

# BOARD MINUTES



**Meeting Date:** 02 November 2023  
**Time:** 6pm  
**Venue:** Almond HA Office

## Board Members in Attendance

Neil Tulloch  
Tricia Hill  
Vicky Bluck  
Martin Joyce  
Craig Morton  
Darren Lewis  
Chris Boyle

## Apologies

Adam Turner  
Julie Riley

## 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

## STANDING ITEMS

6932	<b>Welcome</b> The Vice Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
6933	<b>Apologies</b> A record was made of apologies from non-attendees.
6934	<b>Use of Seal</b> None
6935	<b>AOCB Approval</b> None
6936	<b>Declaration of Interest on any Agenda Items</b> Both DL & TH noted that they had an interest on agenda item 11iii as they have a relative who is a tenant of Almond HA.

6937	<p><b>Minutes from Previous Meeting</b></p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> the Minutes from the previous meeting without amendment.</p>
6938	<p><b>Matters Arising/Update/Information Papers for Discussion</b></p> <p>None</p>
6939	<p><b>Board Members – Items for Future Meetings</b></p> <p>None</p>
6940	<p><b>Board Training – Verbal</b></p> <p>CB noted that he had recently attended a two-day conference on Passivhaus and also currently undergoing an Institute of Leadership Course on Expect More Leadership, covering authenticity, vision, achievement, ownership and collaboration.</p> <p>TH queried whether there was a matrix or programme of what training was available for Board members to complete. JD advised that this wasn't something that AHA had, however it could be prepared which could also include details of what conferences are available to Board members. JD also noted that once the Board SharePoint page was developed, training material can be shared on there.</p>
6941	<p><b>Chief Executive's Report</b></p> <p>JD presented the report and provided an update on the Associations position with RAAC. He noted that we responded to the SHR request for information within their required timeframe and we have received the consultants (██████████) report back today which noted that they had not identified work that would need to be carried out straight away. However, medium to longer term we may be required to replace affected roofs. ██████████ ██████████. Therefore, a strategy will be developed once we have had time to digest the contents of the report. It was also noted that ██████████ have recommended that we carry out an inspection every 3 months and they would conduct an annual inspection. However, subject to further discussion and approval from the Board we would be looking to rehouse the tenants in the affected properties as soon as possible and the owner occupiers will also be made aware of the results. IT also noted at this point that in 2005 there was an issue that arose in Deans with significant issues in the buildings there and at that time we also carried out a survey in our properties and we are as confident as we can be that the 7 properties that have been highlighted are the only affected properties that we have.</p> <p>IT also advised that we have been successful in securing £25k grant funding that will be used to explore whether the proposal to proceed with a common ground loop heating pilot project would offer improved energy efficiency and a cost-effective heating for customers. The good work carried out by TL was noted and the positive feedback that was received from Rock Trust. It was also noted that a report will be brought back to Board regarding the accommodation, and they would be invited along to the meeting.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the content of the Chief Executive's report.</p>
<b>PRESENTATIONS</b>	
	None
<b>REPORTS FOR DECISION</b>	

6942	<p><b>Reports to be approved following Audit &amp; Finance Sub-Committee – Budget Revision – Forecast Out-turn 2023/24</b></p> <p>The report was presented by VB who noted that the budget revisions for the remainder of the year were approved by the Audit &amp; Finance Sub-committee.</p> <p>TH noted that there will be additional spend against the windows and doors contract and she questioned why these were not being capitalised. However, CP clarified that Almond HA don't capitalise these.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> the budget revisions for 2023/24 as recommended by the Audit and Finance Sub-committee.</p>
6943	<p><b>Reports to be approved following Audit &amp; Finance Sub-committee – Budget Assumptions 2024/25</b></p> <p>VB detailed that the Audit and Finance Sub-committee agreed that the budget assumptions for 2024/25 were as robust as they can be but also agreed that it is difficult to anticipate what is going to happen going forward.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> the high-level budget assumptions for 2024/25 as recommended by the Audit and Finance Sub-committee.</p>
6944	<p><b>Reports to be approved following Audit &amp; Finance Sub-committee – Annual Rent Review 2024/25</b></p> <p>VB informed the Board that the Audit and Finance Sub-committee felt that overall, the three proposed figures that we should consult on are the correct ones.</p> <p>VB also informed the Board of the discussion that took place during the Audit and Finance meeting around affordability and noted that a lot of work has been carried out by the housing staff to ensure that AHA tenants could still afford any rent increase and they felt comfortable with the outcome and the proposed rates. She also noted that the same method that was used last year will be used for the consultation.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> consultation methods with options for 4.4%, 4.9% and 5.4% increase in rent for 2024/25 as recommended by the Audit and Finance Sub-committee.</p>
6945	<p><b>Reports to be approved following Audit &amp; Finance Sub-committee – Risk Map</b></p> <p>VB detailed that the risk map was taken as read and on the basis that CP will revert back later taking on board the recommendations that were discussed at the awayday.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the status of the Risk Map.</p>
6946	<p><b>Policy Review – Standing Orders</b></p> <p>CP reminded Board that the Standing orders were recently reviewed and approved in August. They have now been amended to include an Asset Management Sub-committee. They also include proposed amendments to the Staffing Sub-committee remit with delegated authority being given to SMT where regrading of staff up to £5,000 could now be approved by SMT.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> the revised Standing Orders which have been updated following the Boards request for an Asset Management Sub-committee.</p> <p>The Board <b>endorsed</b> the recommendation of the Staffing Sub-committee to approve the re-grading of an existing administrative post required under the existing Standing Orders (the level of re-grade applied in this instance (under £5000) would, in future fall under delegated authority to SMT under the proposed revised policy).</p>

6947	<p><b>Sub-Committee Remits and Membership</b></p> <p>There was a discussion around the importance of each sub-committee and the newly formed Asset Management Sub-committee which has 3 members and quorum is also 3. However, CP confirmed that there will be a recruitment drive for additional Board members next year.</p> <p>CM volunteered to join the Asset Management Sub-committee.</p> <p>DL volunteered to join both the Staffing and Allocations Sub-committees.</p> <p>CM also noted that he could provide some finance training for anyone who is interested in joining the Audit &amp; Finance Sub-committee and VB offered to provide training around risk for anyone who felt that they would benefit from receiving it.</p> <p>The Board <b>agreed</b> the remit of the sub-committees of the Board, in line with the Standing Orders and Board members agree the composition of the sub-committee.</p>
6948	<p><b>Board Meeting Schedule – Proposed meeting dates</b></p> <p>CP presented the report and detailed that there are two options provided for the proposed meeting schedule. He advised that for option 1 there would be no meeting in April, a strategy day in May and the overall meeting count would reduce by one. Option 2 would involve a strategy day in April and then have a meeting in both May and June.</p> <p>The Board agreed on option 2 with having one of the meetings held online, possibly May, unless there is a requirement to have the meeting held in person.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> the list of dates proposed for 2024 Board meetings, the proposed date for the AGM, the proposed dates for the 2024 Audit and Finance Committee, and the proposed dates for the Board Strategy ½ Day.</p>
6949	<p><b>Role Descriptions for Governing Board Members</b></p> <p>CP informed the Board that the Annual Assurance Working Group had picked up that the Governing Body Role Descriptions were required to be reviewed. It was therefore agreed that the Association would adopt the revised SFHA version.</p> <p>There were no queries or questions from the Board.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> the reviewed GBM and Office Bearer Role Descriptions.</p>
6950	<p><b>Nine Day Fortnight</b></p> <p>JD reminded the Board that SMT considered the option of moving to a 4-day working week, however it was identified that there would be too much impact on customer service given that Almond currently has a limited online offering for tenants. He moved on to note that it is proposed that we trial a 9-day fortnight (9DF) over a 9-month trial period. He also noted the matrix that will be used to monitor impact and regular reporting will be brought to Board.</p> <p>It was noted that at the end of the trial Board could decide if we proceed with a 9DF on a permanent basis or revert back to a normal working week. It was also noted that if the 9DF resulted in any detrimental impact to the Association, there would be a 2-week notice period to stop with the trial.</p> <p>JD noted that there would be a small financial impact for the trial and this is for staff who currently work part time. The driver is also to help mitigate the challenges that we have faced recently including attracting and retaining staff, to maintain our low sickness levels and also to look after colleagues' wellbeing. He also noted that this would be a voluntary agreement for staff and whilst he would be surprised if anyone would reject the idea, some members of staff have expressed some concern over the impact that a 9DF would have on their current</p>

	<p>workload. However, the resource planning that we are doing will help identify where we can find efficiencies within a working day.</p> <p>VB noted that we must remain mindful that a 9DF has to be a flexible benefit, not a right and CB expressed concern around potentially reducing the service that we are providing to tenants. He also noted that there is evidence available that emphasises that 9DF do not work and whilst he is not against the idea, he doesn't feel as though just now is the right time for AHA. DL noted that he felt that this was both a bold and ambitious attempt by AHA especially within this industry and provides an attractive proposition for any potential new staff.</p> <p>JD noted that the proposal is about output and not hours worked, and it was felt that an alternative such as compressing existing hours into fewer days could have a negative impact on the mental health of staff. This generated further conversation regarding both the positive and negative impact that a 9DF may have. He also referred to the indicators that will be monitored throughout the trial and Board noted that they felt the trial should take place over a 12-month period and that they would like to review outputs at every meeting throughout the year with a review of the trial taking place in November and discussion for the next steps taking place in February 2025.</p> <p>Board noted that the Association should enter into the trial with caution and real scrutiny regarding what we are looking for and remain mindful that the trial has to be right for AHA and its customers.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> the implementation of a 9 Day Fortnight (9DF) trial from 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 to 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025.</p> <p>The Board <b>agrees</b> to receive progress update reports during the trial.</p> <p>The Board <b>agrees</b> to receive an outcome report at the February 2025 meeting with a recommendation on whether to continue with the 9DF on a permanent basis.</p>
6951	<p><b>Development update</b></p> <p>IT informed the Board that a HARP application was submitted for the Blackburn site in July, and it has gone through a technical appraisal but no response has been received as yet. However, she understands from the Scottish Government that there are 3 or 4 other RSLs who are going through the same level of scrutiny.</p> <p>IT also noted that she was asking for Boards approval to accept the offer of grant should it be forthcoming and proceed with the tender.</p> <p>IT moved on to remind Board that when it was discussed last year which developments we would proceed with, a decision was made against the site adjacent to the current site in Blackburn which was then offered to someone else. This offer has since failed and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] have approached Almond HA and advised that they would be interested in working with us on this site.</p> <p>IT also noted that there has been a change in the market recently and we are being approached by various developers, in particular a social housing developer about a potential site in Bridgend. However, she confirmed to Board that we would remain mindful and only engage in sites that we would consider viable.</p> <p>In terms of development reports, TH noted that it would be good to get a sense of viability overall and provide details of a cost per unit and what the grant ask is.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> that authority is delegated to the Chairperson to accept a satisfactory offer of funding for Mill Centre, Sycamore Walk, Blackburn prior to the February Board meeting.</p>

	<p>The Board <b>approved</b>, subject to receipt of a satisfactory offer of funding, acceptance of the negotiated design and build tender offer from [REDACTED] and conclusion of the associated land acquisition for Mill Centre, Sycamore Walk, Blackburn.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> the following in respect of the SHIP project, Community Centre / Filing Station Site, Ash Grove, Blackburn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Almond HA work in partnership with [REDACTED] to establish project viability, with a view to entering into a design and build contract, inclusive of land, at a future date.</li> <li>2. That Almond HA procure the services of a cost consultant from either the Link HA or SPA consultant's framework.</li> </ol>
6952	<p><b>Disposal of Jesperson flats and 1 property with unfactored block</b></p> <p>IT informed the Board that the scaffolding is currently being brought down in Katherine Street and is progressing well. She moved on to note that when installing the fire alarm systems in the affected Jesperson blocks, there are 6 properties where we cannot mitigate the fire risk. These 6 properties were previously highlighted to Board as we are unable to carry out any improvement works on the blocks that they are in and it was agreed that as they became available we would dispose of them.</p> <p>IT moved on to advise that these 6 properties have now been emptied and we are looking for approval to dispose. We are currently working with [REDACTED] and there are 3 where interest has been noted, however we may be required to accept around 10/15% below the home report value. This generated a discussion around how low we would be willing to accept, and it was agreed that it would be a maximum of 30% below the home report value.</p> <p>IT also noted that there is an additional property that AHA would like to dispose which is not located in a Jesperson block and it is [REDACTED]. It is a flat where the close is in poor condition and we have tried to engage with the owners in order to get improvement work carried out but failed.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b> the disposal of 7 properties, 6 Jesperson units within unfactored blocks and 1 unit in [REDACTED] which meets the previously approved criteria of disposing of flats in unfactored blocks.</p>
6953	<p><b>Unaccompanied Young Asylum Seekers Project</b></p> <p>SY informed the Board that the project brings minimal risk to Almond around asylum seekers status as these are leases which means the risk sits with the Rock Trust. SY confirmed that the rent value would be the same as any other of the Associations properties including the 10% admin fee.</p> <p>The Board <b>approved</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lease of two 2-bedroom flats to Rock Trust to manage the project, with potential to add 2 more units.</li> <li>• Approve a small budget spend (£6k) to add floor coverings and white goods.</li> </ul>
<b>Finance and Business Support</b>	
6954	<p><b>Statutory Returns – OSCR and FCA</b></p> <p>CP informed the Board that both the OSCR and FCA returns are statutory returns, and they are being reported to Board as standard.</p>

	The Board <b>noted</b> submission of the OSCR and FCA returns for the Association for the year ended 31 March 2023, by the due filing dates of 31 December and 31 October respectively.
6955	<p><b>Quarterly KPI Report – Q2 2023/24</b></p> <p>CP presented the Q2 KPI report and reminded Board that it was previously agreed that we would only report on main themes. He noted that within the summary section a number have triggered red but he advised that one indicator failing out of six would make a theme trigger red and the commentary in the pack details what action has been taken.</p> <p>CP moved on to advise that we recently received a performance analysis visit from Scotland’s Housing Network (SHN) who have carried out an analysis of our performance and compared it against our peer group. He noted that the visit has highlighted how stringent we are with regard to our own performance and that we perform really well when compared with our peer group and that we would incorporate SHN figures in our benchmarking next year.</p> <p>CB noted that the Percentage of stairwells with a valid monthly close fire inspection was extremely low at the beginning of the year and queried what has been done to improve the results in recent months. IT was able to advise that previously the inspections were taking place, however the issue lay with the way that the handheld devices recorded the information and therefore we could not evidence that the inspections were taking place.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the action taken on the Red KPI information, and <b>notes</b> the action taken by officers.</p>
<b>Housing Management</b>	
6956	<p><b>Tenant Engagement update</b></p> <p>SY queried whether Board members were happy with the level of detail provided within the tenant engagement update. Board members noted that they were Satisfied with the content.</p> <p>VB asked SY to provide focus group dates as she plans to attend one.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the contents of this paper.</p>
<b>CONSENT AGENDA</b>	
6957	<p><b>Consent Agenda</b></p> <p>JD referred to the AEL update and noted that at the time of writing the report we were looking at a scaled back training scheme. JD and IT have now attended Whiteinch &amp; Scotstoun HA which has a very successful subsidiary and received their input on proceeding with the service. This information coupled with the review work done by HomeAid indicates that we currently don’t have the capacity within AEL to proceed with a training programme at this stage, however we are meeting with the AEL Chair to discuss further. It is proposed that we have a strategy session with the AEL Board to look at a different approach, taking time to review the current AEL structure to ensure that it has the capacity to develop the business in advance of considering training opportunities.</p> <p>The Board <b>agreed</b> to the recommendations within the consent agenda.</p>
6958	<p><b>AOCB</b></p> <p>TH referred to the recent report regarding the proposed procurement approach for a new HMS &amp; noted that she felt the process could have been managed more effectively. JD acknowledged this and noted that, in hindsight, it would have been better to have held a meeting given that</p>

	there were details that required discussion and an exchange of views within a meeting would have been more effective.
	<b>Date of Next Meeting:</b> 01 February 2024

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

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