

# FINAL Albyn Housing Society Board Meeting |MINUTES

**Date:** Tuesday 23 January 2024  
**Time:** 6:00pm  
**Location:** Teams

## Members Present

Lesley McInnes,  
Chair

Clea Warner,  
Vice Chair

Ian Fosbrooke,  
Secretary

Carl Patching  
Member

Fiona Mustarde,  
Member

Scott Macleod,  
Member

Angela Currie,  
Member

Jackie Bugden,  
Member

Lynne Holburn,  
Member

Niall Owen,  
Member

Craig Levy,  
Member

## In Attendance

Maureen Knight,  
Executive Dir. of Operations  
(ExDO)

Andrew Martin,  
Executive Dir. of Group Services  
(ExDGS)

Laurie MacLeod  
Head of Human Resources  
(HHR)

Laura Morgan,  
Interim Corporate Lead  
(ICL) - minute

### 1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies had been received from Kirsty Morrison and Craig Russell.

### 2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

2.1 Regarding agenda item 5.1 Rent Increase, the following Board Members as tenants of Albyn Housing Society (AHS) declared an interest: Scott MacLeod, Craig Levy, and Jackie Bugden, and Ian Fosbrooke.

2.2 The Chair noted the interests and was satisfied that the Board Members would be able to participate in the discussion of this item objectively.

### 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: 29 November 2023

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

#### 4.2 Confidential Minute of Board Meeting: 29 November 2023

4.2.1 The confidential minute of the last meeting was approved. This was proposed by Carl Patching and seconded by Craig Levy.

#### 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 ExDGS spoke to his report and presented the Rent Increase Proposal for Board approval.

5.1.2 There was a discussion about the consultation and the ExDGS confirmed to the Board that AHS responded to all comments made by tenants in their responses. The Board noted that it had been made aware that a tenant had not received the rent consultation. The ExDGS advised that the consultation had been issued to just over 2,800 tenants by a mix of email, post, and text, based upon the communication preferences on file for each tenant. The ExDGS accepted an **action** to investigate this point.

**Andrew  
Martin**

5.1.3 The Board noted that using (Consumer Price Index (CPI) as an anchor point for rent increases might be misleading as the basket of goods used when calculating CPI does not reflect the type of costs that AHS as an organisation faces, such as the increased cost of maintenance and development. The ExDGS advised that the consultation did mention to tenants the specific cost increases that were impacting AHS, for example, increased insurance costs.

5.1.4 The Board discussed the rent affordability data provided with the report and noted that single pensioners appeared to be at high risk and queried what would be done to support vulnerable tenants. The ExDO advised that a survey on the cost of living crisis was currently being

## ACTION

conducted to find out which bills tenants were struggling to pay so that AHS could understand how best to support them. It was noted that AHS needed to cast a wide net in terms of the support it offered via its TRUST and Energy Funds as a range of tenants were facing financial hardship, including those who were in work. The Board also noted that value for money was an important point to consider alongside affordability.

5.1.5 The Board requested that in future the rent affordability data include how many tenants AHS had in each of the categories detailed, so that it might better understand the risk for each. The ExDGS accepted this as an **action** and also agreed to send out an updated rent affordability table with this data included after the meeting. **Andrew Martin**

5.1.6 The proposed 10% rent levy on new builds was discussed by the Board. The ExDGS advised that this was on the basis that new builds were built to higher building and energy efficiency standards which resulted in lower running costs for occupants. The Board requested that further work be completed to set out the rationale for a model of how this levy would work in perpetuity, with reference to relevant research that was available. The ExDGS accepted an **action** to bring this to the March 2024 Board meeting. **Andrew Martin**

5.1.7 The Board approved the following recommendations as detailed within the Rent Increase Proposal report:

- Increase the applicable rentals charged by 7.7%
- Continue to increase the Management Fee (for Shared Ownership properties) by 7.7% (£329 to £354 pa)
- Maintain garage rents at £13 per month.

This was proposed by Carl Patching and seconded by Craig Levy.

## 5.2 Delivery Plan Update

5.2.1 The ExDGS spoke to his paper and sought Board approval of the Delivery Plan Update.

5.2.2 The Board noted the importance of ensuring that adequate resource was in place to deliver upon actions that were outstanding.

5.2.3 The Delivery Plan Update was approved. This was proposed by Angela Currie and seconded by Fiona Mustarde.

## 5.3 Biomass Charge Increase

5.3.1 The ExDO spoke to her report and sought Board approval of the recommendation within it.

5.3.2 The Board approved an increase in the Aviemore biomass charge from 25 pence per kWh to 26.15 pence per kWh from 01 April 2024. This was proposed by Niall Owen and seconded by Lynne Holburn.

## 5.4 Former Tenant Write Offs

5.4.1 The ExDGS spoke to his report and sought Board approval of the recommendation within it.

5.4.2 The ExDGS confirmed to the Board that former tenant debts were last written off in the previous financial year in line with the Financial Regulations. It was added that the AHS accounting policy provides for 95% of former, and 5% of current tenant arrears.

5.4.3 The ExDO advised the Board that current arrears were performing extremely well.

5.4.4 The Board requested that the writing off of former tenant arrears was regularised and take place every January.

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5.4.5 The Board approved the recommendation to write off irrecoverable former tenant debts of £109,470.53. This was proposed by Jackie Bugden and seconded by Fiona Mustarde.

### 5.5 Asset Management Disposal Proposals

5.5.1 The ExDGS spoke to his report and sought Board approval of the recommendations within it.

5.5.2 Redacted - Commercially sensitive

5.5.3 Redacted - Commercially sensitive

5.5.4 Redacted - Commercially sensitive

5.5.5 The Board approved the recommendation of the marketing from disposal of properties at:

- 77 Wyvis Place, Inverness (including if below original grant value)
- Craigdarroch Cottage, Contin

This was proposed by Clea Warner and seconded by Craig Levy.

## 6. POLICY & STRATEGY

### 6.1 Financial Regulations / Authority & Approval Levels 2024

6.1.1 The ExDGS presented the updated Financial Regulations / Authority & Approval Levels 2024 to the Board for approval.

6.1.2 It was noted that the ExDGS would be making administrative updates to the roles detailed within the Authority & Approval levels and would also be clarifying the line regarding 'rent level' approval within the document as per feedback from Board.

6.1.3 The Board approved the Financial Regulations 2024. This was proposed by and seconded by Niall Owen and Fiona Mustarde

### 6.2 Treasury Management Policy

6.2.1 The ExDGS presented the updated Treasury Management Policy to the Board for approval.

6.2.2 It was noted that a complete rewrite of the policy had been completed to ensure it complied with the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) Code, as required by the Scottish Housing Regulator. It was noted that references to 'Finance Director' in the policy reflected a role, rather than a postholder.

6.2.3 It was noted that the ExDGS would be bringing a report to the March 2024 Board to discuss options for fixing more of the organisational loan facility.

6.2.4 *Fiona Mustarde left the meeting at this point.*

6.2.5 The Board suggested that some training for Board Members on treasury management might be helpful. The ExDGS accepted this as an **action**.

**Andrew  
Martin**

6.2.6 The Board approved the new Treasury Management Policy. This was proposed by Clea Warner and seconded by Angela Currie.

6.2.7 The Board noted the ATFS Treasury Management Annual Review

### 6.3 Health & Safety Policy

6.3.1 The ExDGS presented the updated Health & Safety Policy to the Board for approval.

## ACTION

- 6.3.2 The Board approved the Health & Safety Policy. This was proposed by Jackie Bugden and seconded by Niall Owen.

## 7. INFORMATION ITEMS

### 7.1 People Strategy Update

- 7.1.1 The HHR presented the People Strategy to the Board for its information.
- 7.1.2 The Board welcomed the report and was pleased to see the excellent staff survey response and commended the Leadership Team for its achievements in progressing the strategy.
- 7.1.3 The Board suggested that some KPIs be developed to track the progress of the strategy. The HHR accepted this as an **action**. **Laurie MacLeod**
- 7.1.4 There was a discussion about pay negotiations and the HHR advised that she had met with the GMB regional negotiator, with a further meeting scheduled for February.
- 7.1.5 *Fiona Mustarde joined meeting at this point.*
- 7.1.6 The Board noted the People Strategy Update.

## 8. APPROVED MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR NOTING

- 8.1 The Board noted the approved minute of the Highland Residential (Inverness) Ltd (HRIL) Board meeting held on 07 September 2023.
- 8.2 The Board noted the approved minute of the Audit & Risk Management Committee meeting held on 19 September 2023.

## 9. AOCB

### 9.1 Verbal Update: Board Collective Survey

- 9.1.1 The Chair advised Board Members that the ICL would be issuing the annual Board Collective Survey in February via Govenda. The survey was part of the wider Board review process and encouraged Members to complete it.
- 9.1.2 The Board noted the update.

### 9.2 Verbal Update: Affordable Housing Supply Programme

- 9.2.1 The ExDGS provided a verbal update on the recent announcement by Scottish Government that the Affordable Housing Supply Programme would be cut by £196M nationally in 2024/25. This was a 26% reduction from the previous year and was the second consecutive year that cuts had been made to the programme.
- 9.2.2 These cuts were relevant to AHS due to its large development programme and the organisation was in discussion with the Scottish Government to assess what the impact would be upon the

**ACTION**

Highland region. AHS would take the proposed cuts into considerations when setting its budget and might need to make changes to its development programme.

9.2.3 The Board noted the update.

9.3 Verbal Update: Highland Residential Independent Director

9.3.1 The ExDGS provided a verbal update on the recruitment activity for an Independent Director of HRIL. A candidate for the role had recently been assessed by the CEO, ExDGS, and Chair of HRIL, all of whom were supportive of recommending to Board that the candidate be appointed. Due to the timing of the interview, an approval report for the AHS Board to consider could not be issued in time for this meeting; instead, Members would be sent a report for consideration the next day (24 January 2024) under the emergency procedure.

9.3.2 The Board noted the update.

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

10.1 The dates of future meetings were noted.

The meeting ended.