

Albyn Housing Society Board Meeting |MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 30 March 2021
Time: 10.30am
Location: Virtually via 'Teams'

Present

Maxine Smith, Chair	Carl Patching, Vice Chair	Ian Fosbrooke, Secretary
Donna Smith	Jim Convery	Raymond Bremner
Nicola Drummond	Paul Adams	Fiona Mustarde

In Attendance

Andrew Martin, Director of Finance & Corporate Services	Laurie Macleod, Head of HR	Morag Beers, Interim Director of Assets
Brett Fletcher, Executive Assistant	Laura Morgan, Corporate Officer (minutes)	

ACTION

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Clea Warner, Isabell McLaughlan, and Lisa Buchanan.

2. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2.1 None were given.

3. STANDING ITEM

3.1 Board Remit

3.1.1 The meeting met the quorum as set out within the Board Remit.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 Minutes of Board Meeting: Thursday 28 January 2021

4.1.1 The minutes of the last Board meeting were agreed as accurate and proposed by Fiona Mustarde and seconded by Jim Convery.

4.2 Matters Arising: Thursday 28 January 2021

4.2.1 A written update on the action items had been provided and was reviewed.

4.3 Minutes of Special Board Meeting: Monday 25 January 2021

4.3.1 The minutes of the Special Board meeting were agreed as accurate and proposed by Carl Patching and seconded by Donna Smith.

ACTION

4.4 Minutes of Special Board Meeting: Thursday 04 February 2021

4.4.1 It was noted that the minutes for this meeting are still awaiting Leadership Team approval and will be brought to the next meeting of the Board.

4.5 Minutes of Special Board Meeting: Friday 12 February 2021

The minutes of the Special Board meeting were agreed as accurate and proposed by Carl Patching and seconded by Jim Convery

5. **DECISION MAKING PAPERS**

5.1 Business Plan Refresh

5.1.1 Andrew Martin presented the Business Plan Refresh paper to the Board for approval.

5.1.2 The Board suggested that the refreshed Business Plan was missing headline information about the justification for the activities detailed within it. The areas the Business Plan was seeking to address should be clearly stated, followed by how each activity was addressing them.

5.1.3 There was a discussion about the updated KPI schedule which the Board were pleased to see. It enquired about the need for a KPI detailing the demand for housing and suggested that this might be elaborated within the Business Plan refresh.

5.1.4 Morag Beers advised the Board that that our new build programme forms part of the broader Highland development programme which is put together with Highland Council and the Scottish Government.

5.1.5 The Board added that whilst the new 2040 Housing Strategy makes the case for investment in housing in the Highland, Albyn needed to give consideration to the location of this demand within the area.

5.1.6 The Director of Finance & Corporate agreed an **action** to include an explanation of the Customer Experience Strategy work, and to include some information about how Albyn assess the demand for housing.

5.1.7 The Board enquired if the Risk Register had been through the Audit & Risk Committee.

**Andrew
Martin**

5.1.8 Jim Convery, Chair of A&RM confirmed that it was a regular standing item for the Committee and was scrutinised by it.

5.1.9 Andrew Martin confirmed to the Board that the risks within the register were mitigated rather than inherent.

5.1.10 There was a discussion about the financial summary position given for 2020/21 and the way in which depreciation and amortisation of grant were displayed within the accounts. Andrew Martin explained to the Board that the presentation of these figures was in line with the requirements of the Regulator.

5.1.11 Subject to the updates requested by the Board, the Business Plan Refresh was agreed. This was proposed by Maxine Smith and seconded by Raymond Bremner.

ACTION

5.2 Budget & Forecast 2021/22

- 5.2.1 Andrew Martin presented the Budget & Forecast 2021/22 paper to the Board for approval.
- 5.2.2 The Board enquired what would happen at the end of 2020/21 with regard to the underspend for the year.
- 5.2.3 Andrew Martin confirmed to the Board that Albyn would always use cash in the bank before borrowing from the market, and that it currently had an excess of cash due to the underspend on repairs due to the pandemic.
- 5.2.4 The Board enquired about the assumptions made for the Development Programme over the next five years and if the new requirements for auto fire suppression had been considered within them.
- 5.2.5 Andrew Martin responded that it was expected that costs associated with this requirement would be met through grant, with the Scottish Government increasing its standard grant per unit. If there were significant exceptional costs, Albyn would approach the Scottish Government before entering into contracts with developers.
- 5.2.6 Morag Beers added that this issue was being discussed within the RSL sector, and with Highland Council and the Scottish Government as to what auto suppression systems could technically be put into housing.
- 5.2.7 Andrew Martin confirmed to the Board that the CX Housing Management system was a subscription service rather than a one-off cost after the initial acquisition of the licences.
- 5.2.8 The Board enquired if the extended backfill of positions due to the overrun of Project Phoenix was having any HR implications.
- 5.2.9 Andrew Martin advised that where fixed term contracts were having to be extended beyond two years, they would now attract potential redundancy payments.
- 5.2.10 Andrew Martin elaborated to the Board that whilst Project Phoenix was fully resourced and was contracted, there were a number of elements within the Business Transformation Plan that would require further resource requests in the future that would need to be costed, for example, the ICT Strategy. These requests would be brought back to the Board once the Business Transformation Plan deliverables had more clarity.
- 5.2.11 There was some discussion to clarify what the Board were being asked to approve in terms of the budget spend.
- 5.2.12 Andrew Martin confirmed that approval was being sought for the explicit additional resource for the extension of Project Phoenix, over and above the current approved budget, plus the additional Transformation Plan elements.
- 5.2.13 There was a discussion about the move within Project Phoenix from a three phase to two phase operation. The Board suggested that reference to this was not consistent throughout the Business Plan documentation.
- 5.2.14 The Director of Finance and Corporate agreed an **action** to review the Business Plan documentation and ensure it was consistent with regard to the phases of Project Phoenix.

**Andrew
Martin**

ACTION

5.2.15 Subject to the updates requested by the Board, the Budget & Forecast 2021/22 was agreed by the Board. This was proposed by Raymond Bremner and seconded by Jim Convery.

5.3 Transformation Plan Governance Arrangements

5.3.1 Andrew Martin sought approval from the Board for the recommendations within the Transformation Plan Governance Arrangements paper.

5.3.2 The Chair requested that Members email her if they are interested in being part of the new Transformation Committee.

5.3.3 It was suggested by the Board that the Committee should meet six times a year, rather than four times due to the pace of implementation.

5.3.4 The Board agreed the recommendations within the Transformation Plan Governance Arrangements. This was proposed by Carl Patching and seconded by Raymond Bremner.

6. **POLICY PROPOSALS & REVIEW**

6.1 Board Annual Review Policy

6.1.1 Andrew Martin sought approval from the Board for the Board Annual Review Policy.

6.1.2 The Board approved the policy. This was proposed by Maxine Smith and seconded by Donna Smith.

6.2 ICT Security Policy

6.2.1 Andrew Martin sought approval from the Board for the ICT Security Policy.

6.2.3 The Board requested that some indication of who 'other authorised users' were be added within point 3.1 of the policy.

6.2.4 Andrew Martin confirmed to the Board that approved contractors given access to Albyn systems would be subject to data protection arrangements.

6.2.5 Andrew Martin explained to the Board that the Albyn ICT Officer and Dynamic Edge work together as a team, with the responsibilities of Dynamic Edge set out within the contract with them.

6.2.6 The Board requested that 6.2.1, third bullet point be updated to finish at 'unattended', removing, 'if unauthorised access to the data held can be gained'.

6.2.7 The Director of Finance & Corporate agreed an **action** to update the policy as advised by the Board.

**Andrew
Martin**

6.2.8 Subject to these updates, the ICT Security Policy was approved by the Board. This was proposed by Fiona Mustarde and seconded by Raymond Bremner.

6.3 Small Community Grants - *additional policy item added by the Chair*

6.3.1 The Chair asked that the Leadership Team bring a policy on Small Community Grants to the Board for review.

ACTION

- 6.3.2 Andrew Martin added that a Charitable Donations policy was also required.
- 6.3.3 The Board enquired if old ICT equipment was reused.
- 6.3.4 Andrew Martin advised the Board that Albyn had to give consideration to WEEE Regulations, but that requests from tenant groups were considered.
- 6.3.5 The Leadership Team agreed an **action** to draft a Small Community Grants policy.

**Leadership
Team**

7. INFORMATION PAPERS

7.1 SHR Self-Assessment Exception Report

- 7.1.1 Andrew presented the SHR Self-Assessment Exception Report to the Board for its information.
- 7.1.2 The Board noted the contents of the report.

7.2 New Build Update

- 7.2.1 Morag Beers provided the Board with an update on new build development for its information.
- 7.2.2 The update included new commentary on cyclical and planned maintenance which will form part of all future reports.
- 7.2.3 The Board asked for further information about the issues with the Beauly development.
- 7.2.4 Morag Beers responded that the land was purchased by the developer with planning consent and flood risk assessments in place from the Highland Council, however, the flood risk assessment had since been updated and flagged up risks that had not been identified previously. The Board were informed that Albyn was not part of the discussions around this issue as it is the responsibility of the developer.
- 7.2.5 The Board noted the contents of the report.

7.3 Project Phoenix Update

- 7.3.1 Graeme Hamilton presented an update on Project Phoenix to the Board for its information.
- 7.3.2 The Board enquired about the balance of risk with combining two stages of the project into one and about the impact this would have on the number of users the system would be implemented with. It also enquired about the impact upon training.
- 7.3.2 Graeme Hamilton responded that there would be no change to the number of users, and that whilst being able to spread changes over two stages was desirable, the risk identified with this approach by the contractor could not be ignored. With regard to training, it was advised that the Customer Services Team would be impacted, but there would not be any change for the Assets and Finance Teams.
- 7.3.3 There was a discussion about the level of risk presented by the combination of two stages of the project. Graeme Hamilton agreed that he would be able to discuss this matter in more detail at a separate meeting with Members if required.

ACTION

- 7.3.4 The Project Phoenix Update was noted by the Board.
- 7.4 Confidential Item
- 7.5 Scottish Government Housing 2040
- 7.5.1 Andrew Martin provided an overview of the new Scottish Government Housing 2040 Strategy. The key points pulled out included having the right houses, in the right places, for the right people; that there would be an increasing number of people living alone with the need for more single person apartments; and that people were living longer, so adaptable housing for the aged was needed. The strategy also emphasised decarbonising housing and digital connectivity
- 7.5.2 The Chair raised the point that whilst the strategy was well intentioned and was the right direction of travel, Albyn needed to be mindful of the creation of a two-tier system between tenants who have new, low cost, connected housing, and those who live in older housing without these benefits.
- 7.5.3 The Chair and Raymond Bremner reported to the Board that they had both recently attended a workshop on modular builds, offsite construction, and passive housing. The energy costs for passive housing were impressively low and the Chair suggested that these new technologies and methods of construction should be where Albyn is moving towards and that they would offer transformative opportunities to the Highland.
- 7.5.4 Morag Beers commented that the property industry is not innovative in how it builds housing, however, the climate emergency is changing this as buildings and the way people heat and power them was a significant contributor to CO2 emissions. It was advised that Morag Beers had attended an Investment Working Group with the Scottish Government, Highland Council, and Social Housing Association where passive housing, modular construction, and net zero buildings were discussed, and so there was momentum behind this. It was added that green credentials are likely to become a key criteria developer when approaching lending institutions. The Assets Team were supportive of innovation and moving forward with these ideas.
- 7.5.5 The Chair and Interim Director of Assets agreed an **action** to arrange a workshop on modular build, offsite construction, and passive housing for the Board. The Chair also agreed to share the slides from the presentation.
- 7.5.6 There was a discussion about the need to bring traditional developers along with this way of working and to work collaboratively with them to make sure that they had the skills and knowledge needed.
- 7.5.7 Andrew Martin commented that the key themes from the Housing 2040 strategy would be used in developing the Asset Management Strategy, with the challenge being the avoidance of leaving tenants who are in older housing stock behind.
- 7.5.8 Carl Patching left the meeting at this point.
- 7.5.9 Morag Beers suggested that retrofit funding for housing from the Scottish Government might be a solution to avoiding inequalities between people in new and older housing stock. It was suggested that it might be useful to begin lobbying relevant agencies on this point, such as the Regulator.

**Maxine
Smith
Morag
Beers**

7.5.10 The Chair and Interim Director of Assets agreed an **action** to discuss how Scottish Government might be lobbied about retrofit funding to avoid housing inequalities between tenants in old housing stock, and those in new housing stock.

ACTION
Maxine
Smith
Morag
Beers

7.5.11 The Board noted the report.

8. EVICTION REPORT

8.1 Not currently applicable.

9. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

9.1 There were no comments on the minutes of the Committee meetings.

10. AOCB

10.1 Confidential Item

10.2 Confidential Item

10.3 Staff Listening Sessions

10.3.1 Carl Patching joined the meeting.

10.3.2 The Chair advised Members that she would like them to attend the forthcoming Staff Listening Sessions.

10.3.3 There was a discussion about the need to change the current date for the session as it was within the school holidays.

10.3.4 The Corporate Officer agreed an **action** to review the date of the Staff Listening Session.

Laura
Morgan

11. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

11.1 Next Board Meeting is Tuesday 29 June 2021 at 10:30am via Teams.

The meeting then came to an end.