

## **ULSTER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT LTD**

(Company Limited by Guarantee and not having a Share Capital)

Minutes of a Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 11.00

Via video conferencing

### **Present**

Mr W Leathem	Chairman
Mr D O'Hara	Director
Ms J Cowan	Director
Ms C Magill	Director
Mr R Donnelly	Director
Mr W Atkinson	Chief Executive
Mr S Jackson	Head of Manufacturing & Recycling
Mr D Cowan	Head of Employment Services

### **Apologies**

Mrs SJ Mowbray	Company Secretary/Head of Governance & Compliance
Mr R Havlin	Director

## **1. Conflict of Interest**

- 1.1. A perceived conflict of interest was noted by R. Donnelly who has taken up an associate role with SIB NI
- 1.2. A perceived conflict of interest was noted from the SMT regarding the Pension redesign

## **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 August 2020**

2.1. Minutes from meeting on 26 August 2020 were approved with a few amendments

2.2. Actions from previous minutes:

- Mr Leathem confirmed the change of time of the Board meeting from afternoon to mornings going forward for next few months.
- Point 7 in finance report clarified by Mrs Mowbray that £22k deficit was misquoted.

- 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary has been set as an agenda item
- Policy review – there was a review of the governance and partnership agreement with the department – the reporting of finance has not changed. Twenty-two other policy reviews required, and Mr Atkinson and Mrs Mowbray will review these timelines. The Board to set aside time to review these policies, agreement was no more than 4 policies to be reviewed at any one time.

2.3. Mr Atkinson advised that he had spoken with Ms Cherry Arnold, Finance Director, DfC, regarding the Partnership Agreement. Mr Atkinson advised that Ms Arnold is researching this possibility and will speak to DoF and respond to Mr Atkinson in due course.

### **3. Chairperson's Report**

3.1. The Chairperson updated Board members on the following:

- The Chair undertook Adult & Child safeguarding training online with Volunteer Now, a reminder was given to the rest of the board committee to undertake this training.
- Mr Leathem to raise issue of annual accountability meeting with the department. Mr Atkinson confirmed that he spoke with Ms Deirdre Ward, who is reviewing the annual accountability framework and will agree an approach going forward.
- Annual accounts reported and signed off by the Audit Committee. Mr Leathem expressed his thanks to all involved, SMT, Ms Carol Magill and the Audit and Risk Committee.
- Applications closed for Board membership. Interviews to be held 19<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

### **4. Pension Scheme Update**

4.1. No current update.

4.2. Mr Atkinson explained of the ongoing issue with the department regarding the pay remit for 2017/18, 2018/19 or 2019/20. To date there has been no movement in relation to the pay remit; head count reduction; or pension scheme.

## **5. Chief Executives Report**

### **Business Overview**

5.1 Usel have secured a service level agreement with Sport NI with an overall value of £210,000 to be completed March 2021.

5.2 Mr Jackson working with Councils re: costs for recycling have been amended to account for the upward trend of Usel waste costs.

5.3 Future work opportunities are being explored with Lecky Design. Currently producing HI-viso face screens;

5.4 Operating issues and business performance to be reviewed in 2020/21. Without GIA Usel would have posted a loss to the business, with GIA there a small surplus. Mr Atkinson confirmed that Usel currently working on income threads and how to keep support costs low to replace GIA if needed.

5.5 Mr Atkinson explained that Usel is still waiting on an update on the confidential shredding contract for the NICS, regarding the ongoing legal process.

5.6 A formal opening of the Foundry of 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020 has been planned with the Lord Mayor of Belfast.

## **6. Finance & HR Report**

6.1 The Directors reviewed the summary financial position against budget, for August, and noted an operating surplus of £144k. Budget forecast for August was £75k surplus, therefore there is a positive variance of £144k.

6.2 Mr Leathem questioned the £10k sundry costs. Mr Ballentine-Kearns explained the reason for the cost and that it should not present as an issue for audit purposes.

6.3 Indirect costs show a 20% reduction year to date which has been offset by a £85k positive variance in salaries and wages year to date; a positive variance in travel subsistence as well as other savings related to carriage.

6.4A reprofiling exercise is planned for October 2020 after 6 months of trend has been established.

6.5 Management accounts to be presented at October 2020 board meeting.

## HR

6.6 The average absenteeism rates for 2020-21 are as follows:

	<b>Ussel July 2020</b>	<b>Ussel August 2020</b>	<b>Ussel YTD Average</b>
<i>Absenteeism rates - short term- National Average 3% dependant on demographics</i>	0.03%	1.09%	0.99%
<i>Absenteeism rates - long term (+4 weeks)-National Average 2.5% dependant on demographics</i>	0.41%	2.53%	1.92%

## 7. Transition Plan

7.1 The Transition Plan was implemented in September 2019. Mr Leathem confirmed however that the plan does discuss the issue regarding the DB pension scheme. The ownership of the deficit and liability needs to be confirmed before the plan can be approved. The Board agreed that they will require clarification from the department regarding this issue before approval can be given.

## 8. Adults safeguarding issues

8.1. There were no issues to be noted.

## 9. Health & Safety Update

9.1. Mr Jackson confirmed that Mrs Mowbray will be reporting on H&S going forward.

9.2. Mr Jackson explained that a sub-contractor has been scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> October to assess the asbestos. The building affected is currently not in use.

9.3. Mr Jackson confirmed there were no changes with the continuity plan in relation to COVID-19

9.4. Ms Magill highlighted the perception of the potential COVID-19 implications from the MacMillan Coffee morning, as may have been perceived on social media, especially without any context given. Mr Jackson was able to confirm that social distancing was in place, staff were wearing masks/visors, a

member of staff served food to individuals and there was no mass gathering of people in one area. The SMT will be conscious of such perceptions going forward. Mr Leathem extended his gratitude on behalf of the board on the amount of money that was raised for charity.

## **10. Risk Management**

10.1 Mr Leathem confirmed that Mrs Mowbray had forwarded the risk management report with the Board papers. Updates were provided for Risk 19; Risk 23; and Risk 25.

## **11. Recognition of 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

11.1 Mr Atkinson confirmed that Usel took over Workshops for the Blind in 1891. 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary is in recognition of Workshops for the Blind. The Board suggested that Usel consult with staff on how they would like to see the anniversaries marked.

11.2 Mr Leathem explained that he had spoken with the Lord Lieutenant for Belfast who is a supporter of Usel and who is keen to be involved in marking these occasions.

11.3 The Board discussed how best to publicise these events. Mr Atkinson and Mr Cowan to develop a Strategic Communication Plan for the event.

## **12. Draft Policies**

12.1 The People Strategy and Training Plan were both approved by the Board.

12.2 The Bribery Act Policy v2 was approved by the Board.

12.3 Procurement Policy to be revisited to confirm the level of expenditure and authority. For approval at the October board meeting.

## **13. Balanced Score Card**

13.1 Mr Atkinson confirmed that this was for the Board's information only.

## **14. Any Other Business**

14.1 Strategy Day to be moved to December 2020

14.2 Ministerial visits to Usel confirmed for 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

14.3 Mr D Cowan and Ms J Cowan to arrange to meet to discuss pensions in further detail.

## **Date of next meeting**

11.1 The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 28 October 2020 at 10.30 am.