



BOARD MEETING
Wednesday 13th September 2023
House of Sport, Belfast at 9.30am

BOARD MINUTE

Present

George Lucas
 Kyle Ferguson
 Gavin Boyd
 Denise Burns
 Alison Nicholl
 Richard Bullick

In Attendance

Richard Archibald, Interim CEO
 John Hart, Head of Policy & Innovation
 Orlagh Watters, Interim Head of Sports Systems
 Tony Murphy, DfC Observer
 Simon Burrows, G7 Accountant
 Lorraine Gribbon, ELT PA
 Colm Jennings, Operations Officer

	ITEM	STATUS
0	Welcome from the Chair Chair welcomed all and requested Board Members remain after meeting for a closed Board session.	
1	Apologies Apologies were received from A McKeown, K Harding, W Elliot and L Carland.	
2	Declaration of Conflicts of Interest None	
3	Minutes of the previous meeting 14th June 2023 The minutes of the previous meeting (9 th August 2023) were accepted. Approval: Minutes of the previous meeting (9th August 2023) were accepted. Chair raised publication of approved minutes, stating previously agreed minutes would be uploaded after having been passed within three months. To clarify this is three months or under. Once approved and ready to upload this should progress to upload.	Approval: Minutes of the previous meeting (9th August 2023) were accepted.
4	Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions Arising None Register of Actions completed/outstanding. None 	
5	Matters Arising Chair noted Health and safety not on agenda and requested this needs to be an ongoing agenda item. Health and Safety is led by the Board and should always be an agenda item at Board meetings. Chair stated the action plan, following the Mabbett report recommendations, should be allocated across the Management Team on who/what/ where/ when basis aimed at broadening the leadership, changing behaviours and developing preventive Health programmes to support staff welfare. Chair stated that it is important the CEO leads on operational effectiveness across the three sites and ensures the involvement of the Management Team as leaders in delivering the action plan and reporting progress at each Board meeting. Chair informed Board Members of the DfC safety conference on 13 th October on stadia safety and Interim CEO will be closing event. Board noted IT Support issues. Several outstanding issues with accessibility to systems for several Board Members have been ongoing. IT Assist service and Board communication.	

	<p>DfC has requested confirmation/assurance that data protection is in effect. Board Secretary to respond on behalf of the Board. Action: Board Secretary to issue email to DfC.</p> <p><i>R Bullick joined the meeting.</i></p>	<p>Action: Board Secretary to issue email to DfC.</p>
6	<p>Chair's Briefing</p> <p>Chair informed members of a revised Business Plan 2023/24 being tabled today for approval which demonstrates improved alignment on Corporate Plan objectives. The plan seeks to influence more people in NI to adopt and sustain participation in sport and physical activity. This also provides support to ensure our Athletes are among the best in the world.</p> <p>Recent updates from Governing Bodies indicate progress with club membership increasing from 385k to 409k towards Sport NI ambitious target of 500k by 2026.</p> <p>Chair noted that women in sport is underrepresented with 133k and options to improve were discussed at Mondays meeting of the Boards Task and Finish Working Group through improved leadership, partnership working and the need for a robust action plan in order to optimise investment and achieve 250k (50%).</p> <p>Members were advised that progress continues to be made in achieving more athletes and medals on the world stage, building on CWG success in Birmingham as a result of Sport NI Sporting Winners investment.</p> <p>Members were also informed that this month Sport NI launched the annual sports makers awards inviting nominations to recognise all the people, who make sport happen, and underpin the power of sport to change lives.</p> <p>The Chair also noted the success of the Irish Special Olympics Team, winning 75 medals where Ulster Athletes won 31 medals is being acknowledged by the DfC Permanent Secretary hosting a reception in the Long Gallery in Stormont on 20th September.</p> <p>The Chair stated that he would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board and staff for their expertise and commitment to assist in delivering the power of sport. The Chair also noted that Sport NI is facing challenges and inhibitors to progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the past two years Sport NI has underspent on budget by £500k in each year, resulting in £1 million being returned to DfC in easements. - In addition, in 2023 Sport NI achieved on 53% of Business Plan objectives, with business planning delayed by six months instead of being approved before the start of the new financial year. - The outstanding National Lottery Accounts for 2015/16 are now submitted to NIAO and NAO, with all outstanding Accounts to be up to date by 2026. - Bi-Annual Assurance Statement due in March 2023 delayed due to different views of Board and CEO, this needs to be resolved and submitted to DfC. <p>It was noted that Sport NI is confronting these challenges with DfC support, for an independent strategic review into Governance, Financial Management and Relationships.</p> <p>Board was also informed that the Board Task and Finish Group chaired by the Interim Vice Chair and Chair of ARAC, with a DfC observer in attendance, meets weekly with ELT and is proving effective in formulating plans to address these inhibitors to progress.</p>	
7.	<p>Interim CEO Report</p> <p>Board received SNI 23 33 – CEO Report</p> <p>Interim CEO provided update on video conferencing, which has now been resolved after two years.</p> <p>Interim CEO stated that the 2015/16 accounts have now been certified.</p>	

	<p>Members were updated on recruitment of Interim COO. Framework in place with recruitment company, looked outside of this for alternative options as well. There have been ongoing issues regarding which framework to use and implementation of this but is being progressed as a matter of urgency.</p> <p><i>A Nicholl joined the meeting.</i></p> <p>DfC Observer noted the disappointment regarding the issues with the framework from CPD with what first appeared a simple solution.</p> <p>Member queried Sport Engagement and noted concerns among sports. Interim CEO and Interim Head of Sports Systems advised of recent meetings with sports and confirmed progress on ongoing developments.</p> <p>Member queried Board Effectiveness Review and feedback on previous sessions, particularly deliverability of what Board are doing. Essentially that Chair inform procurement for this year. Also queried if this is an annual requirement. Chair confirmed it is an annual requirement and that two of the years can be done internally and that a third is external. Action: Chair requested Members feedback on how best to progress this year.</p> <p>Member raised meeting with Ulster GAA and requested an update on this. Head of Policy & Innovation informed Board of mediastory regarding Derry Senior football team. Chair was consulted on Sport NI media response. Head of Policy & Innovation noted Sport NI is not a regulator of sport, but there was a clear interest in this. Meeting with CEO and Head of Safeguarding. GAA outlined allegations arising on social media and how best to address this. GAA advised Sport NI of Adult Safeguarding processes that were under development at the time this arose, and the work around the GAA culture in this space. Sport NI felt there could be lessons within the GAA experience that be shared with smaller sports. Member acknowledged Sport NI is not the regulator of sport, and the difficulty around this as the allegations did not relate to events within the sporting environment but were personal issues.</p> <p>Member reiterated, what is the role of Sport NI in issues such as this. What lessons can we learn from this, and when identified that this be disseminated among other sporting organisations. Interim Head of Sports Systems advised Members that Sport NI contacted NSPCC, which includes vulnerable adults, and the contract is under review at present to look at some of the wider safeguarding environment. Board Member noted this meeting seemed to be more of a fact-finding meeting and welcomed that Sport NI have a third party contract with an expert. Member felt that the expert should have dealt with this on our behalf rather than potentially opening Sport NI up to unnecessary risk.</p> <p>DfC Observer provided examples of working with third party organisations and Board discussed what Sport NI can do in future circumstances that arise. Member requested Sport NI officials draft guidance on procedures that could be used if similar circumstances arise. Chair recommended contacting UK Sport for advice/guidance. Interim Head of Sports Systems advised of upcoming meeting with UK Sport and DCMS interest in this area. Interim CEO noted that this will be a long-term development process. Action: Positions paper to be drafted.</p>	<p>Action: Chair requested Members feedback on how best to progress this year.</p> <p>Action: Positions paper to be drafted.</p>
7.1	Communications Report	
	<p>Head of Policy & Innovation presented Communications update to the Board as part of SNI 23 33 Interim CEO Report. This highlighted the Comms Calendar and provided examples of projects and events since April as well as upcoming events in Quarter 3 and Quarter 4.</p> <p>Head of Policy & Innovation responded to previous query regarding the decrease in followers and impressions. Advised of specific content around Sport Maker, how this acted as a draw and that a decrease following this was anticipated. Noted that Twitter rebranded at this point to 'X' and that users noted a drop across the platform as other users/followers left the platform.</p> <p>Head of Policy & Innovation responded to query regarding objectives and performance measurement. Informed Members of specific Comms objectives and how specific activities are measured.</p>	

	<p>Board was informed of benchmarking with other Sports Councils through various mediums including Facebook and Instagram.</p> <p>Head of Policy & Innovation addressed Board recommendation regarding building content for quiet periods to maintain public engagement levels with social media channels. Head of Policy & Innovation provided examples of how Sport NI currently do this, and how this material is repackaged and repurposed within the social media schedule.</p> <p>Head of Policy & Innovation responded to request for an update on Insights and Data Capture. Provided an example of recent work on KLT and YPBAS.</p> <p>Member welcomed Comms Report and raised three points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sport NI to filter in with weekly stories were possible. - Many success stories that have their origins in Sport NI funding that are now paying off, is there a way to acknowledge Sport NI's input to this. - Regarding case studies and wider remit to go out and seek stories and encourage smaller sports with less capacity to flag up good news stories and bring them to Sport NI where Sport NI can help to promote these and raise awareness. <p>Member noted that within Council it is part of funding conditions to engage with the funder. Is there anything like this within Sport NI funding conditions. Interim Head of Sports Systems advised that this is part of our funding conditions but that follow up and advocacy of this has not been as strong as it could be.</p> <p>Member queried what impact this has, how aware are our key stakeholders of our own corporate messaging and what are the metrics on this. We need to have a baseline to measure this and what the understanding of our corporate plan is, how we are achieving against our key objectives. Action: Engage with other Sports Councils, what their metrics are, how they measure and report on these.</p> <p>Chair requested the full calendar to see on a rolling basis the next 12 months of projects and events, and provided examples of events and how we can leverage the impact of these to get our message across, e.g., good practice stories to be identified and shared, Safety Conference in October, upcoming Sport Maker, and Bel Tel Awards etc. Chair highlighted the importance of engaging with people and how we can be more involved in events.</p> <p>Action: Future Comms reports to include Benchmarking, key metrics and update on Calendar of Events.</p>	
7.2	<p>Staff Survey 2023</p> <p>Interim CEO introduced staff engagement survey. Head of Policy & Innovation presented 2023 headline findings and noted that this year included agency staff. This is shown separately where applicable.</p> <p>Members were advised of increase across all areas, pace of improvement and provided figures showing this. Members were also shown the top and bottom categories and corresponding figures. Head of Policy & Innovation and Interim CEO stated the intention to share with Union as soon as possible with a view to subsequently sharing with staff.</p> <p>Member noted a more comprehensive report will be coming back to the Board and that this is a highly quantitative update. Member requested qualitative feedback from comments be included as this can be beneficial if the same thing is being said by several staff. Interim CEO agreed this will be part of the more detailed report.</p> <p>Member noted significant improvement in several areas, but that some of the scores are still very low. What is the benchmark and when will we know we have a good or happy organisation. What can we compare this with to say what is good and when we get there. Action: Request information from survey company for benchmark as to what is good, what are the indicators and can we compare.</p> <p>Board was advised this was benchmarked against Civil Service and discussed accuracy of this given differences between small ALB and Civil Service. ELT agreed but noted that one of the main</p>	<p>Action: Request information from survey company for benchmark as to what is good, what are the indicators and can we compare.</p>

	<p>issues was Pay and Benefits and this is directly comparable as NICS and Sport NI both under public sector.</p> <p>Member queried if there was anything arising from survey that is a real concern and that needs immediate emergency remedial actions be undertaken. Stated there was nothing he saw but had anyone else picked up on something he had missed. Member noted the research company had analysed this but have we ourselves looked at the raw data and that we are not relying solely on the company's interpretation. Interim CEO advised this would be looked at however only after the research company could make sure individual staff are not identifiable as the anonymity is an important factor in getting open and honest feedback.</p> <p><i>Following discussion Members noted the content of SNI 23 33</i></p>	
8	Finance	
8.1	<p>G7 Accountant tabled SNI 23 34, Finance Update Paper for Information.</p> <p>The Board were informed that the 2015/16 lottery accounts being laid tomorrow. The 2016/17 accounts are advanced and are hoping to bring forward in October. Work is ongoing with the 2017/18 accounts.</p> <p>Members were informed of recent meeting with Audit Office and resource from them to progress this. Audit Office have made several recommendations on speeding up the process, such as working on several sets of accounts at the same time. We are making progress, although need to confirm narrative with the Board.</p> <p>Regarding budget, clarity has been received on Special Olympics. Recent bid for capital regarding lift and have received advice that there is flexibility within the capital budget. One minibus has also been received by TNOC and the other is anticipated before year end.</p> <p>On resource budget, large areas of spend have been identified, with salaries and wages as well as programmes the main budget areas. G7 Accountant is developing management tool to look at individual budgets and have granularity on this throughout the year. G7 Accountant noted with vacant posts, there is a danger of underspend in salaries and wages. The 2023 pay rise also needs to be factored in, however there is a level of uncertainty regarding this which makes it difficult to factor in to budget management.</p> <p>G7 Accountant and ARAC Chair have discussed presentation of figures and maintained based upon previous format. However, this is open to change if additional granularity is needed.</p> <p>G7 Accountant highlighted that Salaries and Wages is the area of concern at the moment. This autumn window is key in identifying progress in where we will or will not spend money, and to do so now rather than later in the year.</p> <p>It is also important to build this into future planning and align to Business Plan.</p> <p>Member queried vacancies and impact as sustained easements year on year. Member noted presentation issue of figures and the importance of fiscal control and budgetary pressures from DfC. G7 Accountant agreed we cannot be identifying underspend or overspend in February or March. DfC Observer agreed that October and November are critical time and highlighted the importance of contingency planning.</p> <p>Chair explained in last two years the Board had been given assurances that budget would be spent and then were advised in March of underspend. Board needs to ensure that actions are taken to ensure budget is spent in this financial year by improved planning and management.</p> <p><i>Following discussion Members noted the content of SNI 23 34.</i></p>	
8.2	Sport NI Bank Mandate Paper	
	G7 Accountant tabled SNI 23 35 and Members were asked to approve the amendment to the Bank Mandate.	

	Following brief discussion of Bank Mandate Paper Members approved paper SNI 23 35.	
9.0	ARAC Update	
	Outstanding Lottery Accounts 2015-16	
	<p>Member advised Board of ARAC meeting two weeks ago and qualification for 2015-16 accounts. Welcomed the qualification as an expedient means of addressing this. Reported to Board that there was discussion around the narrative and previous approval from previous ARAC in 2019. It was agreed with reservations that ARAC would approve. Noted there would be no requirement in the 2016-17 accounts for the same level of detail.</p> <p>Chair raised letter from Permanent Secretary in 2018 followed by a response from the CEO in May 2019. The Chair recommended the ELT review the lessons learnt report to inform necessary actions are implemented. Action: ELT to review Permanent Secretary letter and Lessons Learnt Report.</p>	Action: ELT to review Permanent Secretary letter and Lessons Learnt Report.
10.	SNI 23 36 Business Plan 2023-24	
	<p>Interim CEO presented draft Business Plan 2023-24 update paper for discussion, demonstrating what steps have been taken and why. Noted closer alignment to Corporate Plan and focus on external facing elements of Sport NI business.</p> <p>Advised this has been shared with TFWG and DfC, feedback received and subsequent revisions. Noted themes and actions and the plan specifies which are being covered here.</p> <p>Interim CEO responded to previous queries regarding how we evidence completion of objectives. Interim CEO noted 12 objectives and presentation identified there will be a report card with key metrics/data and gave an example of these on Infrastructure, TNOC and People Development. Chair sought assurance that this report card system will support the ELT in monitoring implementation of objectives and will flag up success and if there are issues, that ELT can then raise with Board. Interim CEO advised that yes, this will help to facilitate this.</p> <p>DfC Observer queried if Tableau could be used for this, and if the data could be published. Interim CEO advised this was under consideration as it had been done for COVID programmes. Member welcomed this and noted this is what the Board have been looking for and would support this approach. Member raised a concern around reporting of milestones and delivery of programmes etc are not the milestone, but the impact of the programme. Meeting discussed range of impacts from investments and how this can best be reported and identify what is the priority among these impacts. Member stated that this is a largely communicative issue relating to wording of that which is reported. Member highlighted the importance of OBA process and upcoming session on this, how this is implemented and stakeholder engagement to ensure stakeholders can see where the targets come from and how they are integral to this. Members noted the Board would like to see hard numbers whereas the Department would be less quantitative.</p> <p>Member noted this is a two-way process of what purpose does it serve but what is behind it. It has not simply been arrived at but has had a build up to reach a certain stage.</p> <p>DfC Observer advised that the narrative does not connect strongly enough or link to the Active Living Strategy. Noted this is being discussed further between DfC and Sport NI. DfC Observer also welcomed the progress on the report cards as these fills in the background on the objectives and how they are met and monitored. Action: ELT to revise Business Plan narrative section in line with Active Living Strategy.</p> <p>Following discussion, Board approved 2023-24 Business Plan subject to narrative changes agreed.</p>	Action: ELT to revise Business Plan narrative section in line with Active Living Strategy.
	Business Plan 2024-25	
	<p>DfC Observer left the meeting.</p> <p>Interim CEO gave presentation on forward planning process for the 2024/25 Business Plan given lessons learnt from 2023/24 process. This was presented to staff at the last staff session, and it highlighted the importance of preparation, organising, confidence, patience and not to over complicate the process.</p> <p>Plans are needed to underpin the work we do, prioritise work within and across team and ensure everyone involved.</p>	

	<p>Interim CEO outlined a step-by-step process for business planning and how to convert ideas to a basic plan, as well as an indicative timeline of delivery. Informed Board that staff had been asked for ideas for the Business Plan but that this needed to align to corporate plan, strategy and key objectives.</p> <p>Member advised that management of expectations is important if ideas are put forward and are then not implemented or followed up, that staff are advised of the rationale of decisions.</p>	
11.	<p>Women In Sport Update By Exception</p> <p>Head of Policy & Innovation provided an update on a discussion held at TFWG regarding development and implementation of a Women in Sport Panel and Action Plan. Chair noted the importance of leadership in this work area, who is involved and a commitment of time and resources from stakeholders to deliver on this initiative.</p> <p>Member asked if the Board are visibly driving female sport development or whether through Sport NI's good work that Sport NI helps to deliver female sport development as part of general sport development, rather than specifically targeting this and raising it up the agenda. Chair welcomed this comment and asked for a future update from Head of Policy & Innovation. Action: Head of Policy & Innovation to provide further update on Women in Sport Action Plan, stakeholder engagement and Women in Sport Panel progress.</p> <p>The Chair also asked if this initiative was launched without an Action Plan and Partnership working arrangements for key areas identified. Head of Policy & Innovations agreed this was the case, however this was to be addressed in coming months.</p> <p><i>Following discussion Members noted Women In Sport Update.</i></p>	<p>Action: Head of Policy & Innovation to provide further update on Women in Sport Action Plan, stakeholder engagement and Women in Sport Panel progress.</p>
12.	<p>SNI 23 37 Building Better Sports Facilities – Renewable Energy Fund Business Case For Approval</p> <p>Interim CEO advised Board that this is a pilot scheme.</p> <p>Members queried if we are timebound for year-end spend. Interim CEO advised that we are not under Lottery funding, however we are working towards a March delivery. Board and Interim CEO also discussed cheapest quote and if this represents value for money.</p> <p>Member informed Board of a previous programme from a different funder that had led to duplication of work. Interim CEO advised that the consultant will not be delivering but will be providing the advice.</p> <p><i>Members approved SNI 23 37 Building Better Sports Facilities – Renewable Energy Fund Business Case.</i></p>	
	<p>SNI 23 38 Sport Programme Update Paper – September 2023 For Information</p> <p>Interim CEO tabled SNI 23 37 Sport Programme Update Paper – September 2023 for information. Chair asked if there were any questions.</p> <p>Member noted SSI is not on the paper and asked for an update. Interim Head of Sports Systems advised Sport NI is on target following engagement at the start of September.</p> <p><i>Members noted SNI 23 38 Sport Programme Update Paper – September 2023 information.</i></p>	
13	<p>AOB</p> <p>Chair asked if there was any other business to discuss and a Member queried tracking on Decision Time. Also noted the Note function as Member was using as reminder for themselves but that there was now a reply section but had not created notes for others to see or reply.</p> <p>Chair asked if everyone agreed this has been a good meeting and all agreed. Chair also advised that if there were any ideas for improvements to please contact him and raise them for future discussion.</p> <p>Chair noted next meeting 11th October and recommended scheduling all 9:30am – 12:30pm.</p>	

	Meeting ended at 12:40pm	
14	Date of next meeting The next Board Meeting is scheduled to take place on 11 th October at 9:30am – 12:30pm in House of Sport, Belfast.	

Signed by Sport NI Chair: *George Lucas.*

Date: 11th October 2023