**ULSTER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT LIMITED**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Directors

**Wednesday 30th October 2024 at 10.30 am at Cambrai Street, Belfast**

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| 1. | **Attendance:**  Mr W Leathem Chairperson  Mrs S Wakfer Vice Chairperson  Mr R Donnelly Director (left meeting at 12.30)  Mr R Havlin Director (left meeting at 12.17)  Mr D Duffy Director  Mr S McGlew Sponsor Branch Representative  Mr S Jackson CEO  Mr D Cowan Head of Employment Services  Ms N Donnelly Head of Operations  Ms J Davy Acting Head of Finance  **Present:**  Ms R Smyth Minute-taker / Executive Administrative Officer  **Apologies:**  Apologies were received from D Ward of the Department for Communities and Mr D O’Hara.  The Chair opened the meeting at 10.30 am and welcomed all. |
| 2. | **Declarations of Interest**  None noted |
| 3. | **Minutes and Actions** |
| 3.1 | **Minutes of the previous meetings held on 25th September 2024**  The meeting agreed to amend point 4e, Conflict of Interest training, to reflect that R Havlin has completed this and D O’Hara may redo. They also agreed to redact point 5d and the minutes were then approved. |
| 3.2 | **Matters Arising**  There were no matters arising. |
| 3.3 | **Action Log:** Paper circulated with agenda |
| 4 | **Written Procedures** |
| 4.1 | **Working From Home Policy –** this was approved and accepted. |
| 4.2 | **Training & Development Policy –** this was approved and accepted. |
| 4.3 | **Capability Policy (LLR) –** Employee name is to be removed from page 2, otherwise approved and accepted. |
| 4.4 | **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (LLR) –** the meeting discussed diversity accreditation schemes and agreed this may be something to consider.The policy was approved and accepted. |
| 5. | **Chairs Report** |
| 5.1 | The Chair updated the meeting on the recent interviews for new Board members. The meeting discussed the requirement for cyber security skills of new members, D Duffy stating he would be able to cover this skill area. It was agreed this will be discussed at Strategy Day. |
| 5.2 | The Chair gave an update on a meeting with SIB for Strategy Day. It was agreed there will be a session on Board Effectiveness at the start of the day and then SMT will join. |
| 5.3 | The Chair reported back to the meeting on the recent Graduation Day ceremony stating it was an excellent event and congratulated the team on organising it. |
| 5.4 | **POD Meeting**  The Chair of the POD Committee reported to the meeting on the POD Committee meeting.  The CEO gave an update on the proposed new clocking in system. This will be more accurate and will speed up the pay roll. The Hark system is being retained. |
| 6 | **CEO’s Report** |
| 6.1 | The CEO updated the meeting on current legal issues and fees. The meeting briefly discussed. |
| 6.2 | The CEO updated the Board on human resources in relation to staff movement and sick leave. |
| 7. | **Business Reporting** |
| 7.1 | **Employment Services Report**  The Head of ES gave an update on criminal disclosures.  The Chair raised queries in relation to the Workable Programme and the EQIA. The Head of ES clarified stating the Workable audit was satisfactory and within normal margins. He was optimistic this will help with any issues and for grant bidding. He commented that in the long term, this would be a competitive grant, but that Usel has a good record for success.  D Duffy reported to the meeting on feedback from the recent evaluation on the Step-up Programme, stating the response from participants was very good and he is optimistic that it is moving towards a positive destination. |
| 7.2 | **Operations Report** |
|  | The Head of Operations reported to the meeting on a visit a recycling operation in Scotland to learn how that operation would fit with Usel. She stated the trip was successful and represents a potentially excellent opportunity.  The Head of Operations updated the meeting on a planned site visit by a potential new client. The meeting queried H&S issues, storage provision and economic aspects. N Donnelly updated the meeting on these issues and recruitment to the new business line. |
| 7.3 | **Health & Safety Report**  The CEO updated the meeting on H&S, stating the H&S manager is working through all issues. |
| 7.4 | **Fire Safety Report**  There were no incidents to report. |
| 8.0 | **Finance Report**  J Davy presented the re-forecasted budget to the Board, stating it is now more realistic.  D Duffy gave a report back on the recent budget meeting of the Finance Committee commenting that an increase in Grant in Aid is key to balancing the books. He praised the work the team have done to date and the constructive conversations had. He stated he was content the budget reforecast was realistic.  S McGlew queried if the additional VAT commitment was included, J Davy confirmed this and stated the team were committed to working smarter on this issue going forward. S McGlew commented that the gap between Grant in Aid and the pay award needs to be bridged.  The members were content to accept and approve the new budget. |
| 9.0 | **Matters to Note**  **USEL ALB-Assurance Statement April – September 24**  The Chair talked through the statement and explained it will come back to the ARAC in December. The Assurance Statement was agreed by written  procedure by ARAC members on 24th October. He thanked the Vice Chair and ARAC for their review.  The CEO commented on various potential issues such as procurement, conflict of interests and the impact of the potential closure of the ES Programme.  The meeting discussed the engagement of CPD and the timescales involved. The Procurement Manager will work on developing Usel’s own framework. |
| 10.0 | **Any Other Business** |
| 10.1 | **Belfast Zoo Tender – the Head of ES** provided an update stating that the provisions of the new tender contain many changes which could represent a loss to Usel. The Chair presented the various options to the meeting~~.~~The Chair proposed that we would tender for the Stables and this was agreed.  **(proposer / seconder)** |
| 10.2 | **Draft Programme for Government Consultation Response.** The meeting discussed the CEO’s response, agreeing there are areas of alignment and queried if there would be a strategy. S McGlew stated the CEO’s response was very well written but could be firmer on the gaps in disability employment. |
| 10.3 | **Items 10 and 12** on the agenda were postponed to the next meeting in November. |
| 10.4 | **Meeting Dates for 2025** – It was agreed these need to be organised. |
| 11.0 | **Date of Next Meeting**  27th November 2024 at 10.30 am |