

FINAL Albyn Housing Society Board Meeting |MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 24 January 2023
Time: 6:00pm
Location: Virtually via 'Teams'

Members Present

Lesley McInnes,
Chair

Carl Patching,
Vice Chair

Ian Fosbrooke,
Secretary

Clea Warner,
Member

David Cargill,
Member

Angela Currie,
Member

Nile Istephan,
Member

Jim Convery,
Member

Fiona Mustarde,
Member

In Attendance

Kirsty Morrison,
Chief Executive Officer
(CEO)

Andrew Martin,
Dir. of Finance & Corporate
Services
(DF&CS)

Audrey Murphey,
Interim Dir. of Governance &
Business Improvement
(DG&BI)

Maureen Knight,
Dir. of Customer Services &
Property
(DCS)

Laurie Macleod,
Head of HR
(HoHR)

Caroline Madden,
Head of Property Services
(HPS)

Jim Banks,
Customer Services Manager North
(CSM)

Laura Morgan,
Corporate Governance Officer
(CGO) – minutes

ACTION

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies had been received from Nicola McLelland.

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

2.1 No conflicts of interest were noted.

3. STANDING ITEM

3.1 Board Remit

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

4. PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 Minute of Board Meeting: 13 December 2022

4.1.1 The minute of the last meeting was approved. This was proposed by David Cargill and seconded by Carl Patching.

4.2 Confidential minute of Board Meeting: 13 December 2022

The confidential minute of the last Board meeting was agreed as accurate. This was proposed by David Cargill and seconded by Carl Patching.

4.3 Matters Arising

4.3.1 A written update on the action items had been provided and was reviewed. All actions were complete or in progress.

5. DECISION PAPERS

5.1 Rent Increase Proposal

5.1.1 The DF&CS spoke to his paper and sought approval of the recommendations made within it.

5.1.2 The Board welcomed the level of detail provided within the report.

5.1.3 The Board queried how the rent consultation response rate of 27% compared with other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). The CEO responded that 27% was a good response rate, and that this might be linked to the Society having a high proportion of direct rent payers (as opposed to rents being paid directly from Housing Benefit). It was added that the consultation had provided the Society with an opportunity to ask tenants about what their priorities were, with fuel poverty being the key concern raised. This feedback would be used to inform priorities within the Asset Management Strategy.

5.1.4 The Board enquired about rent increase plans for Mid Market Rent properties. The DF&CS advised that the Highland Residential Ltd (HRL) Board would review proposals for any increases to MMR at its next Board meeting. MMR properties were considered to be part of the private rental sector and so were currently subject to a 3% cap.

5.1.5 The DF&CS confirmed to the Board that the HRL budget was approved by the HRL Board and would not come to the Society Board for approval. The HRL Business Plan would be submitted to the Society Board for its information.

5.1.6 The Board approved the following recommendations:

- Increase in the applicable rental charges by 5.0% with effect from 01 April 2023.
- Increase in the Management Fee (for Shared Ownership properties) by 5.0% (£314 to £329 pa) in 2023/24 in line with this uplift.
- Maintain garage rents at £13 per month, pending a review of Garage tenancies which will report as part of the business plan implementation.

5.1.7 This was proposed by Angela Currie and seconded by Fiona Mustarde.

5.2 Customer Services Redesign

- 5.2.1 The DCS spoke to her paper and sought Board approval of the recommendations made within it.
- 5.2.2 The Board enquired what staff felt about the redesign proposals. The DCS and CSM confirmed to the Board that staff were very supportive of the proposals and had been energised by them.
- 5.2.3 The Board enquired if any other structures had been considered as part of the redesign process. The DCS advised that a range of options had been considered and that other RSLs had been consulted to find out more about how different structures performed. In addition, data had been collated for Customer Services to assess performance within different areas of service delivery. The proposed redesign of Customer Services was the result of careful consideration of all this evidence.
- 5.2.4 The Board enquired how the Society would test, measure, and review the success of the proposed redesign, and if there would be scope to modify the structure in response to this monitoring. The DCS advised the Board that the proposed structure allowed for a Performance Manager who would be specifically tasked with monitoring performance. The structure was designed to be flexible and could be easily tweaked to respond to performance monitoring outcomes.
- 5.2.5 The Board enquired if formal consultation with staff was required before implementing the proposed restructure. The HHR advised that legal advice had been sought on this matter and formal consultation was not required, however, staff and the GMB had been briefed on the proposal.
- 5.2.6 There was a discussion about the procurement of legal services. The DF&CS advised that a procurement exercise was undertaken five years previously, but that this exercise was due to be repeated. The Board requested a report on the current position with regard to legal services used by the Society and future plans for procurement. The DF&CS accepted this as an **action**.
- 5.2.7 The Board enquired if the redesign offered an opportunity to consider the office space used by the Society. The CEO advised that the 'Hub, Home & Roam' trial was due to conclude at the end of March 2023, and that learning from this would inform future decisions about office space.
- 5.2.8 The Board enquired as to whether there were any potential cost savings associated with the proposed redesign. The CSM advised the Board that the proposed redesign would enable better delivery of services such as repairs, arrears, and voids, and that this in turn would result in efficiencies and cost savings.
- 5.2.9 The DCS noted that the redesign proposal would be taken to CISMG in February 2023. A member of CISMG would be invited to join a working group focused upon how the redesign would be communicated tenants.
- 5.2.10 The Board approved the redesign proposals set out for Customer Services which included the creation of:
- One contact number.
 - One team consisting of 5 specialist delivery areas (Income / Tenancy Operations / Tenancy Sustainment / Repairs & Maintenance / Business & Performance).

**Andrew
Martin**

This was proposed by Lesley McInnes and seconded by Clea Warner.

5.3 FIT Homes Project Plans

- 5.3.1 The CEO spoke to her paper and sought Board approval of the Fit Homes Project Plan provided. It was noted that a more detailed report would be provided to Board in March / April.
- 5.3.2 The Board advised that the Leadership Team should keep the Fit Homes work contained as a specific project with an end point, and not to conflate it with the wider Internet of Things opportunities that would likely arise for RSLs as technology progressed in this area.
- 5.3.3 The Board requested some more detailed information on costs for the Fit Homes project. The CEO accepted an **action** to report this to Board in March / April.
- 5.3.4 There was a discussion about how the benefits of the project would be articulated, in particular how the benefits relating to tenancy sustainment could be monitored and reported on. The CEO advised that the Society would like to evaluate the Fit Homes project for savings to the public purse and to the Society itself, for example, in areas such as void turnover and tenancy sustainment. It was agreed that the benefits needed to reflect the core business of the Society. The CEO accepted an **action** to include this within the aforementioned report to Board.
- 5.3.5 The Board enquired how the Society would be sharing this piece of thought leadership with the sector. The CEO advised that the Society was working with Perceptive to develop communications and that the CEO and Head of Innovation were attending conferences to speak about the project.
- 5.3.6 The Board approved the Fit Homes Project Plans. This was proposed by Lesley McInnes and seconded by David Cargill.

Kirsty Morrison

5.4 Delivery Plan and Change Programme Update

- 5.4.1 The DG&BI spoke to her paper and sought Board approval of the recommendations within it.
- 5.4.2 The Board enquired about the number of ambers and reds in the Delivery Plan and Change Programme and enquired as to whether there was anything holding up progress. The DG&BI responded that many of these items were two year projects; also, that the Delivery Plan and Change Programme had been ambitious and so not all items were underway as yet.
- 5.4.3 The Board requested that the categorisation of items be reviewed to better reflect progress, for example, green for items that were not yet complete but were on track for completion, amber for items with a minor hold up, and red for items with significant delays / issues. Target dates for completion were also requested to be added. The DG&BI accepted this as an **action**.
- 5.4.4 The Board enquired if any items raised by the Regulator were still outstanding. The CEO advised that she was confident that the Society had addressed all actions raised by the Regulator in association with the 'compliant under review' status.
- 5.4.5 The Board approved the recommendation within the Delivery Plan and Change Programme report for the adoption of reprioritised activities within the Change Programme as detailed. This was proposed by Fiona Mustarde and seconded by Clea Warner.

Audrey Murphy

6. **POLICIES**

6.1 Highland Housing Register Policy

6.1.1 The CSM spoke to his paper and sought Board approval of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) Policy.

6.1.2 The Board discussed the policy and enquired if it covered the Armed Forces Covenant. The CSM accepted an **action** to check this with the HHR Management Group.

**Jim
Banks**

6.1.3 The Board enquired if the Society used local lettings initiatives. The CSM advised that this was on the agenda for the next meeting of the HHR Management Group as some RSL's were interested in introducing this initiative.

6.1.4 The Board approved the Highland Housing Register Policy. This was proposed by Angela Currie and seconded by Ian Fosbrooke.

6.2 Health & Safety Policy

6.2.1 The DF&CS sought Board approval of the Health & Safety Policy and outlined the minimal updates that had been made to the proposed version.

6.2.2 The Board approved the Health & Safety Policy. This was proposed by Clea Warner and seconded by Ian Fosbrooke.

7. **INFORMATION PAPERS**

7.1 Damp & Mould Update

7.1.1 The DCS provided an update to Board on the actions taken by Albyn Group to manage the risks of damp and mould within its housing stock.

7.1.2 The Board was pleasantly surprised that the number of reported cases of damp and mould was so low. It sought assurance on how reports of cases were reviewed and managed. The DCS advised that Customer Services and the Assets Team were working collaboratively on the collation of damp and mould data. Reports of this data were reviewed at monthly meetings of the Operational Management Team (OMT) and were analysed for trends. The reports were also provided to the Leadership Team so that it could assess the level of risk exposure of the Society in this area.

7.1.3 It was confirmed to the Board by the HPS that a damp and mould marker / tag had been established on the CX housing management system so that cases could be tracked. The CEO added that a new damp and mould KPI would be added to the quarterly report to Board on performance.

7.1.4 The Board noted the update.

8. **APPROVED MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR NOTING**

8.1 None this cycle.

9. **AOB**

9.1 Collective Board Survey

9.1.1 The Chair advised Members that the Collective Board Survey will be issued via Govenda in the next few days. This survey is carried out annually to assess collective

Board performance against the five principles of the Scottish Governance Code and ensure compliance with the Board Review Policy.

9.2 Board Member eLearning

9.2.1 The DG&BI advised Members that login information for the eLearning platform 'LearnPro' had been sent out via email. A Data Protection & Freedom of Information module had been assigned to Members for completion.

10.0 **DATES OF FUTURE BOARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

10.1 The dates of upcoming meetings were noted by the Board.

The meeting ended.