banks have been appointed as the two Customer Services Managers, and Ms Cameron has been appointed as the Asset Management & Investment Manager.

4.1.4 These new positions will start from 1 December. Now that the management structure is in place, the detail of changes at officer and administrative staff level has begun to be identified. The directors and managers are leading these discussions. There will be approximately 32 staff in Customer Services, primarily structured into two area teams. One of those teams will be based in Inverness.

4.1.5 The first point of contact for many customers will be with the Customer Services team and, after appropriate training, the team should be able to provide one point of contact and deal with a broad spectrum of issues.

- 4.1.6 Within Asset Management & Investment, the structure will comprise approximately 11 staff. Work continues on identifying who will be included in this team and what their roles will be.
- 4.1.7 Within Finance & Corporate there will be some redeployment of duties to Customer Services. Time will also be taken to consider whether any other changes are required within the department.
- 4.1.8 Mr Convery asked if the organisational change process had been communicated to Albyn's tenants. The Housing & Communities Director confirmed that some very broad level consultation took place with tenants earlier in the year, and further consultation will take place in the near future. In addition, the changes have been briefly flagged up in the tenant newsletter due to be circulated before Christmas.
- 4.1.9 The Board thanked the Chief Executive for his work and the staff for their patience and assistance.

4.2 New Model Complaints Handling Procedure

- 4.2.1 The Board had been provided with a paper which updated them on the new model complaints handling procedure introduced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Albyn was due to implement the new procedure from 1 January 2013.
- 4.2.2 Miss Lawrie reported that the Ombudsman had included tenants in the consultation process for this new model. All complaints, no matter how minor, will now be recorded and new software had been sourced which was quick and simple to use. Training had been arranged for all staff. Some of this training was being provided by another housing association who had already implemented the new model. Some of the training was via e-learning modules provided on the Ombudsman's website.
- 4.2.3 Miss Lawrie noted that one of the reasons for the new model was to provide a more streamlined process for tenants. Staff had welcomed the new model. It meant that each complaint could be dealt with quickly and if a resolution was not possible within its two stages then the complainant could ask for a review by the Ombudsman.
- 4.2.4 The other main reason for the new model was to ensure that Registered Social Landlords learn from their complaints and change their policies and procedures as required. The Ombudsman expected Albyn to report back the outcomes of the complaints they receive not only to them, but also to tenants and the wider public via media such as the website and newsletters.
- 4.2.5 Miss Lawrie noted that the first year is being viewed by the Ombudsman as a trial period. At the end of the year the Ombudsman will review the deadlines and decide whether they are achievable, or whether they need to be revised.
- 4.2.6 The Board ratified the new complaints process.

4.3 Albyn Enterprises Limited: Business Plan

- 4.3.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director introduced Albyn Enterprise Limited's Business Plan which focused on the work achieved through the LIFT and sales programme. Consideration is now being given to increasing AEL's activities. At their last meeting the Board of Albyn Enterprises had approved the Business Plan for submission to the Albyn Housing Board.

4.3.2 Mr Convery, in his additional capacity as Chair of Albyn Enterprises Board of Directors, updated on the work that Albyn Enterprises has been carrying out and the success that it has had. This is mainly due to the marketing experience of the staff involved. The Business Plan has been the conclusion of much work in terms of developing the vision for Albyn Enterprises.

4.3.3 Mr Nairn noted that external Board members are required for Albyn Enterprises and this is being progressed by raising the profile of AEL and producing an article similar to that circulated for Albyn Housing's Board member recruitment.

4.3.4 The Board approved the Albyn Enterprises Business Plan.

4.4 Welfare Reform

4.4.1 The Housing & Communities Director provided an update on the main issues surrounding welfare reform.

4.4.2 The Board agreed that what is now needed is scenario planning and more information on the financial impacts of welfare reform. A range of scenarios will help the Board understand the implications for the business. Something to be considered is what additional benefits there might be in developing solutions in conjunction with other agencies. By investing the same amount of resources, the results might be increased.

4.4.3 It was agreed that welfare reform remain as a standing item on the Board agenda to ensure regular updates are provided.

5. **POLICY PROPOSALS & REVIEW**

5.1 There were no reports for consideration this cycle.

6. **MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

6.1 Staff Consultative Forum: 8 October 2012

6.1.1 The minutes of the Staff Consultative Forum meeting held on 8 October 2012 were noted. It was confirmed that the next meeting on 13 December had been cancelled.

6.2 Audit Committee: 16 October 2012

6.2.1 The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 16 October 2012 were noted.

6.3 Performance Committee: 6 November 2012

6.3.1 The minutes of the Performance Committee meeting held on 6 November 2012 were noted.

7. **VERBAL UPDATE: CALBYN**

7.1 The Chief Executive referred to the draft hotel business plan which had been circulated to the Board. This was the culmination of all the work carried out over the past few years on the project. This project has been developed in conjunction with the Calman Trust. The Board (known as "Calbyn") overseeing this project contains representatives from both Albyn Housing and the Calman Trust, as well as an independent Chair.

7.2 In terms of the social purpose of the hotel, the main reason is the employability and training of young people. This fits with some of the issues raised by the Housing & Communities Director around welfare reform, and also fits with the Scottish Government's programme. Highlands and Islands Enterprise have been very supportive throughout the process.

7.3 The Board noted the report.

8. HEALTH AND SAFETY

8.1 There was nothing to report on this item.

9. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

9.1 Ms Slimon and Mr Sinclair requested a leave of absence for the Board meeting on 22 January 2013.

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

10.1 There were no items of any other competent business.

11. BOARD TRAINING

11.1 The Board received fire safety training from the HR Officer.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 11 December 2012: Board / Staff get together in Invergordon
- 15 January 2013: Audit Committee meeting in Invergordon
- 22 January 2013: Board meeting in Invergordon