

## **ULSTER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT LTD**

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

Minutes of a Board of Directors Meeting  
14.30, Tuesday 30 April 2019  
Cambrai Street, Belfast

### **Present**

Mr J Perry	Chairman
Mr T Hinds	Director
Mr D Mackay	Director
Ms C Magill	Director
Dr G Adams	Director
Mr A Bennett	Director
Mr W Atkinson	Chief Executive
Mrs SJ Mowbray	Company Secretary/Head of Corporate Services

### **Apologies**

None

### **1. Conflict of Interest**

1.1. No perceived/actual conflicts of interest were noted.

### **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2019**

2.1. Minutes from meeting on 27 March 2019 were approved.

2.2. Actions from previous meetings were noted as cleared:

- The job evaluation process is now complete and the recommendation from the report will be implemented.

### **3. Chairman's Business**

3.1. The Chairman updated members in relation to:

- Letters of Offer have been sent to individuals in relation to new Board appointments, by the Public Appointments Unit. An induction will be organised for a date in May;
- Board appraisals are now completed and submitted to the Department;

- The Tailored Review has now been received by the Department and will be shared with Usel once a first stage review has been completed by the Department;
- A meeting with the Permanent Secretary has been organised at Cambrai Street, for May.

#### **4. Pension Scheme Update**

4.1. The Chair updated members in relation to:

- The Department's appointed actuary has undertaken a preliminary review. A meeting has taken place between Usel's pension administrator and the Department's actuary;
- The Usel pension Trustees have assessed Usel's performance and drafted an Employer's Covenant, concluding that there is a positive outcome;
- Legal advice has been obtained in relation to the employment status of Employment Support participants. This advice has been shared with the Department;
- A meeting took place between Chairman, CEO and Usel's Company actuary. Detail will be covered in the Chief Executives report.

#### **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:

##### **Strategic Partnership Development**

5.2. As discussed in March meeting, progress with a key strategic partner regarding the development of a hospitality academy and a new Ability coffee shop has progressed.

5.3. Advice has been received that financial support for the project has been agreed and we are now working through the finer detail regarding the legal requirements of the service level agreement.

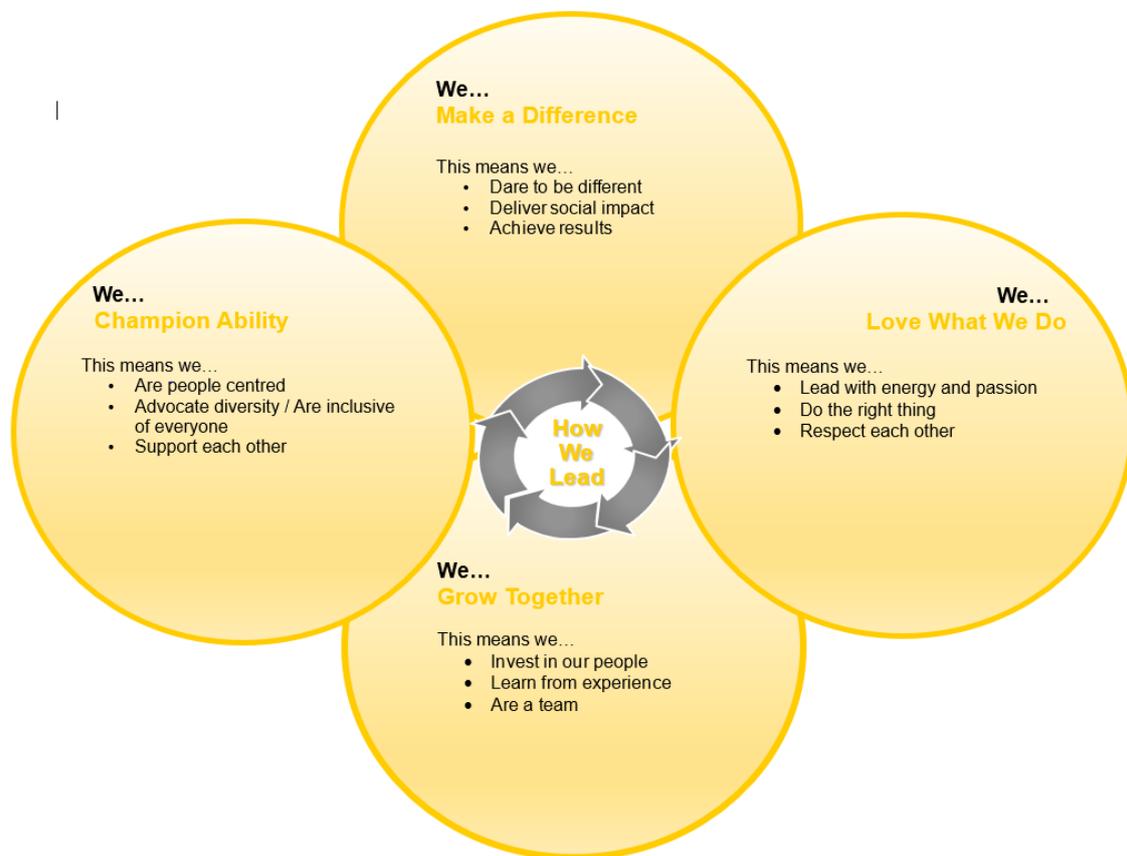
##### **New Business development**

5.4. As outlined at the March Board, engagement with a new commercial partner to scope the provision of a baling service on the main Belfast site commenced. The proposed partner is one of the largest recycling businesses in NI and is keen to develop a more formal arrangement in relation to the collection and bailing of a range of paper, cardboard and other dry recyclables.

5.5. A six-month test and learn pilot will commence in mid-May. The focus of the test and learn is to scope the volumes and waste reduction targets prior to discussions on a full partnership model commencing in late 2019. The outcome of this test and learn could be particularly significant, due to a forecast reduction in our income in mid-2020.

## Staff Engagement

5.6. The management team have met a number of times to reshape Usel's values. The staff forum were consulted on possible options. These meetings have been productive, and a draft form of the proposed values has been produced, as outlined below:



5.7. The outlined values have been endorsed by the staff forum and the management team.

5.8. The Board approved the outlined amendments and are content to move forward with full implementation.

## **Pension Update**

5.9. Following a meeting with the pension Trustees, the Chair and CEO met with Usel's Corporate actuary to review the accounting position of the Usel pension scheme. A number of options were highlighted by the Corporate actuary that could improve the current accounting position of the Usel scheme.

5.10. A full copy of the information from the pension administrator was presented to the Board.

5.11. The Board are content to approve recommendations contained within the report.

## **Stake Holder Engagement**

5.12. Usel have been shortlisted by the Belfast Chamber of Commerce in the upcoming business awards in two categories:

- Social Enterprise of the Year
- Environmental Business of the Year

5.13. The Chamber confirmed the strong competition across all their awards with 289 entries.

5.14. Usel has been selected for a Special Recognition award is being presented by the Federation of Transport Association (FTA). Each year the FTA recognises a member that has gone over and above what is expected within the transport sector. This year the FTA want to recognise the work that Usel is doing within the community and environment.

## **Year 1 STRIDE Results**

5.15. Year 1 of STRIDE successfully recruited 215 participants into the project, 7.5% above target. To 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, 132 participants have left the project. Of the 132 leavers:

- 74 (56%) have entered employment or self-employment, against a project target of 30%
- a further 20 (15%) have left to Further Education or Training, against a project target of 15%.

5.16. The provision of quality training interventions on project have helped to facilitate strong employment outcomes. During Year 1, 196 accredited qualifications were achieved by participants in the following areas:

- Employability skills (90)
- Vocationally related skills (66)
- Essential skills (20)
- IT skills (20).

5.17. In addition, 207 non-accredited training courses have been delivered, approximately 50% completed were to support participants resilience, mental health, confidence, motivation, independence and self-efficacy.

## **6. Head of Corporate Services' Report**

### **Finance**

6.1. The Directors reviewed the summary financial position against budget, for **March**, and noted an operating surplus of £1k. Budget forecast for **March** was £30k deficit, therefore there is a positive variance of £31k. We are therefore in line with our forecast.

6.2. YTD a surplus of £52k was noted. Budget forecast for YTD position, as at 31 March was a surplus of £42k, which is a £10k positive variance. A breakdown of full year income performance was provided to the Board.

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

6.4. Any additional clarification requested by Board members was provided.

### **HR**

6.5. The average absenteeism rates for 2018-19 are as follow

	<b>2018-19</b>
<i>Absenteeism rates - short term-National Average 3% dependant on demographics</i>	2%
<i>Absenteeism rates - long term (+4 weeks)-National Average 2.5% dependant on demographics</i>	3.7%

6.6. No other substantive issues to note.

6.7. Usel are continuing to engage with its out-sourced HR business partner as required and monitor the contract spend each month.

### **ICT & Compliance**

6.8. In addition to delivering the ICT Strategy, recent activity included:

- Unet has now launched across the business with positive feedback to date. Non email users can now access the system using a generic login. This means that all staff can access the digital employee handbook. Elements such as electronic suggestion box have also now been included.
- Review of the business Data Protection Policy and Business Continuity Plan
- Appointment of Vodafone as the new mobile provider for Usel under the government CPD framework. This will provide a value for money solution for the renewal of the mobile contracts in June.
- New Digital Mileage Solution has now launched. Training and support has been provided to all staff who are using the new system. We will monitor the system to provide a 6 month analysis and cost benefit exercise.
- ICT team are trialling new Microsoft Teams software which (if fit for purpose) could be rolled out across the business to digitalise workload management and communication between staff working together.
- Ongoing HR administration.

6.9. There were no incidences of ICT Breaches to report.

### **Business Development and Marketing**

6.10. In addition to delivering the Communication Plan, recent activity included:

- Finalists in Belfast Business Awards – Best Social Enterprise / Best in Environmental Best Practice
- Development of key strategic partners:
  - IFA:
    - Better NI Recruitment Launch
    - Homeless Street Soccer International Cap Presentation

- Disability Football League Partnership
- Belfast City Council Hospitality Academy
- Ballymena Factory Shop Open Day for retail park
- Launch of new marketing material for bedding wholesale and retail customer
- KTP graduate started.

6.11. Communications to staff continues to operate in line with plan. No issues or concerns have been raised.

### **Business Improvement**

6.12. Recent activity included:

- Project in divan area to improve housekeeping, health and safety and overall efficiencies in the area
- Preparation for the National Bedding Federation forthcoming audit – implementing new requirements
- Reviewing cutting and preparation process in Industrial Sewing with a view to increasing efficiencies through the implementation of new methods and machinery

#### **U.matter.**

- New Year New U concluded
- Gardening Committee to be organised to create a sensory garden at the rear of the site.

### **7. Chair of ARAC Update**

7.1. The Chair of the ARAC attended an annual meeting with Chair's of other ARAC's. There were 2 key themes for discussion: a revised approach to ALB management; and, an update on NICS risk management.

**AP: Query with the Department re: attendance at next meeting.**

### **8. Balanced Scorecard 2018-19**

8.1. The Board noted the full year 2018-19 Balanced Scorecard.

### **9. Adult Safe Guarding Issues**

9.1. No new issues to report.

## **10. Health & Safety**

10.1. Health & Safety forum continues to operate on monthly basis.

## **11. Risk management**

11.1. The Board noted the changes to the risk register.

## **12. Policies for Approval**

12.1. No new policies were presented for approval.

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

- Data Protection Policy
- Business Continuity Plan v2

## **13. Any Other Business**

13.1. The Chair of the Board acknowledged Trevor Hinds and Don Mackay's contribution to Board achievements during their tenure. He thanked them for the role they had played in the Company's development over the last few years. The Chair also expressed appreciation for their personal support during their time on the Board.

## **14. Date of Next Meeting**

14.1. 17 April 2019.