

ULSTER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT LTD

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

Minutes of a Board of Directors Meeting
13.30, Wednesday 30 October 2019
Cambrai Street, Belfast

Present

Mr W Leathem	Chairman
Ms C Magill	Director
Mr R Donnelly	Director
Mr D O'Hara	Director
Mr R Havlin	Director
Ms J Cowan	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

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 25 September 2019

2.1. Minutes from meeting on 25 September 2019 were approved.

- There were no actions from September's Board meeting.

2.2. All actions are cleared.

3. Chairman's Business

3.1. The Chairman updated members in relation to:

- The Chair attended a retirement breakfast event for a member of staff with 26 years service, which highlighted the supportive working environment in Usel;
- The Chair, Joan Cowan and David Cowan attended a pension trustee meeting;

- The Chair and CEO attended a workshop, organised by DfC, to discuss the transition towards a Partnership Framework, from the MSFM;
- The Chair expressed his congratulations, on behalf of the Board, to the team on winning Social Enterprise of the Year at the Ballymena Business Awards.

4. Pension Scheme Update

4.1. The pension benefit re-design business case was submitted to the Department on 19 October.

4.2. The Department were reminded of the 10 working day turnaround to ensure there is an effective consultation process.

5. Chief Executive's Report

5.1. The Directors reviewed the Chief Executive's Report which had been circulated with Board papers. The following was noted:

Business Development

5.2. Usel are currently engaged in discussions with a number of other NDPB's, regarding the development of new strategic partnerships. These discussions, if successful, could create a new service model, that has the potential to create a new business gateway into the wider public sector delivery space.

5.3. The new retail outlet in Ballymena is now open. Early signs are positive regarding footfall, with feedback from potential customers also being very positive.

5.4. We won the Social Enterprise of the Year Award at the Ballymena Business Awards. This is a positive outcome for Usel and will support further development of the Usel brand within the wider Mid and East Antrim area.

Pension Benefits Redesign

5.5. The updated business case has been issued to the department. The need for the department to respond within the agreed timeframe has been reinforced, to ensure the consultation process to remain on track.

5.6. The Board will be provided with the Department's response as soon as it is received.

Stakeholder Engagement

- 5.7. The CEO attended a Solace meeting earlier this month. The meeting was extremely positive with an agreement from all attendees to facilitate a follow-up meeting to explore in more detail how Usel can support the various councils close the disability employment gap within their various areas.
- 5.8. The CEO and Chairman attended an NDPB forum hosted by DfC to review and discuss the new proposed partnership framework. The new framework will replace the current MSFM and when fully implemented will potentially change the operating model between the sponsor department and the NDPB. During the session there was an opportunity to discuss potential challenges for both parties in this new approach. As a follow up, Usel have requested to be part of the first phase of organisations to trial the new approach.

Continuous Improvement

- 5.9. As Usel continues to focus on creating a sustainable future, several areas have been identified that need to be addressed in order support the changing nature of Usel.
- 5.10. Historically, Usel has been in the manufacturing sector. However, in recent years there has been a shift towards the service sector, with the development of recycling and hospitality business units. This is a trend likely to continue. In order to support growth in these areas, efficiencies have been identified.
- 5.11. The Board approved the senior management team proceeding with exploring the efficiencies presented.

New Site Development

- 5.12. A draft of the proposed for scheme of works for the development of the new site was presented to the Board.
- 5.13. Preparations are underway to shape a business case to support the overall project. Due to a capacity constraint within the senior team, it is intended to secure external support via a direct award contract (DAC). The external support selected has delivered a number of other projects, knows and understands Usel as a business and was recommended by a senior official within the Department. It is envisaged the contract value will be less than £4000 with all works to be complete by end of December 2019.
- 5.14. The Board were content to proceed with a DAC.

6. Head of Corporate Services' Report

Finance

6.1. The Directors reviewed the summary financial position against budget, for **September**, and noted a surplus of £14k. Budget forecast for **September** was £17k surplus. Performance was therefore £3k underbudget.

6.2. YTD we have delivered a deficit of £34k. Budget forecast for YTD position, as at **30 September** was a deficit of £30k. This is a negative variance of £4k.

6.3. It was noted that income and expenditure lines for YTD were within 10% variance tolerance.

HR

6.4. The average absenteeism rates for 2019-20 are as follow:

	Usel September 2019	Usel YTD Average
<i>Absenteeism rates - short term-National Average 3% dependant on demographics</i>	1.06%	2%
<i>Absenteeism rates - long term (+4 weeks)-National Average 2.5% dependant on demographics</i>	3.28%	2.7%

* This equates to six staff – three of which have returned to work.

6.5. No other substantive issues to note.

6.6. Following a recruitment exercise, Usel has appointed a People and Culture Manager who will take up post on 25 November.

6.7. Usel will continue to engage with its out-sourced HR business partner until the individual takes up the post.

AP: Circulate job description and questions for People and Culture Manager.

AP: Update on implementation of values to be provided in December Board.

ICT & Compliance

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

7. Assurance Statement 2019-20, interim review

7.1. Mrs Mowbray advised members that the Assurance Statement 2019-20 had been circulated to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee for comment. As a consequence of ARAC feedback, the Statement was updated in relation to procurement and the impact of Brexit on Usel's data.

7.2. The Board reviewed and approved the interim Assurance Statement.

8. Balanced Scorecard 2019-20, Q2 update

8.1. Board members noted the Balanced Scorecard and progress against annual targets and objectives.

9. Adult Safe Guarding Issues

9.1. No new issues to report.

10. Health & Safety

10.1. The Health & Safety forum continues to operate on monthly basis. No issues to note.

11. Risk management

11.1. The risk register was reviewed in full.

12. Policies for Approval

12.1. The following policies were approved, subject to minor amendments:

- Disciplinary Policy – updated
- Health and Safety Policy

12.2. The following policies were submitted for approval in November's Board:

- Acceptable Use of ICT v2
- ICT Security Policy

13. Any Other Business

13.1. ARAC December meeting to move to January.

14. Date of Next Meeting

14.1. 14 November 2019