

ULSTER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT LTD

(Company Limited by Guarantee and not having a Share Capital)

Minutes of a Board of Directors Meeting

13.30, Wednesday 27 May 2020

Via video conferencing

Present

Mr W Leathem	Chairman
Mr D O'Hara	Director
Mr R Havlin	Director
Ms J Cowan	Director
Ms C Magill	Director
Mr R Donnelly	Director
Mr W Atkinson	Chief Executive
Mrs SJ Mowbray	Company Secretary/Head of Corporate Services
Mr S Jackson	Head of Manufacturing & Recycling
Mr D Cowan	Head of Employment Services

Apologies

None

1. Conflict of Interest

1.1.A perceived conflict of interest was noted for the SMT in relation to the pension benefit re-design.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2020

2.1. Minutes from meeting on 29 April 2020 were approved;

2.2. Actions from previous minutes were noted as cleared or on-hold during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3. Assurance was provided that the Business Continuity Plan will continue to be updated in line with Government guidance.

3. Chairperson's Report

3.1. The Chairperson updated Board members on the following:

- The First Minister visited Usel to thank frontline staff for their hard work during COVID-19;
- Positive feedback on Twitter, thanking Usel for their contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic;

- Annual appraisals have been completed for CEO and Board members;
- The Board approved the action for DfC will undertake a recruitment exercise for an additional Board member.

4. Pension Scheme Update

- 4.1. There is no update to progress in relation to approval, as the business case remains with the Department's actuary.
- 4.2. The Department have been made aware that if approval is obtained, there are potential implementation costs of £150k, which Usel will be unable to fund.

5. Chief Executives Report

Business Overview

- 5.1. Usel continued to run with a reduced service within the manufacturing and recycling lines in April. Within the industrial sewing line, work is booked until mid-July and there are bedding orders for approx. 250 units. With no further bedding orders confirmed, staff in bedding have been placed on furlough from the end of May.
- 5.2. A decision has been reached to furlough a number of the recycling team in Belfast. With the recent reopening of the council amenity sites Usel would envisage that Ballymena will continue to maintain the status quo for the foreseeable future.
- 5.3. A service level agreement has been agreed between Usel and DfC, for the supply and delivery of sandwiches to all the DfC offices on a Wednesday and Friday every week. This equates to 2,500 units per day being delivered to 48 sites across NI. The current arrangement is on a week by week basis however there is a possibility that it may be in place to August.
- 5.4. Usel completed a tender for confidential shredding across the NICS, the term of the tender will be 3 years, plus 2, plus 2 and based on forecasted volumes could have a potential value of approx. £3 million. The formal outcome of the tender should be available early July.

5.5. In order to prepare for the forecast downturn across the business when the furlough scheme comes to an end, a business case has been to the department seeking approval for a restructure.

AP: A Recovery Plan to be drafted, for post COVID-19, including details on how staff currently on “furlough” will return safely to work.

6. Head of Corporate Services Report

Finance

6.1. The Directors reviewed the summary financial position against budget, for **April**, and noted an operating deficit of £18k. Budget forecast for **April** was £22k surplus, therefore there is a negative variance of £40k. The variance in both income and expenditure lines have been impacted by COVID-19.

6.2. The draft Annual Report and Accounts was presented to the Board, including a reconciliation between March 2020 management accounts and the Net Expenditure in the Accounts.

6.3. No additional clarification was requested by Board members.

HR

6.4. The average absenteeism rates for 2020-21 are as follows:

	Usel April 2020	Usel YTD Average
<i>Absenteeism rates - short term-National Average 3% dependant on demographics</i>	0.68%	0.68%
<i>Absenteeism rates - long term (+4 weeks)-National Average 2.5% dependant on demographics</i>	3.15%	3.15%

ICT & Compliance

6.5. There were no incidences of ICT or data breaches to report.

7. COVID-19 Update

7.1. The CEO provided the Board will an update in relation to Usel’s plans in response to COVID-19.

7.2. An Assurance Statement was provided to the Department and reviewed by the Board.

7.3. Ms Magill suggested a Deputy Chair is appointed, in the event that the Chair is unable to fulfil his role. The Memorandum and Articles of Association permits other Board members to appoint a Deputy Chair. The Board will agree and make a decision in this regard.

7.4. Ms Magill queried how Usel will respond to staff returning to work from furlough or from shielding. Mrs Mowbray advised that a return to work interview, specifically designed for furlough and shielding, will be completed on staff returning to work.

AP: The Board to make a decision in relation to appointing a Deputy Chair.

8. Revised Business Plan and Associated Budget 2020-21

8.1. The CEO presented the revised Business Plan, which has been updated for impact of COVID-19.

8.2. The budget will be revised following a review of May's management accounts.

9. Adults safeguarding issues

9.1. There were no issues to noted.

10. Health & Safety Update

10.1. Mrs Mowbray provided the Board an update in relation to H&S, in particular in relation to COVID-19.

11. Risk Management

11.1. Changes to the Risk Register were noted.

12. Draft policies/strategies for:

12.1. There were no policies submitted for review and approval in June Board:

12.2. The following policies were approved:

- Gifts and Hospitality Policy

13. Any Other Business

13.1. Ms Magill provided advice to the Board, learned from Invest NI's webinar on Director Responsibilities and Covid-19.

13.2. Ms Magill requested information on how the Employment Services team provide support remotely.

AP: Mr Cowan to present how the Employment Services Team have provided remote employment support.

14. Date of next meeting

14.1. The Board will meet on Wednesday 17 June 2020 to discuss the revised 2020-21 budget.

14.2. The next Board meeting, AGM and ARAC will be on 24 June 2020.

AP: A list of Usel policies to be provided for the Board to review, in preparation for the Partnership Agreement between Usel and DfC.