

# FINAL Albyn Housing Society Board Meeting | MINUTES

**Date:** Tuesday 24 October 2023  
**Time:** 6:00pm  
**Location:** Teams

## Members Present

Lesley McInnes, Chair	Ian Fosbrooke, Secretary	Carl Patching
Fiona Mustarde, Member	Lynne Holburn, Member	Jackie Bugden, Member
Craig Levy, Member		

## In Attendance

Kirsty Morrison, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Maureen Knight, Executive Dir. of Operations (ExDO)	Andrew Martin, Executive Dir. of Group Services (ExDGS)
Robert Buchanan, Virtual ICT Director	Zoe Bywater, Head of Highland Residential (Inverness) Ltd (HHRIL) – item 5.4 only	Chris Ellis, Head of Performance & Projects (HPP) – item 6.1 only
Caroline Madden, Interim Head of Property Services (IHPS)	Laura Morgan, Interim Corporate Lead (CL) - minute	

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## ACTION

### 1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the newly elected Board Members to the meeting: Lynne Holburn, Jackie Bugden, and Craig Levy. The Chair also welcomed ICT Director, Robert Buchanan, who was joining the meeting this evening.
- 1.2 Apologies had been received from Clea Warner, Craig Russell, Angela Currie, Niall Owen, Scott MacLeod, and Laurie MacLeod.

### 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: 22 August 2023

- 4.1.1 The minute of the last meeting was approved. This was proposed by Lesley McInnes and seconded by Fiona Mustarde.

#### 4.2 Minute of Post-AGM Board meeting: 20 September 2023

- 4.2.1 The confidential minute of the last meeting was approved. This was proposed by Lesley McInnes 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 Annual Assurance Statement

- 5.1.1 The ExDGS spoke to his report and presented the Annual Assurance Statement to the Board for approval.
- 5.1.2 The ExDGS advised the Board that no material noncompliance with the Regulatory Standards had been found. It was added that a range of actions for the Society to take forward had been identified as part of the Annual Assurance process, and progress against these will be reported to Board.
- 5.1.3 The Board noted that an internal audit of the Annual Assurance process had been carried out at the beginning of October 2023, with the draft report giving strong assurance to the Society. The internal audit report would be duly presented to the Audit & Risk Management Committee at its next meeting.

## ACTION

- 5.1.4 The Chair stressed the importance of the Annual Assurance process and the collective responsibility of the Board in approving the Annual Assurance Statement for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).
- 5.1.5 The Chair of the Audit & Risk Management Committee set out his support for the process followed in preparing the Annual Assurance Statement, and noted the marked improvement of the Society over the past few years which found it in a strong and stable position
- 5.1.6 The ExDGS noted his thanks to the former Director of Governance & Business Improvement and the ICL for their efforts in delivering the process this year.
- 5.1.7 The Chair suggested that a short update on the Regulatory Standards might be a useful activity for Board Members to undertake on a regular basis. The CEO noted that new Board Members had attended a briefing session on the Annual Assurance process in advance of the meeting but would also consider a broader range of training for Board Members.
- 5.1.8 The Board approved the Annual Assurance Statement for submission to the SHR. This was proposed by Lesley McInnes and seconded by Carl Patching.

## 5.2 Health & Safety Update

- 5.2.1 The ExDGS spoke to his paper and sought Board approval of the Health & Safety Update.
- 5.2.2 The Board noted that the Health & Safety Policy Statement would be brought to Board in January 2024 for its annual review.
- 5.2.3 The Board suggested that the Health & Safety Manager consider adding an 'incident' category for the reporting of accidents, near misses, and dangerous occurrences.
- 5.2.4 The Health & Safety Update was approved. This was proposed by Lesley McInnes and seconded by Fiona Mustarde.

## 5.3 Delivery Plan 2022/23 Close Down

- 6.3.1 The CEO spoke to her report and sought approval of the close down of the Delivery Plan 2022/23.
- 5.3.2 The Board discussed whether the action regarding activity to meet the requirements of Housing 20240 should be assigned the red category of having 'significant delivery issues', and instead should be assigned the amber category of having 'some delivery issues'. It was agreed actions which spanned delivery years were difficult to assess and that the Leadership Team needed to be more clinical in defining the in year deliverables that needed to be achieved.
- 5.3.3 The Board approved the close down of the Delivery Plan for 2022/23 and the arrangements for the reporting of the Delivery Plan for 2023/24. This was proposed by Lesley McInnes and seconded by Carl Patching.

## FINAL Albyn Housing Society Board Meeting | MINUTES

- 5.4 Highland Residential (Inverness) Ltd Annual Report 2022/23
- 5.4.1 *Zoe Bywater joined the meeting at this point.*
- 5.4.2 The Chair welcomed the newly appointed Head of Service for Highland Residential (Inverness) Ltd (HRIL), Zoe Bywater, to the meeting.
- 5.4.3 The CEO set out the importance of the Society Board having oversight of the governance of its subsidiary, HRIL. The Annual Report provided Board with an overview of the activities of the subsidiary in 2022/23 and had been reviewed and approved by the HRIL Board. The HRIL Business Plan and a further update on performance would also be presented to the Society Board each year.
- 5.4.4 The HHRIL introduced herself to Board and gave a summary of her background and noted that she would use her experience in the property sector to champion HRIL and the Society.
- 5.4.5 The CEO noted that the Society was continuing to lobby Scottish Government regarding the classification of Mid Market Rent properties as being within the private rented sector and therefore subject to the same rent caps despite being very different.
- 5.4.6 The HRIL Annual Report 2022/23 was approved by the Board. This was proposed by Lesley McInnes and seconded by Ian Fosbrooke.
- 5.4.7 *Zoe Bywater left the meeting at this point.*
- 5.5 Rent Consultation Options
- 5.5.1 The ExDGS spoke to his report and sought Board approval of the approach to rent consultation as set out within it.
- 5.5.2 It was noted that consultation would commence in November 2023 and run to early January 2024. The outcome of the consultation would be presented to Board at the end of January 2024 so that a decision upon the increase could be made. It was expected that tenants would choose CPI+1% and this was used as the planning assumption.
- 5.5.3 The Board enquired as to the rationale for not offering a consultation offer of below CPI +1%. The ExDGS advised that this would result in less investment in existing stock which would compromise the quality of tenant's homes. The Leadership Team did not consider to be a sustainable option, especially following two years of sub inflation rent increases. This would be outlined to tenants within the consultation report that was to be issued to them.
- 5.5.4 The CEO advised that the consultation process would mirror that of the previous year, with engagement activities such as pop up surgeries and Housing Officer visits supporting the consultation report sent out to tenants.
- 5.5.5 The ExDO outlined the substantial amount of financial support that had been secured to support tenants with the cost of living crisis. In addition, the Society had secured fuel debt write offs totalling over £10K for tenants. The Society would ask tenants about fuel debt as part of the consultation to identify more that could be supported.
- 5.5.6 The Board discussed the rent increase consultation proposal options and agreed that those provided were in line with the requirements of the Society to deliver the best service to its tenants.

## FINAL Albyn Housing Society Board Meeting |MINUTES

5.5.7 The Board approved the rent consultation options of:

- CPI + 2.00%
- CPI + 1.5%
- CPI + 1.00%

This was proposed by Lesley McInnes and seconded by Ian Fosbrooke

### 5.6 Land Disposal Proposals

5.6.1 The ExDGS spoke to his report and sought Board approval of the recommendations made within it for the disposal of two plots of land.

5.6.2 It was noted by the Board that the valuation reports provided had been completed by two different contractors each using different units of measurement. It requested that a single unit of measurement be used in future.

5.6.3 With regard to the plot of land in Dornoch which was to be donated to the Dornoch & District Community Association, it was confirmed to Board that The Highland Council had donated the additional piece of land detailed within the report and was supportive of the proposed donation by the Society.

5.6.4 With regard to the sale of the plot of land in Muir of Ord, it was confirmed to Board that the Society would ensure that the necessary title restrictions were imposed to prevent development of the land.

5.6.5 The Board advised the Society that it should have a policy in place for disposals. The ExDGS accepted this as an **action**.

**Andrew  
Martin**

5.6.6 The Board approved the disposal of:

- 170Sqm of land behind the Albyn Scheme at Logans Way, Muir of Ord to an adjacent private owner at its disposal value of £4K.
- 0.013Ha of land northeast of Morrison Court, Dornoch for a nominal value in favour of the Dornoch and District Community Association.

This was proposed by Carl Patching and seconded by Lesley McInnes

### 5.7 Society Membership Applications & Removals

5.7.1 The ICL spoke to her report and sought Board approval of the recommendations for Society shareholding member approval and removal.

5.7.2 The Board approved the shareholding membership of the Dornoch & District Community Association. The Board approved the removal of the persons specified within the report from the Shareholders Register. This was proposed by Lesley McInnes and seconded by Carl Patching.

## 6. **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### 6.1 Civica CX Post Implementation Review

6.1.1 *Chris Ellis joined the meeting at this point.*

6.1.2 The DIT and HPP presented the Civica CX Implementation Review to the Board for its information

## FINAL Albyn Housing Society Board Meeting | MINUTES

- 6.1.3 The Board commented that it was a balanced report which reflected the challenges of delivering the project and the lessons that should be learnt from it.
- 6.1.4 The Board enquired as to the financial implications associated with the delivery of the project. The DIT advised that the project had come in on budget as it was a fixed price contract. Additional cost has been incurred through the need to bring in an external consultant, but this had enabled the Society to move towards implementation of the housing management system more quickly. The Board accepted this but noted that there had also been a high opportunity cost associated with the delivery of the project.
- 6.1.5 The Board enquired about future modules to be added to the housing management system. The DIT advised that modules for voids, anti-social behaviour, and a customer portal were to follow. It was added that the Society was investing in training for staff to ensure that it had inhouse expertise to make system changes, and so that the benefits of the system could be fully realised.
- 6.1.6 The Board noted the review.
- 6.1.7 *Chris Ellis left the meeting at this point.*
- 6.2 Emergency Report – Insurance Renewal
- 6.2.1 The Chair set out the details of the annual insurance renewal which was approved outwith the meeting cycle via the emergency procedure. The procedure had been used because approval was required in advance of the October 2023 Board meeting.
- 6.2.2 The ExDGS outlined that usually the insurance renewal would be covered by the approved budget; however, the premium amount being charged had increased significantly and therefore required additional Board approval. It was noted that the increase in insurance premiums was a sector wide issue for Registered Social Landlords.
- 6.2.3 The Board noted the report.
- 6.3 Emergency Report – Land Acquisition
- 6.3.1 The Chair set out the details of the land acquisition which was approved outwith the meeting cycle via the emergency procedure. The procedure was used because approval was required in advance of the October 2023 Board meeting.
- 6.3.2 The ExDGS outlined that the acquisition was in partnership with the Scottish Government and The Highland Council. Scottish Government and The Highland Council had provided support for the proposed acquisition to be 100% grant funded subject to the submission of a tender proposal to complete the refurbishment of the dwelling.
- 6.3.3 The Board noted the report.
- 6.4 Verbal Update: Scottish Housing Regulator - RAAC Information Request
- 6.4.1 *Caroline Madden joined the meeting at this point.*
- 6.4.2 The ExDO and IHPS provided an update to Board on RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete), and the recent letter from SHR requesting information about this matter by 31 October 2023.

## **FINAL** Albyn Housing Society Board Meeting | **MINUTES**

- 6.4.3 It was noted that the Board had received an update on RAAC at the Board Engagement event in September 2023, along with a further update by email at the end of September 2023.
- 6.4.4 Following a detailed internal desktop review, the Society was confident that none of the properties within the Albyn Group portfolio contain RAAC; however, the SHR required this assessment to be externally validated. Rapleys had been contracted to provide this external validation with the support of the technical team of the Society.
- 6.4.5 The Society would also be publishing an update for tenants on its website on 25 October 2023 to reassure any who might have concerns.
- 6.4.6 The Board noted the update.
- 6.4.7 *Caroline Madden left the meeting at this point.*

### **7. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

- 7.1 Confidential Item
- 7.2 Confidential Item

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

- 8.1 The Board noted the approved minute of the Albyn Enterprises Ltd Board meeting held on 13 June 2023.
- 8.2 The Board noted the approved minute of the Highland Residential (Inverness) Ltd Board meeting held on 19 June 2023.
- 8.3 The Board noted the approved minute of the Audit & Risk Management Committee meeting held on 20 June 2023.

### **9. AOCB**

- 9.1 None.

### **10. DATES OF FUTURE BOARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

- 10.1 The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting ended.