



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SPORT NI BOARD HELD ON 11TH MARCH
2020 AT 5.00PM IN THE HOUSE OF SPORT**

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| <p>Present: Board members: George Lucas Jay Colville Jackie Bryson Richard Bullick Wilma Erskine Kieran Harding Darryl Petticrew</p> | <p>In attendance: Sport NI Officials Antoinette McKeown, CEO John News, Director of Participation and Facilities Peter McCabe, Director of Performance Adrian Doherty, Director of Finance & Governance Ali Campbell, Executive Unit Manager Gillian Gilliland, Board Secretary</p> <p>Connor Hamilton (for item 6) Des Jennings (For item 6)</p> |
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| Agenda Item | Record of main discussion |
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| CLOSED SESSION OF BOARD & CEO | Members had a closed session with the CEO who provided an update on governance and change matters and Neil Hughes, Grant Thornton who presented proposals in respect of leadership and management teams to the Board. |
| OPEN BOARD SESSION | <p>Sport NI Staff and Cheryl Robinson, BCS joined the meeting at 6pm.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Cheryl Robinson, BCS to the meeting and thanked her for attending today.</p> <p>Cheryl advised members it was good practice for boards to conduct an external review every 3 years. Cheryl provided the Board with an overview of the process and the Board member survey; it was highlighted the review would be based on the current performance of the Board and Committees and recommendations would be made. Members heard the review would commence in April and the draft report would be presented to the June Board meeting. Members were advised there would be anonymity in responses received from the Board survey and this would be emailed to members in due course. Consultation slots would be booked for meetings with members, either face to face or phone interviews to take place in mid-May.</p> <p>Members were asked if they were satisfied with the content of the survey and this was confirmed; members also confirmed they were happy to complete the questionnaire and take part in consultation meetings with BCS.</p> |

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| | <p>Members noted a draft report would be produced and shared with the Board for comment following which an action plan would be developed.</p> <p>Members thanked Cheryl for her presentation; Cheryl left the meeting at 6.15pm.</p> |
| 1. Apologies | <p>The Board meeting commenced at 6.15pm.</p> <p>Apologies were received from K Ferguson and C O'Mullan.</p> |
| 2. Chair's remarks | <p>The Chair highlighted three recent conferences – Belfast Telegraph Awards, Sport Maker Awards and the Female sports Forum highlight the power of sport to change lives by individuals and teams excelling in their chosen field.</p> <p>Behind each achievement, people paid tribute to the people who inspire them, role models, family, coaches, teachers and club officials. In most of these cases, Sport NI had played a significant role in creating and implementing programmes to support their pathway to success. We need to reflect and acknowledge the expertise, hard work and dedication of Sport NI staff in changing lives and building communities.</p> <p>We need to encourage this to continue, as we develop and consult on our new 5 year Corporate Plan which seeks to build momentum for the next phrase of the development of sport and physical recreation. We need to modernise and restructure to support our strategy and present solid business cases to DfC for sign off in respect of HR and ICT which are urgent and crucial enablers. There is also a need to evaluate the risk and costs of interim cover until approval and implementation.</p> <p>Leadership & Culture requires us all to demonstrate that we practice what we preach and we need to reflect, identify a root cause, challenge ourselves and put remedial action plans in place in our journey of continuous improvement.</p> <p>As a result of the NIAO Report being published today the Chair and CEO briefed the staff this morning and explained Sport NI Board's position of welcoming the publication of the report and our commitment to ensure the recommendations are fully implemented. The Chair took the opportunity to advise we have worked closely with our sponsor department and the NIAO to diligently address the issue of the past and he acknowledged their support.</p> <p>The Chair stated he would like to thank the Board, the CEO and the exceptional team in Sport NI who have led and embraced significant positive changes in governance, culture and strategy, to enable us to look forward to a positive future for sport in NI.</p> <p>The Chair stated the external Board Effectiveness Review provides further opportunities to share, learn and develop.</p> <p>Members heard the issue of Sport NI representation on the Board of UK Sport continues to be progressed by DfC.</p> <p>The CEO expressed thanks to the Chair for attending this morning to speak to staff and stated the organisation reported on in the NIAO report bears no</p> |

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| | <p>resemblance to the organisation today. The CEO made a statement on the NIAO report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport NI's response to the NIAO report will include confirmation that every recommendation attributable to Sport NI has already been implemented. • It was disappointing for staff to read that Sport NI's meeting of targets during the period was reflected by the NIAO as targets being too soft, with no evidence to support this position. The independent PAR report of October 2017 contradicts this position and there had been a missed opportunity to have this included. • It was important to the CEO that facts were recorded in relation to the annual accounts; that the CEO returned to Sport NI and inherited 3 years of outstanding accounts, with no records available to verify accuracy of those outstanding accounts. Despite this, the CEO as Accounting Officer took personal responsibility to ensure she could stand over signing accounts during a period in which she was absent. It was unfortunate the final report did not report this. • Notwithstanding this and the very challenging implications of the report for the CEO, she respected that the Board had taken a different position and welcomed the report; the focus now was on Sport NI going forward. • The CEO expressed her wish to look forward now, recognising that the Sport NI staff team was one she was very proud to lead and the work she is also leading to transform the organisation can now be driven forward without historical related distractions. • The CEO expressed her wish also to work with the Board to ensure the new Corporate Plan delivers what the sector needs in terms of sports strategy and development over the next 5 years. <p>Members queried the comment within the report about DfC reviewing SNI in light of the findings and queried whether this would affect the restructure and strategy. Members noted the lines taken by the department and SNI have not changed, these were what was agreed with the department and included the review of the organisation. However, members noted that a recent Ministerial media article had not followed these lines to take.</p> <p>Member were presented with a draft elevator speech which the Board had discussed and agreed some time ago to develop regarding the work of SNI and the Corporate Plan. Members noted this was a starting point and feedback was requested from members. Members agreed to feedback on the draft elevator speech.</p> |
| <p>3. Register of Member's Declaration of Interest</p> | <p>No new interests were declared.</p> <p>D Petticrew advised there had been a potential perceived conflict through his employer submitting a tender to Sport NI; however he was removed from the process. Members noted this declaration of interest has already been flagged through the normal process but this would be monitored closely to ensure there was no perceived conflict.</p> |

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| | <p>The Chair confirmed there was nothing on tonight’s agenda that conflicts members.</p> |
| <p>4.Minutes of meetings on 11 December 2019, 15 January 2020 and 28 January 2020</p> | <p>Members approved the minutes of the meetings held on 11 December 2019 and 15 January 2020.</p> <p>Members heard in relation to the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January K Ferguson requested the following amendment: paragraph at the bottom of page 1 to include the following sentence after the 2nd sentence “Board members raised issues with evidence to support the position”. Members noted the minutes of 28 January have been amended. The CEO advised she had tried to made contact with K Ferguson to discuss this particular issue on the Corporate Plan and had been unable to do so to date but would make contact again tomorrow.</p> <p>Members highlighted the research was inconclusive and the theory change piece could be an academic conversation. The theory of change could be reflected in the final Corporate Plan for this year and this may resolve the issue and give some comfort. Members were advised UK Sport are leading on a piece of work on the value of elite sport and our contribution is part of the 5 nations group and this is in the business plan for this year. The other piece of work is participation which is in the business plan. Members discussed sport for social change and noted the extensive discussions on this throughout the development of the draft plan.</p> |
| <p>4.1. Action Points</p> | <p>Action points of 11 December 2019 were circulated to members and officers prior to the meeting.</p> |
| <p>5. CEO report SNI 20 01</p> | <p>The CEO presented paper SNI/20/01 for noting by the Board and highlighted a number of key points within the paper.</p> <p>Members noted it had been expected that the McBride Judgment would be overturned but this wasn’t the case. The Interim Finance & Governance Director has been in contact with DfC and we are waiting for their comments.</p> <p>Members queried the terminology in point number 3 Sports Strategy. Members noted sports strategy covers SNI’s Corporate Plan as well as the NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Active 2020-2030 which is DfC’s plan. Members queried was there any feedback from the meeting on 9 March and it was advised the meeting was due to take place on 12 March.</p> <p>Members highlighted the section on Sport infrastructure stating the NI Executive is clear about climate emergency and queried SNI’s position. Members stated sustainability and climate need to be considered and how best to design this to make it less about facilities and more about spaces and places. Members queried whether this should be in the business plan for this year. ET members confirmed these issues are factored in.</p> <p>Members were advised a lot of this would be subject to planning permission and SNI would be driven by this. Members noted there was narrative within the corporate plan with reference to facilities, we added innovative and sustainability facilities driven by environment.</p> |

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| <p>5.1 Q3 Business Plan Review 1 October-31 December 2019</p> <p>5.2 Route Map for Change – Update</p> | <p>Members queried whether the statutory role would conflict with best practice and it was confirmed procurement practice would not allow this. To build in excellence costs more and there needs to be a balance.</p> <p>Members noted the contents of the paper.</p> <p>Members received the Q3 Business Plan Review for approval. Members queried was the planned recruitment in April/May this year likely to proceed. It was advised the department are aware of the timeline and it was hoped to continue with this. The Business Case needs to be submitted to the department and we have alerted them regarding the urgency of approval; however we may need to amend this to amber or red. Members approved the Q3 Business Plan Review.</p> <p>Members received the updated Route Map for Change which included some amended timelines. Under Board leadership the Review of Board Effectiveness will take place from April-June. The final area at the bottom of last page relates to the review of finance processes and it was advised SNI are seeking to bring in some SIB resources to help with this. Members noted the Business Case has been approved by DfC.</p> <p>Members noted under Board Leadership the formal stakeholder consultation related to the Corporate Plan, not the strategy.</p> |
| <p>6. Communications Report SNI 20 02</p> | <p>Members received paper SNI/20/02 which covered the period since the December meeting and heard there had been an increase in Facebook and Twitter followers. Members heard that although the focus today had been on the NIAO report and Covid-19 tonight’s meeting would be highlighting some good news stories. Members would be hearing presentations from Conor Hamilton, the Sport NI Graduate Leadership Programme intern within the Participation Team and Des Jennings, Head of Performance Skills.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Conor Hamilton and Des Jennings to the meeting and thanked them for attending.</p> <p>Conor highlighted the work he has been doing on social media, SNI YouTube videos on Everybody Active as well as presenting at EBA events and representing SNI at various events. Des presented on the work being undertaken on mental health and wellbeing in sport, in particular highlighting a number of athlete videos focused on mental health and provided members with an overview of the SNI Inspire Sports Hub website.</p> <p>Members thanked Conor and Des, agreeing the presentations were excellent and great to see what was being done on the ground.</p> <p>Members queried where the various videos could be viewed; it was advised these were all available on the SNI YouTube channel and links would be sent to members.</p> |
| <p>7. Business Plan 2020/21</p> | <p>Members received paper SNI/20/03 for approval.</p> |

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| <p>SNI 20 03</p> | <p>Members queried was the Business Plan 2020/21 a holding document and this was confirmed. Members noted the plan would change; this is a transition year to bring us in the direction of travel in the absence of a strategy. Members were advised SNI is conscious that we are moving forward without a new Corporate Plan but the Business Plan aligns with Sport Matters. Members noted there would be some amendments when DfC's comments are received.</p> <p>Members stated there needed to be a connection with the Minister's priorities in the Business Plan. Members suggested there were areas on today's agenda which should have been reflected within the Business Plan and the document felt a bit light in places.</p> <p>Members were advised this detail is included within the business plan, however some of what was being discussed were projects. The sporting system is culture, governance and leadership. These will be embedded into the investment principles. Members noted the Business Plan includes the outputs, based on hard evidence and numbers.</p> <p>Members approved the draft Business Plan 2020/21.</p> |
| <p>8. Preparation for Tokyo 2020 SNI 20 04</p> | <p>Members received paper SNI/20/04 which provided members with a progress update on Northern Ireland athletes preparing for Tokyo.</p> <p>Members heard there were 69 athletes (including 12 para athletes) potentially able to represent NI or Ireland at the Games. Members were advised the qualification routes were difficult and were being impacted on by Covid-19. The table within the paper details the sports which will be represented; cycling have come on board since the paper was written and it was hoped para badminton would also be included.</p> <p>There are a number of challenges regarding participating in Tokyo in terms of climate and environment. Potentially 9 staff will be travelling with the athletes to assist and support them and these staff would be granted secondments to provide this assistance. Members noted it would be a challenging year for staff travelling to and in the lead up to the Games but this would be managed to help them.</p> <p>Members queried the possibility of Covid-19 affecting the Games and any contingency planning. Members heard there were issues around the qualifiers and our staff involvement but this was being watched closely and SNI would react to whatever happens.</p> <p>Members queried whether the Chair and CEO would be attending the Games and it was advised SNI have received 2 accreditations and representation would be provided.</p> |
| <p>9. Active, Fit & Sporty SNI 20 05</p> | <p>Members received paper SNI/20/05 for noting.</p> <p>Members heard this builds on work which has been ongoing for the last 3 years with partner organisations including project delivery to date. Linking back to Des' presentation on mental health and wellbeing, during engagement with women and girls in sport the participants advised this was particularly important</p> |

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| | <p>to them. The conclusions will help to inform future investment principles in line with the Corporate Plan.</p> <p><i>D Petticrew left the meeting at 7.50pm.</i></p> <p>Members noted there was an ongoing piece of work, desk based research, on female sport to look at the disparities and what the system needs in terms of equality. Members heard there is a commitment in next year's budget for a media programme on female sport which would be similar to "This girl can".</p> <p>The Chair suggested this area of work could be discussed further at a future workshop when a paper on this area of work is available for discussion.</p> |
| <p>10. Special Olympics Investment SNI 20 06</p> | <p>Members received paper SNI/20/06 for approval.</p> <p>Members noted the funding recommendations were in respect of SOI for the period 2020-25. The SOI funding arrangement is a cross-departmental package originally established by First Ministers across 5 departments and each of these departments made year-on-year allocations in support of the respective policy outcomes achieved through SOI operations.</p> <p>Members queried was it possible to have baseline figures included in the programme outcomes and this was confirmed. Members noted the PPE for the current investment was in progress.</p> <p>Members approved the recommendations.</p> |
| <p>11. Disability Sport Northern Ireland SNI 20 07</p> | <p>Members received paper SNI/20/07 for approval.</p> <p>Members noted the paper sets out proposals to fund DSNI in support of the development of an increase in quality and accessible opportunities to enable people with disabilities to adopt and sustain participation in sport and physical recreation; enabling NI athletes with disabilities to be among the best in the world.</p> <p>Members queried whether DSNI were the best organisation to invest in to move disability sport forward and it was advised DSNI are the only pan disability organisation to do this. Members noted there are a range of other disability sports organisations who SNI have worked with on a range of projects. SNI are working with DSNI to change the culture across sports and bring these other organisations on board to have a voice.</p> <p>Members approved the recommendations.</p> |
| <p>12. Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland SNI 20 08</p> | <p>Members received paper SNI/20/08 for approval.</p> <p>Members noted the funding recommendations in respect of Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland for the period 2020-25 to support increased access to and sustained participation in outdoor recreation.</p> <p>Members approved the recommendations.</p> |

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| | <p>Members highlighted these were 3 major pieces of investment for SNI and queried the synergy and alignment across the areas; it was advised the 3 business cases are all from the Participation Team which sits alongside the Facilities and Capital Team. The business cases have also been informed and influenced by the Performance Team therefore providing input and engagement across the organisation. Members also noted that Sport NI would not be investing in ORNI's Walking Strategy.</p> <p>Members queried to what degree the 3 pots of money collaborate to get more from this investment; members heard all investments would be informed by the cornerstones of SNI's Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Members suggested SNI had started to implement the strategy via this investment commitment. Members noted these were continuous investments on a year on year basis to allow these organisations to continue and demonstrates SNI's commitment to equality and inclusion. There are 3 distinct areas of SNI's functions to allow these areas to work and there was absolute synergy between the 3 investments. Members heard it would be more problematic if we didn't proceed with these investments at this stage.</p> |
| <p>13. Audit Risk and Assurance Committee Report</p> | <p>Members received a verbal update from the ARAC Chair regarding the meeting which took place on 2 March.</p> <p>Members noted ARAC discussed the McBride Judgment and feedback has been requested from DfC; members heard ARAC agreed to proceed at risk.</p> <p>Members heard good progress was being made on internal audit, in particular on procurement. The Investment Assurance Manager presented to the meeting on the remedial action; there has been good progress and this provides security to the Board. The internal auditors reported they were content and the annual assurance would be completed on time.</p> <p>In terms of accounts the NIAO provided a positive report about getting the accounts on track. It was hoped the accounts would be back on track by September which would include the 18/19 and 19/20 accounts.</p> <p>Members noted ARAC has requested the organisation restructure be amended to red on the Risk Register; ET are to consider this.</p> <p>Members noted within the Lottery accounts there was currently £14m in the bank account and ARAC had requested a balance sheet. Members heard in terms of the NLDF balance of around £14m this would be spent in line with the Corporate Plan once developed; there were various proposals within the plan contingent on investment decisions being taken forward. Members were advised ET will produce a high level plan and bring this to the Board.</p> <p>Members noted there had been discussion to move ARAC meeting 2 weeks before the Board meeting which would allow full draft minutes to be provided to Board meetings and it was agreed this would be amended for 2021.</p> <p>The Chair advised at a recent Anti-Doping meeting it had been flagged that GBs don't have Anti-Doping on their risk registers or included as a Board</p> |

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| | agenda item. It was agreed this would be discussed further at the next ARAC meeting. |
| 14. Finance & Governance Report SNI 20 09 | <p>Members received paper SNI/20/09 for noting.</p> <p>Members heard there was a predicted underspend of £300k, some of which has been impacted by Covid-19; for example, members were advised the Winter Special Olympics has been cancelled and this would also have an impact. Members noted this underspend can't be carried over and this would be discussed with DfC.</p> <p>Members noted there was one residual risk on the Risk Register in terms of effective governance but this would remain red until the accounts were up to date.</p> |
| 15. Finance & Governance Policies SNI 20 10 | <p>Members received paper SNI/20/10 and associated policies for approval.</p> <p>Members noted it was not normal practice to bring all these policies for Board approval; however in light of the recent court of appeal decision on the McBride Judgment approval was being sought.</p> <p>Members approved the policies as detailed within paper SNI/20/10.</p> |
| 16. AOB | <p>The Chair queried if members were content with tonight's meeting; all agreed.</p> <p>Members noted the presentations by Connor and Des had been great, it was good to see the work being carried out on the ground.</p> |
| 17. Dates of next meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 April 2020 – Board Meeting and Workshop @ 9.00am (followed by Remuneration Committee) – starting with a Board closed session update 9.00-10.00am • 10 June 2020 – Board Meeting @ 5.00pm (Remuneration Committee @ 4.30pm) <p>The meeting closed at 8.30pm.</p> |

Approved by:
Sport NI Chair

George Lucas.

Date:

22 April 2020