



BOARD MEETING
Wednesday 9th August 2023
House of Sport, Belfast at 9.30am

BOARD MINUTE

Present

George Lucas
 Kyle Ferguson
 Kieran Harding
 Wendy Elliott
 Alison Nicholl
 Richard Bullick
 Denise Burns

In Attendance

Rebecca Morgan, Chief Operations Officer
 Richard Archibald, Director of Sport
 Orlagh Watters, Interim Head of Sports Systems
 Tony Murphy, DfC Observer
 Colm Jennings, Operations Officer
 Lorraine Gribbon, ELT PA
 Simon Burrows, G7 Accountant

	ITEM	STATUS
1	Apologies Apologies were received from A McKeown, L Carland, J Hart and G Boyd	
2	Declaration of Conflicts of Interest None	
3	Minutes of the previous meeting 14th June 2023 The minutes of the previous meeting (14 th June 2023) were accepted. Approval: Minutes of the previous meeting (14th June 2023) were accepted.	Approval: Minutes of the previous meeting (14 th June 2023) were accepted.
	Minutes of the previous meeting 19th June 2023 The minutes of the previous meeting (19 th June 2023) were accepted. Approval: Minutes of the previous meeting (19th June 2023) were accepted.	Approval: Minutes of the previous meeting (19 th June 2023) were accepted.
	Minutes of the previous meeting 20th July 2023 The minutes of the previous meeting (20 th July 2023) were accepted. Approval: Minutes of the previous meeting (20th July 2023) were accepted.	Approval: Minutes of the previous meeting (20 th July 2023) were accepted.
4	Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions Arising Register of Actions completed/outstanding. No actions arising. Member queried duration of action list. Chair confirmed actions are on a rolling basis for the previous 12 months.	
5	Matters Arising None	
6	Chair's Briefing The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, particularly TM from DfC as observer, LG as PA to ELT and thanked ELT for circulating the papers in advance to inform today's discussion. Members were advised that the CEO remains absent, and HR continue to ensure duty of care support services are provided. Furthermore, that the Board has requested support from DfC, and that the Permanent Secretary's letter to the CEO advises of the temporary withdrawal of Accounting Officer status and provides guidance on interim cover arrangements in the CEOs absence. The Board acknowledged the support from DfC through TM and the expertise and experience within the sports sector that he brings.	

	<p>The Chair acknowledged the COO has covered for CEO during absence until COO leaves Sport NI on 11 August 2023. The Chair thanked the COO on behalf of the Board for her professionalism and effectiveness during this period and wished her every success in her new role. Board was informed that the Director of Sport has been temporarily promoted to post of interim CEO from 14 August 2023 and interim Accounting Officer. Chair advised that GB, the Chair of ARAC, with lengthy experience as an Accounting Officer has offered his support, advice and guidance if required to Interim Accounting Officer.</p> <p>The Chair informed the meeting that DfC are working with Deloitte to finalise a Statement of Work for the independent Strategic Review of Sport NI. It is anticipated that this is likely to include reviewing financial management control, governance, and relationships.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group has been meeting each Monday to provide oversight and support to ELT to improve governance, financial management controls and delivery. Progress has been positive with current focus on improving the Business Plan, adjustments necessary for Board approval on Bi-Annual Assurance Statement and recruitment for COO role, on both a permanent and interim basis to cover the 6–9-month recruitment period.</p> <p>Board was informed that the COO has commenced work on the recruitment process including approaching Agencies to gauge availability of a suitable candidate to provide interim cover. A handover plan has been developed that includes key issues for the new G7 Accountant and for Interim CEO in the Finance/HR space.</p>	
7	CEO Report / Operations Report	
	The COO has advised that the format has changed slightly on this occasion and has been merged with the Operations report.	
7.1	Business Plan Progress	
	<p>Member queried R1.1, percentage of Sport NI Attendance at Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Meetings. The update advises that due to resourcing gaps in ELT during Quarter One, ELT have attended 50% of CPP meetings. Board was advised that ELT resourcing issues have continued during Quarter Two. The target has reduced to 50% as attempting to meet this target will have a detrimental impact in other priority business areas. Members thanked COO for update and noted the importance of targets that reflect the good work that Sport NI does, for example the match funding target with District Councils (DCs), rather than how many meetings were attended.</p> <p>Board Member queried if match funding from DCs has been confirmed. COO responded that Sport NI has contacted the DCs regarding planning assumptions that can be used where easements occur. COO clarified that this is not solely from the DCs but from all partners within the CPP. DfC Observer noted the importance of collaborative working, of partners leveraging in to deliver, and how this is framed and reported on within the Business Plan is very important.</p> <p>Members noted the Board paper says the Business Plan will be brought forward in autumn and asked for a more definitive timeframe. COO stated there is a large piece of work needed to revise the Business Plan 2023/24 as a matter of urgency but could not provide a specific date. Chair asked if September or more likely October. Director of Sport advised that there are too many variables to confirm a definitive month at this point. DfC Observer advised of discussion with COO and Director of Sport, adding that in the absence of a Minister the plan will go to Permanent Secretary for approval, and that the Observers role had no decision-making authority but solely a support capacity.</p> <p>The Chair noted the failure to deliver a significant percentage of the 2022/23 Business Plan objectives. Also, despite commitments in the past to improve the business planning process with first draft in December and final draft for approval in February/March we are still unable to finalise the new plan until September or October, 6 months late. However, the Board welcomes all contributions to improve planning, delivery, and effectiveness.</p>	
7.2	Financial Report	
	See SNI 23 33 Financial Report, item 8.1 of agenda	
7.3	Partnership Working	
7.3(i)	Department for Communities	
7.3(ii)	Local Government	

	See SNI 23 29 – Operations Report, item 8 of agenda.	
7.4	Health and Safety – Staff Welfare Members noted no adverse incidents, categorised as ‘near miss’, recorded in 2023/24 to date. The review of Health & Safety provisions across the three Sport NI sites at House of Sport, TNOC and SNISI has been carried out by Mabbett & Associates. It was agreed that a handover report be created, and Mabbett & Associates presented the handover in July 2023. Sport NI are exploring if there is any capacity to extend existing contract arrangements with Mabbett & Associates for additional support to HR for the implementation action plan.	
	<i>IT Manager</i> Members asked for an IT update. COO advised that the post is still vacant, although a full time IT assistant has been recruited. DfC Observer queried alternatives, for example has a shared service approach been considered? COO updated on completed actions to date and that Sport NI had sought a grade 7, which unfortunately also did not attract a post holder. This will continue to be discussed at the weekly Task and Finish Group meetings.	
7.5	Communications Report Member queried followers on twitter update, noting the decrease of 16 and a drop in ‘Impressions’ of 78.5k. <i>S Burrows left the meeting.</i> Member asked what are the objectives, how we measure actual performance, and are we getting into the required markets? Members also asked where the wider benchmark for this is, compared against similar bodies. Also, is there an update on the website? Members recommended that where there is not Sport NI content, that Sport NI connect in with other stories and show case the input and impact Sport NI has had indirectly as well as directly. Members raised previous discussions with Head of Policy and Innovation around interviews ready to publish and where these are. Members also asked for an update on Insights and data capture, particularly if this could generate positive stories. Member stated that engagement with key stakeholders is vitally important, that the Board recognise the work that has gone into this but felt that the report does not sufficiently provide this. Board asked for an update on all Comms SMART targets against Strategic Objectives.	Action: Head of Policy & Innovation to advise on rationale for drop. Action: Performance measures update and development of website for Board. Action: Head of Policy & Innovation to update on interview content. Action: Head of Policy & Innovation to update on insights & data capture. Action: Future reports to include progress against all Comms SMART targets against Strategic Objectives.
8	SNI 23 29 Operations Report	
8.1	Board received SNI 23 29, Operations Report for information.	Members noted SNI 23 29 Operations Report.
8.1(i)	Board received SNI 23 33, Financial Report – Resource Consumption for information. COO provided an update on the Lottery Account advising that the Lottery Accounts remain in audit arrears and that Sport NI is working with NIAO to resolve this legacy issue. Sport NI (under the authorisation of NIAO) have postponed preparation of 2022/23 Lottery Accounts and the substantive finance manager will be taking this work forward and anticipates 2022/23 accounts to Board in September. However these accounts will be due to potential subsequent changes to prior years. The Chair thanked COO for update and noted the drawn-out process in progressing the Lottery Accounts. While acknowledging the impact of COVID support programmes the Chair stated the outstanding Lottery Accounts remain a disappointment and frustration for the Board, from the CEO’s Lessons Learnt report in May 2019 subsequent expectations have gone unfulfilled. The Chair added that the Lottery Accounts will continue to be a focus for the Task and Finish Group and the Deloitte Strategic Review. COO advised that as with COVID, this is not entirely within the control of Sport NI who are working with third parties whose workloads and scheduling has impacted on this legacy issue. Also, Sport NI have prepared and finalised 2015/16 accounts which are ready for approval by Sport NI ARAC and Sport NI Board (before AO sign off) and remaining years have ‘skeleton’	Members noted SNI 23 33 Finance Report

	<p>accounts up to the latest set of accounts. However, under the direction of NIAO, progression towards certification was postponed in the absence of the CEO.</p> <p>Board discussed the cash balance and the impact on the outstanding lottery accounts. COO and Director of Sport advised on how this is being managed and the focus on delivery over the next 3 years.</p>	
8.2	<p>Governance Action Plan</p> <p>COO advised the majority of the actions have closed and that the remaining actions may need to be revised due to changing circumstances. COO recommended that the action plan be closed off and that remaining actions be revised and taken through other existing vehicles such as ARAC. A process needs to be determined to take forward those 4 remaining actions. Board agreed with this approach and for remaining actions to be carried on and reported in other mediums, such as H&S through HR reporting.</p> <p>Chair drew Members attention to appendix 2 of Operations Report, Annual Theft and Fraud Report; and Guidance on Conflict of Interests.</p> <p>Chair also advised Members Permanent Secretary letter on responsibility of Accounting Officer.</p> <p>In the absence of a finalised Business Plan, Board was advised a Quarter One (June 2023) update based on the May 2023 draft Business Plan has been included at Appendix 3 to this report.</p>	<p>Members noted Appendix 2 - DAO Annual Theft and Fraud Report.</p> <p>Members noted Appendix 2 DAO Guidance on Conflict of Interests.</p> <p>Members noted Accounting Officer responsibilities regarding budget spending.</p> <p>Members noted Appendix 3 – Quarter 1 Business Plan Review 2022/23.</p>
8.3	<p>ARAC Report</p> <p>COO met with RSM on 21 July 2023. In line with the timeframe outlined in the Governance Action Plan, advised the Audit plan for 2023/24 is in development and should be finalised and be taken forward to ARAC for approval.</p> <p>Board Member asked if the Terms of Reference and other guidance could be uploaded to Board Knowledge section on Decision Time and this was agreed.</p> <p>Chair noted the contribution from Michael Matthews and his continued input. COO added the information sessions MM delivered to staff which were needed and well received.</p>	<p>Action – Terms of Reference to be uploaded to Decision Time Board Knowledge</p>
8.4	<p>SNI 23 32 HR Report</p> <p>Board received the SNI 23 32 HR Report for information.</p> <p>Member stated informative report and queried how often this would come to Board. COO advised Board that the report will evolve and improve with the changing IT systems being implemented and that the frequency of the reporting is a decision by the Board. Member acknowledged the information within the report, information on new starts is welcome but also need to see information on leaves, exit interviews and vacant posts within the organisation. Members agreed a summary of high-level statistics of leavers, sick, complaints/grievances and unfilled posts would be welcome.</p>	<p>Action – HR Report to include high-level statistics of leavers, sick, complaints/grievances and unfilled posts.</p> <p>Members noted SNI 23 32 HR Report.</p>
8.4(i)	<p>Chair asked if performance management can be reported on within the report? For example, training courses, how many took part etc. Member added that PDP information could be included within this. Director of Sport agreed that these can all be looked at, but may not all make the next report, Chair interjected that the Board understand this with HR capacity and managing the heightened workload within HR at present.</p>	<p>Action – Performance Management data to be added to HR report.</p>
8.4(ii)	<p>Culture Change</p> <p>Chair raised Culture Change and working group. Board discussed and noted this has been superseded by Staff Engagement Working Group.</p>	
8.4(iii)	<p>Staff Engagement Survey</p> <p>Member queried basis of staff engagement survey; can it be used as a comparison to the previous survey. Members advised the survey was designed to allow a comparison with the previous survey. COO informed the Board of the staff engagement working group established after the previous survey and the great work they have done over the last 12 months. Noted some of the recommendations coming out of the previous survey and their implementation, for</p>	<p>Action – Report on Staff Engagement Survey from Head of Policy and Insight.</p>

	example the opportunity for staff the meet the Board which was subsequently poorly attended by staff. Members thanked COO for update. COO added that there was a staff briefing session and feedback from this is also being used to inform what staff are seeking from those sessions.	
9.	<p>SNI 23 30 – Recognition of Touch England as NGB</p> <p>Director of Sport presented paper SNI 23 30 and the recognition of Touch England as the NGB within England for Touch Rugby. Board discussed recognition of NGB and noted how other sports such as 20/20 cricket have stayed within the existing NGB's. Board was advised that ELT were not aware of any discussions with Ulster Rugby and that there may be a need to contact IRFU to discuss this. Chair asked if Members felt topic needs to re-tabled for September. Director of Sport recommended proceeding to decision now. Members agreed and discussed approval of English NGB by NI Board. Director of Sport explained joint recognition policy and process of all NGBs by all Home Council Boards.</p>	Members approved Paper SNI/23/30 – Recognition of Touch England as NGB
10.	<p>SNI 23 31 – Sports Systems Investment – Governing Bodies – Funding Increase 2023/24</p> <p>Interim Head of Sport Systems (IHSS) presented paper SNI 23 31. IHSS advised of previous paper presented and outstanding balance remaining to be allocated. IHSS outlined the options considered, noting specific priority areas and the flexible approach taken. IHSS highlighted the size and scale of some of the sports, for example membership numbers. Overall, 18 sports will be impacted by the investment.</p> <p>Board welcomed this approach, with Sport NI as a genuine partner and not just almost as an inspector. Members recognise this is a positive opportunity to help sports progress, but that it is also important to strike a balance to help smaller sports that may struggle to thrive or grow with a little bit of assistance, while continuing to support larger more self-sustaining sports.</p> <p>Chair asked if the table could be amended to demonstrate what has been delivered and this was agreed.</p> <p>Members queried how the figures are quantified, the make-up of the figures and how the figure is arrived at. IHSS advised that the sports asked for these amounts and explained that it is based upon a combination of competition, participants, and volunteers within the sport to name a few.</p> <p>Members questioned priority investment areas and where the data comes from on impact of where Sport NI is really making a difference. Board was informed of various methods of data collection, reporting from sports, how this is captured, some manual and labour intensive, as well as how this is then reported to the Board.</p> <p>Members noted that this investment not only grows the sport but also the internal mechanisms of the NGB. As these improve is there a way to share this learning across NGBs and help one another improve. Speaking with the sports some also struggle to see the bigger picture and where they fit in. It was also noted that this is the first year, what about years 2, 3 and 4 etc. When is the next cycle coming to the Board for the next year or next 4-year cycle. IHSS stated this is an increase on the current investment and that future proposals are being considered.</p> <p><i>D Burns left the meeting</i></p> <p>NGBs have been asked to plan their needs and deliverable for the next 4-5 years and this will help inform our development plans. Larger sports are working on this, but this is more difficult for smaller sports. Sport NI is working with these sports, so they do not fall behind.</p> <p><i>R Bullock left the meeting</i></p> <p>Member stated the paper is very good and noted the areas of focus, emphasising the need to work with sports on recognising the need for data. Member asked if the Sports Hub can play a role in this? IHSS agreed to look into this but did not believe it was created as a data capture tool but for sharing of good practice.</p> <p>Chair noted the importance of data capture and reporting. Can we take forward a piece on the value of sport. Director of Sport advised Head of Policy and Insight has been working on this and will be bringing a update to the Board at a future date.</p> <p><i>R Archibald left the meeting.</i> <i>R Bullock returned to the meeting</i></p>	<p>Members approved Paper SNI/23/31 - Sports Systems Investment - Governing Bodies - Funding Increase 2023/24.</p> <p>Action – Table to demonstrate delivery against SMART target club membership.</p>

	<p>IHSS gave presentation to Board. During workforce information slide, the Department Observer advised of recent job start programme and the sports job placements that have been facilitated through Job Start.</p> <p>Chair thanked IHSS for the presentation and breadth of topics summarised. Members asked if the presentation could be uploaded to the resources for the Board.</p>	Action – Presentation to be uploaded to Board Knowledge on Decision Time.
11	<p>AOB</p> <p>A Nicholl, K Harding, W Elliott and K Ferguson noted issues with IT support.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 12:13pm.</p>	Action – Board Secretariat to follow up on I.T. issues.
12	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>The next Board Meeting is scheduled to take place at 9:30am, on 13th September 2023.</p>	

Signed by Sport NI Chair: *George Lucas*

Date: 13th September 2023