

ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED

REPORT OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2013 AT 10:30 AM AT ALBYN'S OFFICES, INVERGORDON

Present

Mr D Russell (Chair)	Mr G Sinclair (Vice-Chair)	Mrs P Dingwall
Mrs E Grant	Mr J Oag	Mrs S Slimon
Ms M Smith	Mr T Solle	Mr B Summerfield
Ms K Williams (up to Item 4.2.5)		

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	Ms L Fraser, Communities Co-ordinator (Item 4.4 only)	Miss C Lawrie: Corporate Officer (Minutes)

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Mrs McLaughlan, Mr Convery and Mr Lockhart for this meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no conflicts of interest declared at this point in the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- 3.1 Minutes of Previous Meeting: 10 September 2013

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

3.1.1 Pension Consultation Process

The Finance & Corporate Services Director reported that the consultation process with staff had started on 22 October. This is due to conclude before the year end and a decision about future pension provision will then be made by the Board at their January meeting.

3.1.2 Board Code of Conduct

The Chief Executive noted that Board members have been provided with their copy of the Board's Code of Conduct at this meeting. It was agreed that the staff's Code of Conduct will be progressed once the draft staff Code of Conduct is available from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) in conjunction with Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH).

3.2 Minutes of Pensions Board Meeting: 4 October 2013

These minutes were agreed as a true record.

4. **DECISION MAKING PAPERS**

4.1 Board and Committee Remits

4.1.1 The Chief Executive's paper provided the Board with the revised remits for the Audit, Performance and Health & Safety Committees. The current remit for the Staffing Committee had also been circulated on the basis that the Committee will consider it at their next meeting. In addition the remit for the Board had been circulated for consideration at this meeting.

4.1.2 The Board members discussed their remit and agreed that it was still relevant, with two minor amendments.

4.1.3 The Board members considered the Performance Committee remit and agreed one minor amendment to the wording.

4.1.4 The Board members discussed the Health & Safety Committee remit. It was suggested that environmental risks could be included in this remit. It was agreed that this proposal will be discussed by the Health & Safety Committee at its next meeting. The Committee will report back to the Board on its decision.

4.1.5 The Board's remit, with the revisions as discussed, was approved. The Board also approved the revised remits for the Audit and Performance Committees. The Health & Safety Committee's remit was approved, pending the further amendments to be considered at the Committee's next meeting. The remit for the Staffing Committee was also approved, subject to the Committee's review at their next meeting.

4.2 Strategic Objectives

4.2.1 The Board was asked to consider proposed revisions to Albyn's strategic objectives. The revisions had been identified at the Board and Staff Strategy Day which took place on 22 October. The Chief Executive had listed proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to support each of the objectives.

4.2.2 The proposed revised objectives were:

- Achieving successful tenancies through quality customer / landlord relationships
- Building and maintaining a sustainable, quality housing stock
- Supporting neighbourhoods and communities to thrive
- Providing access to housing and support in the Highlands
- Delivering good value for money in rents and other charges

4.2.3 After discussion it was agreed that the KPIs and outcomes should be seen as a work in progress, once the new Strategic Objectives have been approved.

4.2.4 In answer to a query, Mr Macaulay confirmed that the proposals which had been collated from the Board and Staff Strategy Day will be fed into the business planning process.

4.2.5 The Board approved the revised Strategic Objectives.

4.3 Rent Proposals: 2014/15

- 4.3.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director's paper asked the Board to review the options regarding the basis of any increase in the rent charge that Albyn would wish to implement on 1 April 2014.
- 4.3.2 In answer to a query, it was confirmed that currently Albyn did not charge depending on the age of the property. Using energy efficiency standards had been considered for helping to set rents. Once the current stock condition surveys exercise is complete, further consideration can be given to this proposal. It was agreed that this should be discussed in the rent setting process next year.
- 4.3.3 Board members believed that Albyn's tenants do receive good value for money. The risk for rent arrears was with tenants who currently pay rent and may receive little, or no, benefit. Mr Nairn confirmed that Albyn's rent increases tended to be about average for the sector.
- 4.3.4 The Board approved the proposal to consult on CPI +1%, using the December figure.

4.4 Digital Health Business Proposal

- 4.4.1 Mr Macaulay's paper updated the Board on progress in identifying appropriate business opportunities in digital health or Telecare. The paper also sought the Board's agreement to create a Joint Venture Company (JVC). Albyn's Communities Co-ordinator was invited to join the meeting for this item.
- 4.4.2 Ms Fraser made a presentation on this subject. The project had begun as a means to support tenants to remain in their homes. Research had been carried out with HIE which identified that there was very little support already in place. Further research took place to identify what support people wanted to help them remain in their homes. This showed that they wished to receive a level of support on day to day items such as gardening; cleaning; cooking; dog walking; someone to take them shopping or to appointments; and when people leave hospital or are unwell with no-one else available to help them.
- 4.4.3 Using grant funding, consultants had been employed to develop the provision of a network to deliver the services, rather than the actual delivery of the service to tenants. The concept was that the user would request a service via an application on their smart phone and the providers of the service would then contact the user to make arrangements. The user would then pay the service provider direct. The service providers would have been pre-vetted by the network supplier.
- 4.4.4 Mr Macaulay said that a Joint Venture Company needs to be established to progress this project. Mr Macaulay noted his appreciation of the excellent work that Ms Fraser had carried out on this project. He confirmed that the proposal to create a JVC was to eliminate any financial risk to Albyn Housing Society.
- 4.4.5 The Board discussed this proposal at some length. Reports from the project will be provided to the Board as the project progresses.
- 4.4.6 The Board approved the creation of a Joint Venture Company.

4.5 Eviction Approvals

4.5.1 The Board was asked to endorse the Chair's approvals for the enforcement of court decrees for repossession of tenancies due to rent arrears. The Board was also asked to approve one further request for enforcement.

4.5.2 A Board member asked what happened to the possessions of someone who was convicted and sent to prison. Ms Barton said that it would be up to the tenant to make any arrangements required. Social workers and Citizens Advice Bureau advisers are based in prisons and can offer advice on housing matters. Albyn staff also occasionally attend prison to provide advice. Tenants with a sentence of more than a few months are encouraged to voluntarily give up their tenancy until release, to reduce the risk of debt.

4.5.3 The Board endorsed the Chair's approvals for the enforcement of court decrees for repossession of tenancies and approved the further request for enforcement.

4.6 ACAS Job Evaluation Review

4.6.1 The Chief Executive updated that ACAS had been jointly asked by Albyn and the union to provide an independent review of Albyn's current job evaluation scheme. The paper asked the Board to consider the outcomes of that job evaluation scheme review and the recommendations which had been made by ACAS.

4.6.2 The Board considered the recommendations proposed by ACAS. After much discussion the Board agreed the recommendations detailed by ACAS in their report.

5. **POLICY PROPOSALS & REVIEW**

5.1 There were no policies for consideration at this meeting.

6. **MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

6.1 Health & Safety Committee: 17 September 2013

6.1.1 The minutes of the Health & Safety Committee meeting held on 17 September 2013 were noted. The Committee Chair drew attention to the item regarding the Unacceptable Actions Log. The staff had found this system very helpful in supporting them in their work.

6.2 Audit Committee: 6 August 2013

6.2.1 The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 15 October 2013 were noted.

6.3 Performance Committee: 5 November 2013

6.3.1 The draft minutes of the Performance Committee meeting held on 5 November 2013 were noted.

6.4 Health & Safety Committee: 12 November 2013

- 6.4.1 The draft minutes of the Health & Safety Committee meeting held on 12 November 2013 were noted. The Committee Chair noted that the standing item on the Board agenda for health and safety was to underline that the issue is everyone's responsibility and it provides the Board members with an opportunity raise any related matters they wish.

7. **STANDING ITEMS**

7.1 Welfare Reform

- 7.1.1 The Customer Services Director had provided a written update on this issue.
- 7.1.2 In answer to a query, Ms Barton said that Albyn did not have many one bedroomed properties to allow tenants to downsize. Those who did want to move could try to do so via an exchange with a tenant with another landlord, or via the private sector, or via family. The Making Advice Work project will be working with people regarding whether they can afford to stay where they are, or what their options might be.
- 7.1.3 Ms Barton confirmed that the situation with Discretionary Housing payment for next year is not yet known. The Chair thanked the Customer Services team for their work on the Welfare Reform issue.
- 7.1.4 The Board noted the report.

7.2 Aviemore Network Heating System

- 7.2.1 The Chief Executive updated that in the last couple of months the network has been flushed through and four subsequent, localised re-flushes were also carried out. The system is clear and working, distributing heating and water throughout the network.
- 7.2.2 Solid magnetite is being removed from the system and re-flushes are planned to ensure that these do not build back up. An effective water management system is now in place which should also help reduce the build up of magnetite. Although the planned flushes are additional items of work, savings were made elsewhere so the work remains within budget.
- 7.2.3 A small number of complaints are still being dealt with in relation to the problems users of the system experienced. One of these complaints is with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and their conclusion is now awaited.
- 7.2.4 A system to replace the meters is now being considered and a procurement process will then be required. This is anticipated to be at a substantial cost but within the indicative figure previously highlighted. The Board will be asked to approve this work.
- 7.2.5 The Board noted the verbal update.

8. **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- 8.1 There was nothing to note on this item.

9. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- 9.1 Requests for a leave of absence for the Board and staff meeting taking place on 17 December were received from Ms Smith and Mr Sinclair. The Chair may also be absent from part of the meeting.

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

10.1 Green Deal

Mr Solle suggested that a Green Deal assessment could be carried out on properties as part of the stock condition surveys, alongside the Energy Performance Certificate process. The Chief Executive confirmed that this will be considered further.

10.2 Phone Call Recording

10.2.1 The Finance & Corporate Services Director reported that a group of staff had met on 20 November to discuss the practical implications of implementing a phone call recording process. This followed the Board's discussion on the subject and their approval of the associated draft policy at their June 2013 meeting.

10.2.2 Phone call recording can already take place manually during a phone call, although the staff member would need to advise the caller that they were taking such action.

10.2.3 After discussion the group had agreed that the cost and complexity of implementing a formal call recording system which ensured that all staff were treated equally would be disproportionate to the likely benefits perceived. The group therefore decided not to progress this option. It was noted that this provision could be reconsidered in the future should that be deemed necessary.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 11.1 The next meeting is due to take place on 28 January 2014.