



Minutes of the meeting of the Sport NI Board held Wednesday 6th October, 9.30am @ Clayton Hotel, Belfast

| | |
|---|--|
| Present: Board members: George Lucas Wilma Erskine Kyle Ferguson Wendy Elliott Gavin Boyd Darryl Petticrew | In attendance: Sport NI Officials Dame Katherine Grainger, Chair of UK Sport Richard Archibald, Interim Director of Sport Orlagh Watters, Interim Head of Sports Systems John Hart, Head of Policy & Innovation Laura Carland, Board Secretary Kirsty McCool, Finance Manager |
|---|--|

| Agenda Item | Record of Main Discussion |
|---|---|
| 1. Apologies | Apologies were noted from Jay Colville, Denise Burns, Richard Bullick, Kieran Harding and Adrian Doherty |
| 2. Register of Member's Declarations of Interest | There were no new declarations of interest to note. |
| 3.1 Minutes of meeting held on 18th August 2021 | Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 18 th August 2021 pending a minor amendment. |
| 4. Chair's remarks | <p>The Chair welcomed Dame Katherine Grainger (DKG), Chair of UK Sport to the meeting and congratulated DKG and UK Sport on their recent achievements at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo 2021.</p> <p>The Chair extended a welcome to Orlagh Watters, the new Interim Head of Sports Systems to OW's first Board Meeting.</p> <p>The Chair advised that the Interim Director of Sport, RA, will be providing an update on the Tokyo Olympics from an NI perspective later in the meeting but took the opportunity to congratulate all NI athletes who performed so well. The Chair noted that this reflects the investment and support of the organisation which has allowed for podium development.</p> <p>The Chair advised that Minister Hargey, DfC, will be hosting a reception in the Great Hall in Parliament Buildings, Stormont on 13/10/21 for the returning athletes of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games; acknowledging the contribution of all those involved.</p> <p>The Chair informed Members that a positive and productive meeting was held with Deputy Permanent Secretary, DfC, MD, in relation to the Corporate Plan and Business Plan 2021/22; with the organisation gaining MD's support in relation to the Sport NI position on physical activity. Members noted that both the Corporate Plan and Business Plan has been</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>submitted to MD with no material changes beyond further clarification on the Sport NI role on physical activity.</p> <p>Members were advised that following considerable work undertaken by Chief Operating Officer, AD and Finance Manager, KMcC, in partnership with NAO, this has culminated with the positive news that the 2014/15 Accounts were approved on 05/10/21 and will be submitted for certification. The Chair extended thanks to AD, KMcC and their team for reaching such a significant milestone in good governance recovery.</p> <p>Members noted that the organisation continues to monitor progress in respect of the forthcoming ALB Review and following ongoing discussions with MD, DfC, the Chair was advised that Sport NI would be consulted and engaged with during the review process in the coming months.</p> |
| <p>5. Dame Katherine Grainger Remarks</p> | <p>DKG extended thanks to the Chair and Sport NI Board for the invitation to attend the meeting; stating an intention to attend in person in future if possible. DKG provided an overview of the success of the athletes at the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games 2021; stating a unique and challenging environment as a result of the response to, and management of, COVID-19. DKG provided an overview of the ongoing key projects at UK Sport including the development of Transgender Guidance, further progress in the areas of equality and inclusion and collaborative projects seeking to bring all home nations together in partnership.</p> <p>Member, Wilma Erskine, joined the meeting</p> |
| <p>6 CEO Report</p> | <p>Members received paper number SNI 21 47 for information. The paper was tabled as read. The CEO thanked Members for any questions raised to date.</p> <p>The CEO provided an overview of the CEO Report for the information of Members.</p> <p>Members noted that work in response to COVID-19 is ongoing but there will be a gradual shift from COVID-19 recovery projects to business relating to the implementation of the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>RA provided an overview of the headline findings from the sports sector survey; which consisted of approx. 78% of respondents from sports clubs. Members noted that the responses to date provided a good sense of the overall impact of COVID-19 and the extent to which clubs are more pessimistic than before.</p> <p>Members were advised that discussions are ongoing with DfC in respect of the development of the Sports Recovery Fund and that a coordinating group has been established to ensure consistency and the implementation of lessons learnt from previous projects such as the Sports Sustainability Fund. Members noted that discussions are ongoing in terms of budget, funding targets, timelines, funding caps and roles and responsibilities for the project and were advised that work is ongoing to ensure no duplication in grants. It was confirmed that Board members would be asked to approve final plans and recommendations in relation to this investment and that an extraordinary meeting may be needed for that in November.</p> <p>Members noted that the Route Map for Change has been subject to further amendments and the CEO sought feedback on information. Members noted that a Board Development Plan is intended for 2021-22 and following revision, the ET have met to discuss further and an ET member has been assigned to lead in areas formed from the Health Check undertaken in April 2021. Members noted that the Chair will lead directly on the Board Development Plan with support from the CEO and this will include procuring services to deliver a workshop on conflict of interest. The services of Eileen Mullan were already procured to conduct a workshop on how the Board and Executive Leadership team could</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>6.1 Comms Report</p> | <p>work together to maximise effectiveness and RSM, internal auditors had offered an expert in their senior team to deliver a workshop on risk in December.</p> <p>Members welcomed plans for a Staff Survey in light of the current anxiety surrounding the Staffing Restructure project. Members noted that it is intended that efforts to reconnect with the Sport NI DNA will be instigated following the Staffing Restructure Project conclusion. Members noted that this will also include the appointment of Culture Champions, however, the roles, remit and titles of said Culture Champions have yet to be determined and will be led by RA.</p> <p>DKG was invited to comment and noted that from a UK Sport perspective, work is ongoing to ensure continuous improvement, that operations remain relevant to the organisation and that the Board are subject to regular review and challenge. Members noted that work is ongoing at UK Sport to ensure that best practice is implemented at all times, through internal self-reflection and external review.</p> <p>Members queried the timeline of the Staffing Restructure Project and noted that it is intended that Deputy Principal level posts will be completed by the end of October 2021 in terms of slotting in and internal recruitment, all external posts will be advertised where appropriate and following Union consultation, posts will be 'slotted in' at SO and below where applicable.</p> <p>DKG advised that UK Sport recently undertook a restructuring exercise and stated that working remotely created further challenges and staff anxiety as a result. DKG offered the CEO discussions with Sally Munday, CEO of UK Sport.</p> <p>In addition, the Chair advised Members that the Chair attended a recent ALB Forum with DfC and one agenda item concentrated on Board Effectiveness. It was noted that the Chair would circulate the minutes of the meeting to Members once they are available.</p> <p>JH advised Members that work is ongoing to establish and develop relationships with key media representatives in response to recent media coverage of the organisation.</p> |
| <p>7. Communications Strategy Paper</p> | <p>Members had previously received the interactive Comms Report 18th August – 29th September 2021, for information.</p> <p>The Head of Policy & Innovation, JH, provided an overview of the outline, high-level plan to take forward a bespoke Communications Strategy which would be aligned to the Corporate Plan. Members noted that this strategy would also include a stakeholder engagement plan. Members were advised that the Sport NI Comms team is currently subject to resourcing pressures.</p> <p>Members discussed the proposed strategy. Members expressed support for JH developing positive working relationships with key media representatives and political representatives. In addition, Members noted that further to reviewing and upgrading current Comms assets, as part of the Staffing Restructure Project, the internal Sport NI Comms team will be upskilled and brought back to full strength. Members acknowledged the impact on the delivery of services as a result of the Comms team not currently being at full capacity. Members were informed that further work will be undertaken to better measure engagement and interaction with the sporting sector through statistical and evidence based reporting.</p> <p>DKG reiterated the importance of the UK Sport Comms team engaging with journalists which can organically lead to feeding positive case studies on behalf of the organisation.</p> <p>Members received clarification that the Sport NI Communications Strategy would also seek to review and bolster internal communications across the organisation.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| 8. Corporate Plan 2021-26 | Members received paper number SNI 21 48 for approval. The information was tabled as read. There were no queries or issues to raise. |
| 9. Business Plan 2021-22 | Members received paper SNI 21 49 for approval. The information was tabled as read. There were no queries or issues to raise. |
| 10. Lottery Investment Paper | <p>Members received paper number SNI 21 50 for information.</p> <p>RA provided an overview of the paper for the information of the Members; outlining all available options and associated risks to the organisation moving forward for investment into sports for the next financial year. In addition, RA provided an overview of the transition periods and how investment programmes could be rolled out. These options included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1 – Do Nothing. Members noted that this would see investment ceasing with no future investment envisaged in these business areas • Option 2 – End existing programmes as planned in March 2022 and future investment will be dependent on a new integrated investment programme • Option 3 – Continue investment as per the 2021-22 awards • Option 4 – Initiate a transition programme – Members noted that this would involve continuing investments but seek to leverage programme changes and award modifications (upwards or downwards as appropriate) that are aligned to the new Corporate Plan and Sport NI direction of travel. <p>Members were advised that there needs to be assurance that the organisation is moving the right strategic direction, however, Members were asked that the next financial year is used as a transition period for future Power of Sport investment</p> <p>After discussion and consideration of all potential available options, Members were content to approve Option 4 i.e: <i>Transition programme - Continue investments but seek to leverage programme changes and award modifications (upwards or downwards) that are aligned to new Corporate Plan and Sport NI direction of travel</i></p> |
| 11. NLDF Balance & Future Investment | <p>Members received paper number SNI 21 51 for information. Members noted the paper.</p> <p>Members noted that it has been acknowledged that urgent priorities detailed within the paper have resulted in delays to the NLDF balance and future investment and that as a result the organisation is not in a position to develop a new investment programme. Members noted that the ELT is turning attention to this and a number of options will be brought to the Board for consideration in early 2022, relating to new investment needs. In addition, Members were offered an overview of how the Lottery Investment is drawn down on a monthly basis, is not year-end sensitive, consisted of approx. 0.51% of total Lottery sales and to date, there are indications of an underspend.</p> |
| 12. Finance & Governance Report | <p>Members received paper number SNI 21 52 for information.</p> <p>Members noted the paper.</p> <p>Members noted that further to information received from NAO indicating a clean audit opinion for the approved 2014-15 Lottery Accounts and Annual Report for 2014-15, the Chair asked for Board approval subject to the final NAO audit. KMcC provided an overview of the NAO report via shared screen for the information of the Members. Members noted that the final report includes a narrative explaining the delays on account certification and noted that any changes in figures will be as a result of a change in accounting policy by DCMS.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>Members approved the 2014-15 Lottery Accounts and Annual Report 2014-15 and were content for the CEO to sign the documentation so that NAO can proceed with the certification of the accounts.</p> <p>KMcC queried if the Chair or CEO should sign the final accounts. Members noted that it was appropriate for the CEO to sign the accounts but for the outstanding accounts relating to 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 accounts, during a period of absence of the CEO, the Chair would also sign the documentation.</p> <p>Members noted that the 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 annual accounts will follow and it is intended that the 2018-19 and 2019-20 accounts will be completed by the end of the financial year.</p> <p>The Chair extended thanks on behalf of the Board to the COO and KMcC for the considerable work undertaken to date to address the outstanding accounts for the organisation.</p> |
| <p>13. Delegated Decisions Paper</p> <p>13.1 Delegated Decisions Paper Appendix 1</p> | <p>Members received paper number SNI 21 54 (13, 13.1) for approval.</p> <p>Members approved papers SNI 21 54 (13, 13.1).</p> |
| <p>14. 2020 Tokyo Olympic & Paralympic Games Update</p> | <p>OW provided a verbal update on the performance of NI athletes at the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.</p> <p>Members noted that there were approx. 31 athletes across 11 sports from NI; with medals obtained by Aidan Walsh in the Olympic Games and a total of 6 medals obtained by NI athletes in the Paralympic Games.</p> <p>Members were informed that serious challenges were presented as a result of COVID-19, with many nations reporting the Tokyo Games to be full of anxiety, stress and difficulties. Members were advised that a significant amount of time and effort was invested by staff to ensure athletes were supported appropriately and reported that there has been an increase from six Top 8 placements in the Rio Games to approx. 11 Top 8 placements in 2021.</p> <p>The Chair thanked OW for the overview of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.</p> |
| <p>15. Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Report</p> | <p>Member, KF, provided an overview of the actions of the previous ARAC meeting and the ARAC extraordinary meeting held prior to the Board Meeting on 06/10/21, on behalf of the ARAC Chair, for the information of the Members.</p> <p>Members noted that Kieran Harding has stepped down from the ARAC Committee and it was noted that the Committee recognised the hard work and commitment shown by KH to date in the post.</p> <p>Members noted that ARAC were content to bring the 2014-15 Lottery Accounts and Annual Report for 2014-15 to the Board for approval subject to the final NAO Audit. Members noted that this was further endorsed as the ARAC meeting preceding the Board Meeting.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>Members noted that ARAC agreed that the ELT would work with the Internal Auditor to create the internal audit strategy for the year. Members noted that this plan was brought to ARAC and approved on 06/10/21.</p> <p>Members were informed that ARAC discussed the HR update and noted a rise in the average sickness leave statistics; acknowledging also the work to address the symptoms of this increase.</p> <p>Members were informed that ARAC were advised of an indication that 12% of targets are likely to be missed in the Quarterly Business Plan Review as a result of resourcing pressures but noted that an update will be provided to the Board.</p> <p>Members were advised that a discussion was held on the scoring of the indicated risks in the Corporate Risk Register and it was agreed that ARAC would facilitate an exceptional workshop to discuss risk appetite, current operational risks and the overall Corporate Risk Register.</p> <p>In addition, Members were advised that ARAC noted the concerns raised in relation to staff grievances and accepted that this risks were mitigated within the existing grievance and Dignity at Work policies and procedures. Members were advised that to date all staff grievances have been subject to independent review and have not been withheld. Members recognised that there may be risks and complications associated with displaced staff or discontentment as the Staffing Restructuring Project progresses.</p> <p>Members also noted that ARAC agreed to note the CEO Pay Award matter in the ARAC Report to the Board in October. Members noted that this issue will also be noted in the HR Risk Update report.</p> |
| 16. Sports Sustainability Fund Public Affairs Committee Update | <p>Members noted paper SNI 21 56.</p> <p>Members noted that the paper details key issues relating to the June 2021 Public Affairs Committee (PAC) evidence giving session. JH provided a verbal update on the follow up work required in partnership with both the PAC and DfC.</p> <p>Members noted that subsequent to the resulting paper from PAC, further questions have been received via DfC and that the Board will be updated on the response progress.</p> |
| 17. AOB | <p>Members noted that meeting dates for Board and ARAC in 2022 will be drafted and circulated for information.</p> <p>Members discussed all current available meeting spaces and noted that TNOC could be a potential option for a future Board Meeting.</p> <p>The Chair extended once again thanks to Dame Katherine Grainger for attending the Board Meeting.</p> <p>The Chair took an opportunity to record thanks to the Board, ET and staff for their ongoing hard work and dedication in the efforts to optimise the power of sport to change lives and build communities.</p> |
| 18. Date of Next Meeting | Wednesday 15th December @ 9am |

Approved by Chair:
Date: 19/11/21

George Lucas