

ALMOND ENTERPRISES LTD.

MINUTES

of the virtual Board meeting held at 5.00pm on Thursday 18 February 2021

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Alistair Barton
Kevin Clark
Tatyana Duffie
Margaret Schonberger

APOLOGIES:

IN ATTENDANCE:

Vicky Wilson (from item 546 to 563)	AEL Manager
John Davidson	Chief Executive, AHA
Angela Coutts	Director of Corporate Services, AHA
Tammy Allan	AHA - Minutes

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Please note that these minutes have been edited to remove any commercially sensitive or confidential discussions.

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STANDING ITEMS

546	<p>Welcome AB welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p>
547	<p>Apologies No apologies were received.</p>
548	<p>Approval of Previous Minutes The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2020.</p>
549	<p>AOCB Approval AC advised that she would like to discuss with the Board recruitment requirements going forward.</p>
550	<p>Declaration of Interest None.</p>
551	<p>Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JD advised that the AHA Board had formally approved AB as the Chair of AEL at their December meeting. • A request had been made for VW to provide an update on the lessons learned as a result of the current Covid restrictions. AB advised this was on the agenda under item 15.
552	<p>AEL Manager's Business Report</p> <p>VW presented the Manager's Business Report. MS asked how the regular one-to-ones with staff were going. VW confirmed that staff had welcomed them. She advised that staff were missing working together and felt slightly disheartened as a result. Each one-to-one lasts approximately 20 mins unless there is a requirement for them to last longer. Staff are given a template to complete ahead of the meeting. AC commented that as the time allowed for each one-to-one has not been included in the budget, it was a non-chargeable expense with regard to contracts and VW may need to look at how this was included going forward, perhaps through the training budget.</p> <p>VW confirmed that following a costing exercise it had been concluded that it would not be economical for AEL to take on the Garden Scheme contract for AHA. KC queried if the work involved was work that had been carried out by AEL before. VW advised that AEL had tendered for alternative work for AHA but were not successful. MS questioned if AEL still carried out work in private gardens. VW confirmed that this was the case, and it was hoped to increase this once restrictions were lifted. AB confirmed that the £20k allowed for preparation for this contract had now been absorbed back into the budget.</p> <p>With regard to the proposed change in line management arrangements for the AEL Manager, MS expressed her concern that the Director of Asset Management would not be able to offer an independent view as they were also employed by the Parent company. JD advised that there would be no conflict and procurement processes would ensure that all business is sourced and appointed fairly. JD assured the Board that the Director of Asset Management would be there to provide support to the AEL Manager. Also AHA remained accountable to the Scottish Housing Regulator, so must ensure that this change was successful. JD advised that initial interviews were scheduled to take place around 8th March and it was hoped to have someone in post by June.</p> <p>The Board agreed in principle that a line management role for the AEL Manager be provided by the new AHA Director of Asset Management, and noted that this proposal would now be considered by the AHA Board.</p> <p>The Board noted the Manager's report.</p>

PRESENTATIONS

553 None.

PAPERS for APPROVAL

554 **Finance report and management accounts to December 2020, including proposed Gift Aid of part of current year surplus 2020-21**

VW presented the report and informed the Board that it was proposed that £35k of the anticipated surplus be gift aided to Almond HA in the current year. MS asked VW to ensure that all of the required equipment for AEL was in stock and up to date before any surplus is gifted. VW confirmed that stock has already been replenished and some small purchases have been made. AEL were also examining the purchase of a resource management system and carrying out some vehicle repairs.

AC noted that whilst there was a £35k surplus, AEL had received £17k worth of financial support through the year in terms of furlough support and other grants which were made available. The £17k was to ensure sustainability of the business as a result of loss of income through Covid restrictions. AC advised that the gift aid will be used to purchase 180 IT devices to donate to local families who are in need given the ongoing issue of home schooling. It will also be used to fund the Community Soup initiative.

The Board **approved** a Gift Aid payment to Almond HA of £35k in the current financial year.

The Board **noted** the financial position as at 31 December 2020.

555 **Draft Budget – Year Ending 31 March 2022 & 3 Year Forecast**

VW presented the report and noted AC's comment regarding the costs of the staff one-to-one meetings. There were no other comments or questions from the Board.

The Board **reviewed** the Draft Annual Budget and key assumptions.

The Board **approved** the Budget, to be incorporated into the Business Plan for 2021-2022.

556 **Business Plan 2021-22**

AB reviewed the draft Business Plan. TD asked about the impact of Covid restrictions and if this had been considered for the coming year. AB advised that VW would report on the lessons learned as a result of Covid at agenda item 15. These were now incorporated into working practices.

The Board **approved** the Business Plan text for 2021/22, and **noted** that the finalised Plan, including the Budget approved under the last item, would be submitted to the Almond HA Board for formal adoption.

557 **Cost of Living Award 2021-22**

It was noted that this item would be taken at the end of the meeting.

FOR INFORMATION

558 **Business Plan 2020/21 – Action plan update**

VW presented the report. Seven of the nine actions had been completed and two had not been implemented. One of the outstanding actions was to provide an apprenticeship, but due to Covid restrictions this had not been possible this year. The other was with regard to working in partnership with supported businesses, but again due to Covid regular meetings to progress this had not been possible.

TD acknowledged the delays caused by Covid but requested that both actions were carried into 2021-22.

The Board **noted** the Action Plan progress report.

559	<p>Performance reports</p> <p>VW presented the performance report, advising that additional commentary against all red and amber KPIs could be found within her report.</p> <p>TD asked if there was any flexibility around the debtor and creditor days. She felt that 100% was an ambitious target. VW advised that the target had been reduced over the Christmas period. KC proposed that a 90% target may be more realistic, and it was agreed to consider this.</p> <p>The Board noted the report</p>
560	<p>Risk Register – Update</p> <p>AB advised that, while the Risk Register had been reviewed at the November meeting, it was on this agenda so that it remained in sync with the review calendar.</p> <p>One risk had been removed from the register as a result of Teckal and the work that is being carried out on behalf of AHA.</p> <p>The Board noted that there were currently no ‘high’ risks and two ‘medium’ risks.</p>
561	<p>Response to Covid-19</p> <p>VW presented her report on the response to Covid-19. A review of the budget had taken place and any contracts that could not be fulfilled were removed. To assist communication with staff, ‘morning huddles’ were introduced and where required, these were carried out via telephone. AEL staff now have staggered start times to avoid everyone being in the office at the same time and AHA had provided IT support in order to assist with home working.</p> <p>TD asked if there had been any effect on staff morale. VW confirmed that staff missed working together and the socialisation aspect of this.</p> <p>MS asked if any working practices had changed as a result of Covid. VW advised that she was having to work from home. Additional PPE had been introduced, and all staff have been given letters to carry with them to confirm that they were out on work if asked.</p> <p>KC asked if it would be feasible to get all staff on the same call at once. VW advised that the staff room at the office was not large enough to support this.</p> <p>The Board noted the report on AEL’s response to the challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>
562	<p>AOCB – Board Recruitment</p> <p>AC noted that this would be MS’s last Board meeting and advised that there was a need to recruit additional Board members. She would liaise directly with AB to progress with this.</p> <p>On behalf of current and previous Board members, AB expressed his appreciation to MS for all she had contributed to the success of AEL. MS had been instrumental in AEL’s formation and had remained very supportive of the original vision through many challenges and changes, including 4 Managers. AB thanked MS for her support and guidance in the hand-over of the Chairperson’s position.</p> <p>On behalf of the Parent company JD also expressed his thanks and appreciation to MS and wished her well in the future.</p>
563	<p>Board Members – items for future meetings</p> <p>None.</p>
564	<p>Cost of Living Award 2021-22</p> <p>VW left the meeting at this point. The Board reviewed the proposed Cost of Living Pay Award outlined in the paper circulated.</p> <p>The Board approved a 2% pay increase for all staff with effect from April 2021.</p>
565	<p>Date of Next Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 20th May 2020 @ 5.00pm – online