



BOARD MEETING
Wednesday 10th August 2022 at 9.30am

BOARD MINUTES

Present:

George Lucas
Jay Colville
Gavin Boyd
Denise Burns
Richard Bullick
Wilma Erskine
Wendy Elliott
Kyle Ferguson
Kieran Harding
Alison Nicholl

In Attendance:

Antoinette McKeown, Chief Executive
Rebecca Morgan, Chief Operating Officer
Richard Archibald, Director of Sport
John Hart, Head of Policy & Innovation
Orlagh Watters, Head of Sports Systems
Laura Carland, Board Secretariat

	ITEM	Owner	Status
1	Apologies None		
2	Declaration of Conflicts of Interest There were no declarations or conflicts of interest to note		
3	Minutes of the Previous Meeting 28th July 2022		
3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No actions from the previous meeting on 28th July 2022. <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted.</p> <p>Members were advised that in respect of the orienteering incident at TNOC on 1306/22, an independent report has been commissioned in response. Members noted that all available information relating to the incident will be uploaded to the Resources section on DecisionTime for information.</p>		Approval: The minutes of the previous meeting (28 th July) were approved
4	Chair's Introduction The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.		
	<p>The Chair commented that 2022 had been a great Summer of Sport across all sectors, with competitors and teams providing inspirational moments for everyone in NI.</p> <p>The Chair stated that, in particular, the performance of Team NI at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham was inspirational. The Chair informed Members that Team NI achieved 7 Gold, 7 Silver and 4 Bronze medals across the games and that this was a testament to what can be achieved with targeted investment, time, and support. The Chair congratulated everyone involved in Sport NI including National Lottery and Commonwealth Games NI in supporting Athletes, Coaches, Families and Volunteers.</p> <p>The Chair spoke to the importance of leadership and governance which has been highlighted in recent reports including the Whyte Report, British Gymnastics and stated how Sport NI have an opportunity to add value in areas by sharing and learning good practice with governing bodies and partner organisations.</p>		

	<p>In addition, the Chair advised that in respect of internal operations, Sport NI have an opportunity to make a step change by improving focus on the Board Effectiveness Review and Internal Audit report to develop remedial action plans and new ways of working to take the organisation to a higher level and enable future development.</p>		
5	Matters Arising		
5.1	<p>The CEO advised that as a result of late submissions of survey responses, the Board Effectiveness Survey Update will be provided ahead of the Board workshop in September 2022. Members noted that the Board Workshop with Eileen Mullan, Strictly Boardroom, on this date will focus on Board Effectiveness.</p> <p>The Chair referred to recent correspondence with MD, DfC, in respect of the 'path to green' letter following the recent internal audit report. The Chair advised that this work would include four steps, that is, Internal Audit, Financial Management of the Lottery Accounts, the Staff Survey and Health and Safety. In addition, the Chair advised that Board Agenda moving forward will include Board questions and answers, monthly reporting, a performance management action plan in October and a Governing Bodies partnership action plan in November.</p> <p>The CEO spoke to the proposed agenda items and advised Members that the CEO and Chair have not had an opportunity to speak on the proposed issues coming forward.</p> <p>The CEO indicated a serious concern regarding staff welfare and the numbers of staff currently working under pressure and expectations of the Board. The CEO commented that the ELT and Board acknowledge the impact of the Staffing Restructure on staff morale and yet additional actions were being placed on staff without discussion with the CEO, creating additional pressure on staff. The CEO requested that the Board to prioritise as if 'everything is a priority nothing is a priority', resulting in an overall reduction in staff health and well-being.</p> <p>In addition, the CEO stated that she is concerned that she is receiving information third hand on matters for which she is responsible for implementing, making it difficult to meet expectations and ensure accuracy in information exchanged between DfC and Sport NI and between Board and ELT.</p> <p>The Chair spoke to the comments made by the CEO and referred to discussions held during the ARAC Meeting on 05/07/22. The Chair stated that basing discussions on the draft minutes of the ARAC Meeting on 05/07/22, the Chair met with MD to discuss the issues raised. The Chair noted that a briefing note of the meeting was provided to the Board and ELT which detailed the need for action plans. The Chair stated that it was no intention on his part to put staff under pressure or to work to unrealistic timelines.</p> <p>Members noted that a briefing note to Board, copied to ELT, instructing additional work with no prior discussion put additional pressure on staff and set unrealistic expectations from Board.</p> <p>Members noted that the CEO and Chair currently meet on a fortnightly basis, and that this forum provides the opportunity for discussion on the current workloads, communication methods and proposed timelines to ensure that staff welfare is managed appropriately.</p> <p>The Chair stated that the CEO comments are respected and that a way forward should be agreed in partnership.</p> <p>Members noted that Board and ELT were committed to high challenge and high support within a respectful environment. Members noted the CEO's comment that it is not intention but rather impact that was important to measure.</p> <p>Members acknowledged the impact of the staffing restructure and current resourcing pressures and stated that when staffing pressures impact on the</p>		

overall delivery of workload, that the Board will support the ELT effectively and appropriately.

The CEO stated an appreciation for this comment and advised that whilst there is a full management team currently in place, performance management is actively managed in an organisation committed to being a high performing team and not one that is benchmarked against public service tolerances. This needs careful balance recognising that new managers and staff and existing managers and staff in new posts will take some time to settle.

The CEO advised the Board that that staff numbers have reduced from 143 to approx. 112 currently. Members were advised that absence management needs to be carefully managed given the range of pressures across teams and ELTs continued prioritisation of work. Members have been consistently advised of risks and issues relating to restructuring.

Members acknowledged that this was an important and welcome discussion and stated that issues of this type would be best discussed with the entire Board rather than just the Chair and Vice Chair, to ensure a full Board-wide understanding and appreciation of the current circumstances facing the organisation. Members stated that whilst it was important for the Board to understand the perspective of the ELT, it was important for the ELT to understand the perspective of the Board and DfC. Members referred to recent health and safety 'near misses' at TNOC and UJJ, in respect of the UJJ acclimatisation chamber, and stated the importance of covering all aspects of health and safety management.

Members recognised the impact of restructure, a new Corporate Plan and a new ELT settling into roles and that the Board is keen to address any issues highlighted with urgency.

RA, Director of Sport, referred the Board to the recent success at the Commonwealth Games and stated that this success originated in work that began over 12+ years ago. Members noted that the cultural change required within the organisation and the legacy issues impacting upon business as usual will require time and investment before meaningful change is evident. Members were advised that it was not the case that the ELT do not take operational issues seriously but rather they are realistic about the time required to make meaningful cultural changes within the organisation.

The CEO clarified to Members that the CEO does not have a different perspective to the internal audit as the Board and that there is collective agreement on the importance of addressing any issues raised. The CEO requested that staff are granted the space to implement actions agreed at Board before new priorities were set for the same time periods. The CEO stated that in respect of internal audit and Board discussions with RSM at ARAC on 05/07/22, that the CEO was disappointed and saddened that the Board accepted serious allegations made by RSM that Sport NI staff had deliberately 'misled' the Board and that the CEO was not afforded a right to reply before the Board reached that position. The CEO stated that it is expected that the RSM audit team would escalate any issues to the CEO, as Accounting Officer, on a timely basis but that this did not occur. The CEO stated that the Board and ARAC had access to the same information as she had throughout the year on audits with no flagging from RSM. In circumstances whereby a serious allegation is made which would potentially impact upon the organisation's reputation and the Board's trust in staff, the CEO asked that she is given a right to reply before the Board reach a position.

The Chair stated that it was the understanding of the Chair that four issues would be addressed moving forward, that is, internal audit, financial management of Lottery, the staff survey and health and safety. The Chair stated that the CEO issued a written response to the RSM comments to Board which were accepted. The CEO thanked the Board for accepting the CEO's written response. The Chair stated it was understood that ARAC would discuss the above action plans on 25th August [NB: The 25th August ARAC meeting has been rescheduled to 18th

August] and that this information would accompany the response letter to MD, DfC.

RM, Chief Operating Officer, advised Members that action plan information would be submitted to ARAC on 12/08/22.

The CEO stated that in respect of Health and Safety, staff recognise the importance of taking lessons from any incidents. The CEO stated it was also important for the Board to note that when tested in a live incident recently, TNOC management and staff performed very well. The work of Sport NI staff was commended by the PSNI, the school in question and Mountain Rescue in specific circumstances to recognise this. Members noted that the orienteering exercise undertaken by the school children on the day the two schoolgirls went missing has now been removed from the general programme and that an independent review is being commissioned. The CEO confirmed that DfC had been briefed of the incident within 48 hours. The CEO wanted to ensure that this incident was not being viewed as a crisis or cements a view that Sport NI got something fundamentally wrong. In addition, members noted that a Health and Safety review across all three sites – HOS, TNOC and SNISI – is being conducted.

In addition, in respect of performance management, the CEO stated the evidence is available to demonstrate that ELT is performance managing and that policy, procedures and the management framework process and systems are in place and being implemented. A duplicated action plan will distract ELT from actually managing performance.

Members stated that they do not seek to be involved directly in operations but rather that the Board operate in a supporting role and ensure that they have a full awareness of issues. The CEO stated that issues of under-performance have been consistently reported to Board, with more detail provided to Chair and Vice Chair. ELT is directly addressing these issues, but that Members should appreciate that historical legacy and cultural issues cannot be fixed overnight and will require time.

The CEO thanked the Board for their comments and stated that whilst providing additional context to the internal audit report, such as significant key staff absence and shortened RSM timelines, is not an excuse it is important context to consider when reflecting upon the internal audit findings.

The CEO, Chair, Members and ELT stated an appreciation for the open and candid discussion held and that moving forward the Board would request all issues to be discussed openly and collectively.

The Chair advised members that the Governance Letter and Action plan response to MD, DfC, would consist of Internal Audit and Financial Management of the Lottery Accounts, the Staff Engagement Survey and Health and Safety which would be brought to ARAC for consideration on 18/8/22.

The CEO requested Board support in seeking interaction and engagement with the DfC Accounting Officer and Minister. The CEO advised that she has not had an Accounting Officer to Accounting Officer meeting. The CEO requested Board support to be involved in DfC discussions on issues which she was responsible for implementing.

The Chair indicated his understanding that the CEO and COO meet with DfC via Accountability Meetings and that the CEO had met the DfC Accounting Officer recently. The CEO confirmed that the only direct meeting held between the CEO and DfC Accounting Officer was in relation to the CEO Pay Remit and a request that he would intervene. The CEO confirmed that Accountability Meetings with DfC are currently held but Accounting Officer meetings are not.

A Board Member commented that this was considered to be a reasonable request and it is important to challenge where there may not be adherence to government documentation and MSFM guidance where possible.

	<p>The Board discussed the current relationship between the organisation and DfC and noted the positive relationship with Kathryn Hill that a positive meeting on internal audit was held with KH, DfC, on 09/08/22.</p> <p>The Chair stated that previous discussions held with the Chair, Vice Chair, CEO and previous COO required determining which meetings each individual would attend and that it was agreed that the CEO would attend accountability meetings and the Chair would meet with the Deputy Permanent Secretary moving forward.</p> <p>DB left the meeting.</p> <p>The Board was content to support the CEO's request for direct engagement and interaction at Accounting Officer level as appropriate moving forward, in the absence of direct engagement to date.</p> <p>DB returned to the meeting.</p> <p>GB left the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair advised that Members have been submitting Board questions to the ELT for response in an attempt to help the Board engage further with Board papers and make meetings more effective. The CEO requested that this be reviewed as part of Board evaluation discussions in September.</p>		
6	CEO Report		
6.1 6.2 6.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Review of the Business Plan • Whyte Review of British Gymnastics • Governance Issues at IABA: Update <p>The CEO Report was tabled as read.</p> <p>RA, Director of Sport, was invited to provide an overview of the recent Commonwealth Games in Birmingham for the information of the Board. RA reported that the 2022 Games saw a record breaking medal haul from Team NI with approx. 18 medals obtained – 7 Gold, 7 Silver and 4 Bronze – which was the best performance since the Edinburgh Games in 1986. Members noted that the 50% increase in medals obtained was as a result of targeted focus from Sport NI and Commonwealth Games NI. In addition, Members noted that the athletes consisted of a 50% gender split between male and female athletes and the decision of the event planners to integrate the paralympic programme was a positive and well received step towards increasing visibility and promotion inclusion across the sporting sector. Members noted that the Birmingham Games represented 13% of all total medals obtained by Northern Ireland to date.</p> <p>RA discussed how the results from the Commonwealth Games show an overall maturing within the sporting system as the medal success can be shown across a greater variety of sports than in previous competitions. Members noted that this achievement demonstrates how the efforts of the organisation and engagement with Sport NI kickstarted up to 12 years ago, has really been rewarded.</p> <p>Members were advised that the Minister was in attendance for a portion of the Commonwealth Games and that it is anticipated a reception will be arranged.</p> <p>JH, Head of Policy and Innovation, advised Members that the Commonwealth Games represented the first major games whereby Sport NI have been able to utilise a full Comms Team. JH provided an overview of next steps which would include demonstrating to the wider public that whilst investment can often be deemed negatively or divisively, by taking hard decisions at an early stage, investment to sport can pay off, as shown by the record breaking medal haul.</p> <p>RA, on behalf of the organisation to the Board, Members thanked the Sport NI staff who were directly involved in the games including Ryan Keating, Laura Ostler, Lorcan Magee, Kerry Kirk, Des Jennings, Wendy Henderson, Alan</p>		

	<p>Rankin, Damian Martin, Alan Curran and the coaching staff, including Michael Cooke and Clare Dowdall and Gillian Gilliland who attended on a volunteer capacity. The Board thanked the entire Sport NI team for their contribution to the medal success.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Chair would send a message of thanks to staff. The Chair referred Members to the questions submitted by the Board to date. Members were invited to consider their own questions and ask any queries to the ELT directly.</p> <p>Members were advised that the organisation now has a fully operational Culture and Integrity Team and that as part of the equality and diversity work being undertaken by staff, the inaugural Women in Sport Panel meeting would be held, with Ministerial attendance, on 11/08/22</p> <p>Members referred to the Business Plan and the methods of monitoring progress. The ELT provided an overview of the Business Plan and associated monitoring techniques and noted that the implementation of the Gold software programme would assist in the quantitative monitoring of key projects and business led objectives.</p> <p>Members referred to the Staff Engagement Survey and asked for more clarity on the role of the Staff Engagement Working Group and its priorities. Members acknowledged that whilst the ELT were advised by the Union to take time for meaningful engagement feedback relating to the Board could be responded to at a faster pace. The CEO responded that ELT was committed to seeking staff feedback on what they considered to be the priorities. Members queried how performance would be measured in respect of the Staff Engagement Survey. Members noted that improvements would be tracked at the next survey in March 2023. It was agreed that the ELT would ask the Staff Engagement Working Group to propose an appropriate method of introducing and re-engaging the Board with staff.</p> <p>KF left the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Board for the 42 approx. questions submitted to date, raised in advance of the meeting and also thanked the ELT for the answers provided.</p>		
7	Recognition of Governing Bodies		
7.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition Review and De-Recognition of Organisations 		
7.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition Paper Kickboxing <p>Members noted two recognition papers for governing bodies – one on the overall recognition review and the de-recognition of organisations and another recognition paper on kickboxing. Members tabled the information as read and noted that there were no issues or concerns to raise.</p> <p>Members were content to approve the Recognition Review and De-Recognition of Organisations paper.</p> <p>Members were content to approve the Recognition Paper relating to the sport of Kickboxing.</p>		<p>Approval: Members approved the Recognition Review and De-Recognition of Organisations Paper</p> <p>Approval: Members approved the Recognition Paper for the sport of Kickboxing</p>
8	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan		
8.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appendix – Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan <p>Members noted the receipt of the Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan. Members acknowledged the excellent work undertaken as part of this exercise and noted that both the Celebrating Diversity Panel and the Women in Sport Panel (as scheduled for 11/08/22 with the Minister in attendance) were received rejuvenated energy and attention in recent months.</p>		

	Members were content to approve the Draft Equality Diversity and Inclusion Action plan.		
9	Draft Complaints Policy Procedure		
9.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appendix – Draft Complaints Policy Procedure <p>Members referred to the Draft Complaints Policy paper for consideration and approval. Members discussed the paper and were content to approve.</p> <p>In addition, Members raised the need to review the language employed within the Whistleblowing Policy. Members were advised that all Sport NI policies are subject to a review schedule and that this would include the Whistleblowing Policy.</p>		Approval: Members approved the Draft Complaints Policy Paper
10	Sporting Winners End of Year Update		
	Members tabled the Sporting Winners End of Year Update as read. Members commented that the information found within the report was detailed and informative.		
11	Operations Report	COO	
11.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content and format of information to Board 		
11.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audit Update 		
11.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Safety <p>The Operation Report was tabled as read. The COO spoke to the paper, highlighting that in respect of Internal Audit, a meeting has been scheduled with RSM on the morning of 18/08/22.</p> <p>Members referred to recent discussions with RSM prior to the ARAC Meeting on 05/07/22. Members addressed the need to hold RSM to account for failing to appropriately manage their contract with the organisation during the last auditing reporting period and the overall impact of the timelines imposed on staff to provide the necessary information to RSM.</p> <p>In addition, Members noted that the next ARAC Meeting, originally scheduled for 25/08/22 has been rescheduled to 18/08/22 and that a Risk Register Meeting has been scheduled for 11/08/22 which will be attended by the Vice Chair. Members requested that the Risk Register be updated to remove the actions attributed to the previous COO. The COO advised that next steps for the response to internal audit will be brought to ARAC for further discussion.</p>		
12	Board Schedule 2022		
12.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board Schedule 2022 <p>It was agreed that the Board Schedule for 2023 would be reviewed at a later date.</p>		
13	AOB		
	<p>a) IT AsslSt Business Case</p> <p>Members were referred to a forthcoming business case relating to the Service Level Agreement with IT AsslSt. Members noted that as a result of the new Finance System and to accurately reflect procurement and contracts on the system, a business case is required to reflect that payments can be made to IT AsslSt as a result of the SLA.</p> <p>Members were content that the Chair and Vice Chair can review and approve the IT AsslSt Business Case on behalf of the Board.</p> <p>b) Bank Mandate</p> <p>Members were advised that following the appointment of a new ELT, approval is required to update the signatories associated with the organisation's bank mandate. The COO spoke briefly to the steps required and after a brief discussion, the Board were content to approve that the ELT Members – that is,</p>		

	Antoinette McKeown, Rebecca Morgan, Richard Archibald, John Hart and Orlagh Watters – are listed as official signatories against the bank mandate.		
14	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14th September – Board Workshop <p>The Chair proposed the Board Meeting in advance of the Board Workshop to discuss the Board Effectiveness Survey and any other issues which required discussion or approval between 9.30am – 10.30am with the workshop to follow at 10.30am – 12.30pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19th October – Board Meeting 13th December – Board Meeting <p>The Chair asked Members if this has been a good meeting and all Members agreed.</p>		
15	<p>Presentation to Wilma Erskine</p> <p>On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked WErskine for the dedication shown during her tenure on the Board. The Chair spoke to WErskine's support and expertise and wished WErskine success in any future roles moving forward.</p>		

Signed by Sport NI Chair:

George Lucas

Date: 19th October 2022