



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SPORT NI BOARD HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2021 @ 9:15AM (VIA ZOOM MEETING)**

<p>Present: Board members: George Lucas Jay Colville Richard Bullick Wilma Erskine Kyle Ferguson Kieran Harding Darryl Petticrew</p>	<p>In attendance: Sport NI Officials Antoinette McKeown, CEO Adrian Doherty, Director of Finance & Governance Peter McCabe, Interim Director of Performance John News, Interim Director of Participation Ali Campbell, Executive Unit Manager Gillian Gilliland, Board Secretary</p>
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Agenda Item	Record of main discussion
1. Apologies	There were no apologies to note.
2. Register of Members' Declarations of Interest	There were no new declarations of interest to note.
3. Minutes of Previous Meetings	<p>Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2020.</p> <p>A member requested the minutes be proof read for grammar and spelling mistakes before uploading to the website as a public document.</p>
4. Chair's Remarks	<p>The Chair confirmed there have been three closed sessions of the Board (12/01/21, 21/01/21 and before this morning's meeting) to discuss confidential HR issues. The CEO advised that she had not been aware of her need to attend a closed session of the Board this morning.</p> <p>The Chair advised the Business Plan for 2021/22 is in draft for discussion with DFC. In the event that additional monies are offered to Sport NI in response to ongoing Covid-19 challenges, the Board will have a discussion as to priorities for next year.</p> <p>This year's business plan was agreed in March last year and no-one could have foreseen the additional amount of work required throughout the year to meet Covid need; Sport NI's budget was more than doubled and the associated work undertaken with the same amount of staff reflects the significant commitment from across the organisation. In the interim, on behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked staff for their continued commitment during Covid-19.</p>

	<p>The Chair thanked K Ferguson for agreeing to be part of the Public Board Mentoring Scheme.</p> <p>The Chair advised a letter had been received from the Minister in relation to ALBs preparing for Climate Change; the ET are currently drafting a reply and the Board will receive a copy of the response when it is ready.</p>
<p>5. CEO Report SNI 21 02</p>	<p>Members received paper number SNI 21 02 for noting.</p> <p>The CEO advised on engagement regarding consultation on the new Programme for Government; a new indicator was being looked at and discussed in relation to sport and physical activity, linking to the new strategy which DfC are leading on. Members heard SNI are very supportive of DfC's work to date on strategy 2020; the Board remain clear SNI has a statutory remit for sport and physical recreation, however a strategic government/ALB partner to lead physical activity has not yet been agreed. Sport NI has previously had clarification from DfC colleagues that Sport NI cannot deliver the whole agenda and the absence of a strategic partner for physical activity presents a risk to effective delivery of our corporate plan. The CEO advised that we don't have the skills within the organisation to deliver physical activity from a health perspective.</p> <p>A member stated this could be seen as a great opportunity for sport and physical activity to ensure other public bodies are duty bound to deliver this (Physical activity) and we do our groundwork for delivering partnership to double our budget. Sport and physical activity would be on the agenda and the distinction between them becomes very clear and we have the opportunity to create the narrative.</p> <p>Members agreed it was probably better to be on the front foot on this discussion and we need to have a separate meeting and consider the opportunities.</p> <p>The Chair of Participation SMIG advised this was discussed at that forum and it should be seen as an opportunity to reflect on.</p> <p>The CEO agreed it was a great opportunity for partners to step up. The Board discussed the experience with Sport Matters implementation; the Sport Matters Strategy had a clear expectation of a partnership approach to deliver sport and physical activity and when our partners didn't step up, Sport NI was pulled into a wider function for physical activity, including leading the three SMIGs, contrary to partnership principles. The clarity at the beginning of strategy 2020 with DfC is what Sport NI welcomed and we need to continue engaging as we have been advised that we must deliver within budget.</p> <p>Members discussed the opportunities to engage on physical activity with health and education (as set out in our corporate plan). Members agreed to a workshop to discuss further.</p> <p>Members were advised discussions at ET had moved well in terms of drafting of the 2020/21 Business Plan targets and the collaborative process with DfC. However, at the last meeting it became apparent there was an issue with the language and therefore there was a need to include some discussion on this in the Board workshop on PfG as it was directly linked</p>

<p>5.1 Q3 Business Plan Review</p>	<p>A member queried point 2.4 within the CEO report in terms of staff rejecting the protocols for restructuring, stating it was disappointing to read and thought the staff were being brought along to modernise the needs of the business. Members asked for an update.</p> <p>The CEO advised staff have been engaged throughout the whole process in terms of formal and informal engagement. Earlier this year the Union had asked to stop the restructure process but staff asked for this to continue. Neil Hughes has advised the process has been exemplar in terms of staff engagement for restructuring. SNI never had a restructuring protocol or policy in place before and we put this in place to ensure transparency. The CEO advised staff have not been able to separate individual job situations from the policy and gave some examples of protocol implications. The CEO advised that new posts were being advertised in line with employment law, exemplary HR practice and Sport NI's HR policies.</p> <p>The CEO further advised there are three sticking points; Members queried was this not provided to staff at the beginning of the process. The CEO advised that there has been engagement throughout but now that the restructuring has become real, staff are naturally concerned about their own posts. The CEO also advised that it is disappointing situation as the project Team has demonstrated movement the whole way through the process in response to staff consultation and feedback (with clear audit trail of this)but that certain demands cannot be provided as it is not the right thing to do. The CEO also advised that not every staff member will have to apply for posts.</p> <p>Members queried how this was going to be resolved. The CEO confirmed a meeting has been sought with the Union and this is in the diary. Members queried would this hold up the restructuring process; the CEO advised this would not, further stating if staff see us moving through the next level we might see some nerves calmed. The protocol is the best of the sector, this is demonstrating to staff we are here to protect them by following employment law.</p> <p>A member queried the position on return to work and how this would look. Members queried whether there were any hybrid variations at this stage. It was advised there is an assumption that life will change but there have been no formal discussions yet about this; we don't see this on the horizon over the next month or so. Members heard there are plans to return safely and these have been drawn up in terms of how many staff will be in the workplace at any one time in terms of social distancing etc. Executive agreed there was a need to have formal engagement with staff about their views for the future, it would be good to understand what that stage would look like.</p> <p>Members received the Quarter 3 Business plan Review and noted 70% of targets were on track, 13% of targets are likely to be missed by a small margin and 17% missed by a substantial margin. Members agreed that given the situation regarding Covid and additional funding with no extra staff this was a good outcome. Members were advised some of our core goals have had to take a back step because of Covid.</p>
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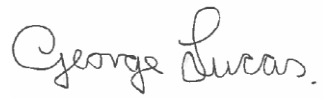
	<p>A member queried in terms of participation we have this is as red but physical activity has dramatically increased with people out walking and queried whether this could be measured in the future in terms of our baseline information. Is there any way we can have an insight on this? Would this relate more to our earlier discussions in terms of working with partners? How can we be more innovative in terms of using outdoor spaces? Members discussed the core area of physical activity and sport needs to be looked at and how much information on research there is to do this. It was discussed that in the PfG workshop, SNI needs to discuss sport and physical activity and the direction agreed in our new corporate plan so that we clarify what our baselines are.</p> <p><i>K Ferguson left the meeting at 9.50am.</i></p> <p>Members queried whether an explanation can be inserted in the Business Plan Review to address the targets not met; it was advised this would be provided within the end of year report and in our formal Annual Accounts.</p>
<p>6. Communications 6.1 Media Report</p>	<p>Members received the new interactive Media Report for information.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the team for the update and the changes to the recent report; well done to staff for this.</p> <p>A member stated if you look at your own sport you can see SNI everywhere; there is a big difference with sports referencing SNI. SNI are seen as a crux for sports and we must not take this for granted. Members agreed the changes within comms are excellent.</p>
<p>7. Remuneration Committee TOR update SNI 21 04</p>	<p>Members received TOR SNI 21 04 for approval.</p> <p>The Remuneration Committee Chair advised the Committee had met, reviewed the TOR and approved the changes.</p> <p>The Board approved the Remuneration Committee TOR.</p>
<p>8. Rolling Board Business 2020/21 update SNI 21 05</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 2105 for noting which sets out the business for 2021 Board meetings.</p> <p>Members noted the paper.</p>
<p>9. Major Games Update SNI 21 06</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 21 06 for information.</p> <p>Members noted the 2020/21 major games which were currently planned, however there were likely to be further developments. Over the next few months there will be further updates provided on the Olympics and Paralympics.</p> <p>Members agreed this was a great paper, however one concern was athlete wellbeing and whether anything was being done. Members were advised initially there were different messages from GB and Ireland; however both are now starting to take this on board and there are interventions from both to work with athletes on this.</p>

	<p>Members discussed that while we are fixated on the Olympics there are also knock-ons for commonwealth games qualification and how this will roll out with some regions being more affected than others. Even in terms of people dropping off the performance ladder with elite club level closed for so long and community sport that has been lost.</p> <p>Members noted the paper.</p>
<p>10. Sport Sustainability Fund SNI 21 07</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 21 07 for decision.</p> <p>Members heard the awards for the Sport Sustainability Fund would be made against the Scheme of Delegation which would require Board input on decisions. Therefore an exceptional Board meeting is required due to the level of requests and it was suggested this be held during the week commencing 22 February.</p> <p>Members queried four sports getting the largest amount of money (86%) and whether this would attract criticism from other sports. Members heard other sports have been very supportive of the process and there has been feedback from sports about the process and they have all been involved. Members agreed as long as there was a process involved they were content.</p> <p>It was advised a short paper would be sent to members as far in advance of the extraordinary meeting but it might be 72 hours in advance.</p> <p>Members approved the recommendations within the paper.</p>
<p>11. Delegated Decisions SNI 21 08</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 21 08 for information.</p> <p>Members agreed this paper was very useful to see what the ET and staff are dealing with.</p> <p>Members approved the paper.</p>
<p>12. Finance & Governance Report SNI 21 09</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 21 09 for decision.</p> <p>Members were advised there was an updated position on budgets since the paper was sent to members, the budget underspend was likely to be 4% (£312k) including a small amount under the Sports Hardship Fund and the risk of a more significant underspend for Sport Sustainability Fund; our target underspend is 1%. Members were advised there was a difficulty with procurement which was a slower process and also in terms of Covid; therefore there was a general underspend in all business areas.</p> <p>Members heard communication had been received from DfC (from DoF) indicating there may be an additional £8m coming to SNI from central money. Indications at this stage state this money is for 2021/22 but we would need to spend it this year, which breaks accounting rules; we have never had the authority to carry money forward. It was highlighted to members SNI does not have current capacity to spend this and there is not the demand currently for it.</p>

	<p>In principle we want to get all the money spent we can but this needs to be done with propriety. The SSF update figures indicate an underspend of £1-2m. Members agreed with the position provided by staff.</p> <p>Members heard SNI welcome all the additional support we have had this year and we have tried to get as much out to those that need it but within a third pandemic lockdown it is difficult to sustain the pace of work that has been held throughout this year.</p> <p>Members heard the Risk Register had been updated by ET as part of the quarterly deep dive. Covid has been added as a risk and budget uncertainty has moved from red to amber. You could interpret the risk that there originally was underfunding and now this is overfunding potentially; however this risk is forward looking into the next financial year.</p> <p>Members were advised of an update meeting with NIAO on accounts; unfortunately regarding the 2014/15 Lottery accounts we will not get those through in March. The NAO have not been in contact with NIAO and the NIAO haven't been able to get any traction. The NIAO are ready to have these signed off.</p> <p>The 2019/20 accounts are within the remit and ability of NIAO to complete and they are confident the audit will be complete and accounts submitted to ARAC in March in time to sign off. We might need a single agenda Board meeting immediately after the ARAC meeting on 22 March. Members agreed this was great news about the 2019/20 accounts and further agreed there should be a Board meeting after ARAC to formally approve the accounts.</p> <p>Members noted the 2014/15 accounts had been discussed with DfC but this is an issue between the NIAO and NAO. There is the opportunity at the ARAC to raise this again with NIAO for them to follow up again. The accounts involve such a small amount of money for a historic accounts however every single audit is important for the NAO. It was confirmed ARAC could ask NIAO for an update and it will be minuted.</p> <p>Members approved the paper.</p>
<p>13. HR Policies SNI 21 10</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 21 10 for approval.</p> <p>Members were advised these policies had previously been approved by the Board but DfC had requested some changes.</p> <p>Members approved the policies.</p>
<p>14. AOB</p>	<p>A member raised an issue from the past when they were appointed to the Board and called to a meeting with the Minister years ago. One of the comments was that the Board didn't know what was going on and staff welfare and wellbeing was being ignored; therefore the member raised this again in terms of a potential staff engagement survey. The member advised they didn't want this being levelled at the Board again and would welcome thoughts and any plans for a staff engagement survey.</p>

	<p>Members heard there has been numerous reports and discussions at Board meetings over least 2 years on staff welfare and SNI have been engaged with staff on culture during the last three years and have carried out several surveys. We haven't repeated the survey carried out in 2015/16 by the DfC EIL Team and we recognise it did not make good reading. There has therefore been a range of ways used to continuously engage staff and seek and receive feedback rather than rely on a periodic survey. Members were advised if a staff survey was carried out now it would not be good given the uncertainties caused by Covid and restructure. Members noted methods currently include micro engagement around hot topics, short surveys with staff at CEO briefs and monitoring of staff welfare; put all these together to get a good picture of what staff feel. At the moment our engagement has been good with staff.</p> <p>Members heard it would be naïve not to think the last 10 months has not been trying for all staff because of the whole environment and this would be reflected. The ongoing successful delivery during Covid is a measure of resilience of staff notwithstanding the reds within the Business Plan, given the doubling of budget.</p> <p>Members noted this is a time of massive instability and we need certainty. With both Covid and restructuring there is uncertainty and there was a need for feedback to check the temperature of staff, respond to staff and meet their needs but we need to agree the best way to do this and provide them with support in terms of what they have delivered. The CEO assured the Board there was constant feedback sought and received from staff currently.</p> <p>It was highlighted to members SNI staff can't sustain the current work pace much longer and there was a need to make some decisions in terms of money Vs Business Plan against staff welfare. Members were advised that Executive Team has introduced a staff resource tool to ensure workloads are evenly allocated and this is reviewed fortnightly.</p> <p>Members agreed there is no right or wrong answer but staff wellbeing is most important and as a Board we must ensure this is reflected. Members advised they welcomed all initiatives ongoing to ensure there is wellbeing being shown along the way. Members stated they would welcome further discussions on this, possibly considered internally and reported back to the Board. A member was asked if he had any insight in relation to the issue discussed. Members were advised that to introduce a staff survey at this stage would be difficult as staff are struggling.</p> <p>The Chair asked for some consideration over the next 2-3 months in terms of the range of staff engagement taking place.</p> <p>The Chair asked if everyone felt this has been a good meeting and this was agreed. The Chair requested if members had any ideas for improvement to give him a call or email the Board Secretariat to circulate.</p> <p>Members agreed the papers show what a great job ET and staff are doing and asked for the Board's thanks to be passed onto staff.</p>
15. Date of next meeting	Wednesday 14 th April @ 9.00am

	<p>The Chair indicated it was his intention to plan closed sessions before the April Board meeting, one with the board only and one with the Board and CEO.</p> <p>There being no further business to discuss the meeting ended at 10.32am.</p>
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Approved by: _____
Sport NI Chair

Date: 14 April 2021