

ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED

REPORT OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2015 AT 10:30 AM AT ALBYN'S OFFICES, INVERGORDON

Present

Mr D Russell (Chair)	Mrs E Grant	Mrs I McLaughlan
Ms M Smith	Miss G Linden	Mr A McMaster
Mr J Convery	Mr G Sinclair	Ms K Williams
Mr T Solle (from Item 4.2 onwards)		

In Attendance

Mr C Macaulay: Chief Executive	Mr R Nairn: Chief Operating Officer	Mr J Banks: Customer Services Manager North: (Item 4.7)
Ms H Cameron: Asset Management & Investment Manager (Item 42)	Miss C Lawrie: Corporate Officer (Minutes)	

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies had been received from Mrs Dingwall for this meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2.1 Ms Smith noted any potential conflicts of interest in relation to her role as a Highland Councillor.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 Board Meeting: 15 September 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: Representation on Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT)**

It was noted that there was not yet a representative from Albyn for the HSCHT Trust Board. The Board was due to meet on 4 December. *Post meeting note: Ms Smith has agreed to act as Albyn's representative from 2016. Mr Macaulay will attend the December Board meeting.*

3.1.3 **Matters Arising: Rural and Islands Housing Association Forum (RIHAF) Conference**

The Chair thanked those Board members who had attended the conference in October to support Albyn as the conference sponsor.

4. DECISION MAKING PAPERS

4.1 Board Strategy 27 October 2015: Report

- 4.1.1 The Board considered the report and recommendations from Mr David Gass, consultant, which had been prepared following the 27 October Board Strategy Day.
- 4.1.2 Mr Macaulay went through the recommendations contained in the report. He commented that most, if not all, of these have been captured within the work that is already taking place within Albyn.
- 4.1.3 The Board noted the report.

4.2 Aviemore District Heating: Options Appraisal

Ms Helen Cameron, Asset Management and Investment Manager, joined the meeting for this item. Mr Solle arrived at this point.

- 4.2.1 Mr Solle's potential conflict of interest for this matter was noted. It was agreed that Mr Solle could continue to participate in the discussion with this conflict in mind.
- 4.2.2 Ms Cameron's paper provided the Board with four options to continue with the biomass system in Aviemore, which is not financially sustainable in its current form. The options are:
 - 1. Retain the existing boiler but replace the meters. Have a day to day contract for the management of the boiler-house and pay for repairs as they occur.
 - 2. Albyn to fund replacement boiler and replace the meters. Have a contract for day to day operation and management of the system as currently.
 - 3. New boiler and metering with an operator contract.
 - 4. Decommission the system and install alternative heating in the properties.
- 4.2.3 This matter was discussed at great length by the Board members. Each option was considered in detail.
- 4.2.4 The Chair summarised that the Board wished to pursue Option 3.
- 4.2.5 The Board thanked Ms Cameron for attending for this item. At this point Ms Cameron left the meeting.

4.3 Staffing Resources: Customer Services

- 4.3.1 Mr Nairn's paper sought approval from the Board to recruit to three Customer Services Assistant posts. This proposal had been made following the recent review of the Customer Services North and South teams which had taken place as part of the work to improve the rent arrears performance. As a result of the review the Board had agreed to increase the number of patches from 11 to 14.

- 4.3.2 This increase in patches was in order to reduce the number of properties in each. This would in turn allow Housing Services Officers to improve customer service to tenants. The proposal was that each patch would be allocated to a specific officer, each with a dedicated Customer Service Assistant. However, there are currently only enough assistants to allocate to 11 of the patches and three more assistants are therefore required.
- 4.3.3 After discussion the Board approved the proposal to recruit to three Customer Services Assistant posts.

4.4 Staffing Resources: Asset Management & Investment

- 4.4.1 Mr Nairn's paper asked the Board to endorse the Chair's Action to appoint an additional Asset Management Assistant. The post would provide support to the Scottish Water work and the resolution of the Aviemore biomass system.
- 4.4.2 The Board endorsed the Chair's approval of the appointment of an additional Asset Management Assistant.

4.5 Funding: Private Placement

- 4.5.1 Mr Nairn's paper updated the Board on actions to date regarding the Bond Issue under Private Placement. The paper sought approval to create a temporary post for six to nine months within the Finance Team to enable resources to be allocated to the Private Placement.
- 4.5.2 The Board approved the request for the creation of a temporary post for a period of six to nine months within the Finance Team.

4.6 Board Members' Appraisals: Outcomes

- 4.6.1 The paper asked the Board to consider proposals to address the skills and knowledge gaps identified through the recent appraisals process. It was noted that two appraisals still require to take place.
- 4.6.2 The Board noted the report.

4.7 Eviction Approvals

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

- 4.7.1 The two eviction requests were considered and discussed by the Board members. Mr Banks provided further background on each as required.
- 4.7.2 Mr Banks was thanked for attending. At this point Mr Banks left the meeting.
- 4.7.3 The Board approved the requests to enforce the two decrees for evictions.

4.8 Diversification Strategy: First Draft

- 4.8.1 The Diversification Strategy had been drafted following the initial discussion at the September Board meeting. Mr Sinclair had drafted a suggested Investment Opportunity Proposal document to support the strategy, and this was circulated to Board members for information. Mr Sinclair added that he had prepared his document in line with the comments made by the auditor in relation to this matter.
- 4.8.2 On the basis that the Board was content with the proposed strategy, it was agreed that Mr Macaulay will bring it back to a future meeting once more work has taken place. The Chair also suggested an annual review.
- 4.8.3 It was noted that there needed to be a process to review all of the potential projects and determine those that should continue, within a decision making framework.
- 4.8.4 The Board noted the work in progress and will receive updates in due course.

4.9 Board Papers: Review

- 4.9.1 The paper referred to the review of papers which had taken place in 2013/14, and provided an update on the current situation regarding the matters raised at that time.
- 4.9.2 It was noted that no comments had been raised on this matter during Board members' appraisals this year.
- 4.9.3 Board members noted the report.

4.10 Communication Strategy

- 4.10.1 The Board members discussed the strategy. Mr Macaulay was commended for a concise and clear document. Some amendments to the strategy were proposed.
- 4.10.2 Subject to the amendments identified, the Board approved the Communication Strategy.

4.11 Renewable Power Investment Opportunities

- 4.11.1 Ms Smith noted a potential conflict of interest as she had been a member of the Planning Committee which had approved one of the proposed investment opportunities. It was agreed that Ms Smith should continue to participate in the discussion, bearing this potential conflict in mind.
- 4.11.2 Ms Watson's paper provided information on one opportunity for investment, and sought the Board's views on investing in a second opportunity. The investment opportunity was with the Applecross Community which was constructing a hydro electricity generation scheme. Information had also been provided about a Trust's plan to install two wind turbines.
- 4.11.3 Mr Nairn updated that the Applecross Community hydro electricity generation scheme had been successful in raising the monies it required. It was agreed that a symbolic investment would be made.
- 4.11.4 Mr Nairn asked for the Board's approval to install a monitoring station on the intended site for the wind turbines. This will provide data over a period of time which will feed into future discussions on whether to invest in this opportunity or not.

4.11.5 The Board approved the request to install a monitoring station on the wind turbine site.

5. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

5.1 Staffing, Health & Safety and the Environment Committee Meeting: 22 September 2015

The Board noted the minutes from the meeting. As Chair of the Committee Ms Williams commented that this had been a positive meeting, with attention paid to the suggestions from staff regarding health and safety, and the Asbestos Management Policy.

5.2 Audit Committee Meeting: 13 October 2015

The Board noted the minutes from the Committee meeting. As Chair of the Committee Mr Convery reported that discussion had taken place about the proposed audit plan.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY

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

7. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

7.1 Requests for a leave of absence for the 8 December Board and staff meeting were noted.

8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

8.1 Board Meeting Schedule: 2016

A revised meeting schedule was circulated at the meeting.

8.2 Gas Servicing and Maintenance Contract

This item was tabled at the meeting by Mr Nairn. The paper sought approval to appoint a contractor for Albyn's gas servicing and maintenance contract. The Board approved the appointment.

8.3 Tenant Report Card

Miss Linden noted her appreciation to Mrs Mackay for the production of the tenant report card, which had been well received by tenants.

8.4 Fuel Poverty

The Chair noted that Mr Macaulay will provide a written update to the January Board meeting regarding fuel poverty.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 The next meeting is due to take place on 26 January 2016 at Invergordon.