

BOARD MINUTES



Meeting Date: 04 May 2023
Time: 6pm
Venue: Almond HA Office

Board Members in Attendance

Adam Turner
Neil Tulloch
Chris Boyle
Julie Riley
Tricia Hill
Jeremy Hewer
Anne Gault
Darren Lewis
Vicky Bluck
Craig Morton

Apologies

Martin Joyce

Staff in Attendance

John Davidson	Chief Executive
Sandy Young	Director of Housing Management
Iona Taylor	Director of Asset Management
Craig Porter	Director of Finance and Business Support
Tammy Allan	Business Improvement Officer (minutes)

Others in Attendance

None

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

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STANDING ITEMS

6874	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p>
6875	<p>Apologies</p> <p>A record was made of apologies from non-attendees.</p>
6876	<p>Use of Seal</p> <p>CP advised that the Seal had been used once following the sale of a piece of land at 9 Selm Park.</p>
6877	<p>AOCB Approval</p> <p>None</p>
6878	<p>Declaration of Interest on any Agenda Items</p> <p>None.</p>
6879	<p>Minutes from Previous Meeting</p> <p>The Board approved the Minutes from the previous meeting without amendment.</p>
6880	<p>Matters Arising/Update/Information Papers for Discussion</p> <p>None</p>
6881	<p>Board Members – Items for Future Meetings</p> <p>AT advised that he will forward the details from the Board Strategy Day onto JD.</p> <p>JH noted that it would be useful for the Board to receive a report on the Associations position regarding the recent CIH report on domestic abuse.</p>
6882	<p>Board Training – Verbal</p> <p>JR advised that she has recently attended Part 1 & 2 of the On Board sessions.</p>
6883	<p>Chief Executive’s Report</p> <p>JD gave a verbal update on the proposed cost of living award for staff and advised that the report will be submitted to the Staffing sub-committee to consider before being brought to Board for approval. JD also informed the Board that AHA are looking to proceed with an open market purchase on a property at Shiel Walk using funding that has been received from the Scottish Government. This purchase will make Almond the majority owner within that particular block.</p> <p>There were queries raised around why AHA used [REDACTED] to carry out the tenant satisfaction survey and where AHA are with regards to gathering regular tenant feedback including meeting with the Tenant Focus Group.</p> <p>There was further discussion regarding the 4-day working week and how it works with staff working from home and how that works. The discussion included an update on what phase 2 of the working group review would include. It was also noted that the issues with [REDACTED] (portal and app) is hindering the AHAs ability to progress to a 4-day working week and the Association are going to officially note their concerns directly with [REDACTED]</p> <p>The Board noted the content of the Chief Executive’s report.</p>

PRESENTATIONS

None.

REPORTS FOR DECISION

6884

Growth and partnership

JD presented the report and noted that he was hopeful that it reflects the discussion and presentation during the recent Strategy Day meeting. He also noted that AHA would not be knocking on doors but are more open to opportunities should they arise.

JD moved on to advise that the proposal is that AHA move towards agreeing how we move forward the process for deciding on whether to respond to requests for expressions of interest. There are a couple of other specifics that need to be considered, such as whether there was a view that AHA should be the main player and also what the redlines should be with regards to what we were not willing to negotiate on.

The Board noted that geography would be the biggest barrier and would also like to keep the community feel. They also didn't want to rule out being the smaller party as that could rule out some good opportunities.

The Board **considered** and **approved** the proposed position statement regarding our approach to potential growth & partnership opportunities.

The Board **agreed** to receive a proposed SMT desktop scoring matrix for approval at a future meeting in advance of 'going live' with our growth & partnership process.

6885

Reports to be approved following Audit & Finance Sub-committee – Risk Map Review

VB informed the Board that there were no major changes proposed to the Risk map this quarter.

The Board **noted** the status of the risk map.

6886

Reports to be approved following Audit & Finance Sub-committee – Bad Debt Write-Off

VB informed the Board that the Audit and Finance Sub-committee were happy with the proposal within the report.

There were no queries or questions from the Board.

The Board **approved** the proposed bad debt write off/write-off of credit balances as recommended by the Audit and Finance Sub-committee.

6887

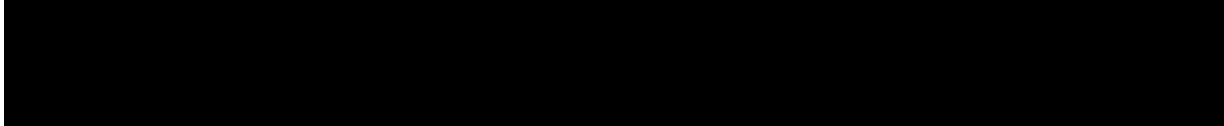
Reports to be approved following Audit & Finance Sub-committee – Treasury update

VB informed the Board that whilst the report suggested that [REDACTED] were relaxing the financial covenant, the Audit and Finance Sub-committee sought further clarification regarding the letters issued by [REDACTED] as it is very unlike a financial institution to make this type of offer.

CP advised that he was currently waiting to hear back from the Associations financial treasury advisors on the position following on from a meeting held with them [REDACTED]

The Board **noted** the update on our Loan covenant with [REDACTED] and also progress of our security release with Royal Bank of Scotland.

	<p>It is recommended that the Director of Finance & Business Support review future plans and make recommendations during the creation of the 2024 Budget setting cycle for any internal interest cover targets.</p>
6888	<p>Accounting for Pensions – March 2023</p> <p>CP presented the report and informed the Board that the pre-determined rates that TPT are using are extremely low compared with the assumptions used within the AHA budget and financial forecast.</p> <p>CP highlighted that as discussed in previous years, the Board are required to be satisfied with the assumptions used in calculation of the Pension Deficit to be included within the Financial Statement to 31 March.</p> <p>A recommendation was presented to the Board that the 3 areas of RPI, CPI and earnings be adjusted to better reflect AHA’s view of the forward economic climate. This is consistent with previous years assumptions.</p> <p>Following discussion, the Board agreed that the March 2023 assumptions when released would be adjusted by the maximum variance available for both CPI and RPI and that the average earnings assumption included within the AHA long term financial plans would be used.</p> <p>The Board agreed to utilise The Pension Trust’s assumptions on discount rates and life expectancy with the pensions calculator for the defined pension with SHAPs for the year ended 31 March 2023.</p>
6889	<p>Loan Portfolio Return</p> <p>CP informed the Board that the Loan Portfolio Return is a standard Return that is submitted to the Regulator on an annual basis.</p> <p>The Board approved the submission of the Loan Portfolio return by 30 June 2023 to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The SHR has still to open the submission timescales on their website however due to the timings of Board meetings a summary of the submission information is included within Appendix 1 will be submitted once available.</p>
6890	<p>SHR Five Year Financial Return</p> <p>CP informed the Board that the Associations Five-Year Financial Return is in-line with the budget that was approved by the Board in February.</p> <p>There were no queries our questions from the Board.</p> <p>The Board authorised the Director of Finance and Business Support to submit the Five-Year Financial Plan to the Scottish Housing Regulator by the filing deadline of 31 May 2023.</p>
6891	<p>Insurance update</p> <p>Following a discussion at the Board Away day in March, approval was sought for the Chair and Vice-Chair regarding the proposed insurance option for the Jespersion blocks and CP advised that the Association now require homologation from the Board.</p> <p>Based on the information within the report, the Board queried what the long-term plan would be for next year. However, CP advised that there will be an issue around insurance throughout the sector. The Associations longer term plans will see an increase in its premiums and [REDACTED]</p> <p>The Board homologated the decision of the Chair and Vice-Chair regarding the proposed insurance option for the Jespersion blocks.</p>

	<p>The Director of Finance and Business Support has undertaken discussions with our Brokers, Marsh to identify the best option for insurance cover for the Jespersion Blocks.</p> 
6892	<p>Share Cancellation</p> <p>CP presented the report and informed the Board that all of the proposed cancellations were in-line with the Associations financial statements.</p> <p>The Board approved the cancellation of the noted Shared certificates.</p>
6893	<p>Policy Approvals</p> <p>CP reminded the Board that a full review of the policy programme took place a few years ago and he noted that this is a refreshed version. The Board were also made aware that any policy approved at SMT which included significant changes would also be brought to Board for approval. IT also noted that the SHR is focusing more on compliance, and it was agreed that going forward, a compliance section would be included within the quarterly planned maintenance report along with notification of any major changes to legislation that are made.</p> <p>It was noted that the Financial Regulations and the Health & Safety Policy should both be brought to Board for approval. The Board also noted that they would like to be notified of any policy breaches.</p> <p>The Board approved the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme of policy reviews delegated to the Senior Management Team (SMT)
6894	<p>Katherine Street & Jespersion Block Update</p> <p>IT informed the Board that the report didn't include a huge update in terms of progress with the Jespersion Blocks, but that AHA are well under way with installing the fire alarm systems. There have been a number of customers who has refused access but AHA are in dialogue with them. She also advice that AHA have sought legal advice regarding forcing access which confirmed that a court order is not required. However, there are difficulties when owners do not allow access and AHA have one instance where this has happened, therefore, AHA are trying to liaise with them in order to proceed.</p> <p>IT also advised that AHA are out to tender for the Katherine Street work and are looking to utilise the Link framework which is significantly cheaper than SPA.</p> <p>The Board queried whether AHA had informed any of the owners who are within the same that will be affected and IT was able to confirm that AHA had made contact with both WLC and Dunedin Canmore.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of this report and approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The formal acceptance of the grant for the Net-Zero funding from the Scottish Government in the sum of £395,641 for 1-12 Katherine Street. • That the Chair be delegated to approve the successful tender for the fire-reinstatement works and energy improvement works currently being tendered. • That access be forced in the event that access is not provided to complete the works in properties owned by Almond HA.

Housing Management

6895	<p>Draft Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) and Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) 2022-23</p> <p>CP informed that the Board that AHA are looking for approval in order to submit the Annual Return. He made the Board aware that there was a validation error received in relation to Indicator 14 which is regarding the count of offer made. He advised that this is due to the way that the Return is designed, and they expect you to make more offers than are expected. However, the offers for the new build properties in Polbeth were made in a previous reporting period. Other RSLs have experienced a similar issue and CP advised that AHA are awaiting feedback on how to proceed.</p> <p>It was noted that previously Christine Dugan (CD) has carried out a validation exercise for the Association and the Board queried why this hasn't taken place this year. However, CP advised that AHA were content with the outcome of previous visits and therefore carried out an internal validation but wouldn't rule out asking CD to carry out a smaller validation visit in future years.</p> <p>The Board noted the content, and approved the Draft Return for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator.</p>
6896	<p>Annual Assurance Statement Working Group</p> <p>CP informed the Board the Board that AHA are looking for volunteers in order to form a short-life working group to review the Associations policies, procedures and documentation. The process will be similar to previous years, however next year the Association are going to look at alternative ways to give assurance. The Board were also made aware that the Annual Assurance Statement is being given extra emphasis by the Regulator.</p> <p>Previous members of the working group advised that the role includes ensuring that the Associations policies align with the SHR requirements.</p> <p>JR, TH and CM volunteered to participate this year.</p> <p>The Board approved the recommendation to form a short-life working group to review the evidence for the Annual Assurance Statement.</p>

Asset Management

CONSENT AGENDA

6897	<p>Consent Agenda</p> <p>IT referred to the Quarterly Planned Programme update and reminded the Board that 2 years ago, after it had been approved that ██████ would proceed with the windows contract, it was then agreed that ██████ would take over the works due to the issues that ██████ were experiencing. However, to date AHA have experienced quality issues with the work that ██████ are carrying out. Therefore, consideration is being made to revert back to ██████ and under the procurement rules, AHA would be allowed to do this. IT also noted that there are other frameworks in place, which would mean that AHA wouldn't need to go back out to market. However, other RSLs have advised that they have experienced issues when trying get contractors in place.</p> <p>The Board approved moving the contract back to ██████</p>
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	The Board agreed to the recommendations within the consent agenda.
6898	AOCB None
	Date of Next Meeting: 03 August 2023

Approved by:

Date: