# ULSTER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT LTD

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

Minutes of a Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday 25th October 2023 at 11.20am at Cambrai Street

# Present

Mr W Leatham Chairman

Mr D O’Hara Director

Mrs S Wakfer Director

Mr D Duffy Director

Mr R Havlin Director

Mr R Donnelly Director

Mr S Jackson Head of Manufacturing & Recycling

Mr D Cowan Head of Employment Services

Ms M Hegarty Head of Finance

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
	1. No apologies noted.
	2. Chairman noted his apologies to SMT for the delay as board had closed session.
2. **Conflicts of Interest**
	1. Conflict of interest noted for SMT with regards discussing the pension, salaries, and temporary promotion/additional payments.
3. **Minutes of the previous meetings held on 27th September 2023 and 9th October 2023**
	1. **Approval** - Minutes added re closed session on both. Both approved.
	2. **Matters Arising** – on action log or agenda.
	3. **Action Log** – due to packed agenda, Chair proposed to review open actions in November meeting. The following items were discussed:
		1. **Cost of moving pension options** – M Hegarty presented the workings, and the Board discussed the affordability. M Hegarty to prepare the budget FY24.25 budget with 3 scenarios 4%, 6% and 8%. Board to look at affordability for FY24.25 before recommending start of business case.
		2. **ALB assurance statement October 22 – March 23**

Chair noted this statement was sent to Department but has not yet gone through ARAC. D O’Hara to send both via written procedures to ARAC members to review and approve. To come back to Nov board meeting.

* + 1. **USEL Fraud Risk Assessment** – D O’Hara noted this is the assessment of USEL’s controls to Fraud that was presented at last ARAC. Noted Sponsor branch had confirmed they had not yet reviewed. To include on agenda for strategy day.
		2. **ARAC Self-Assessment Checklist** - D Ohara noted ARAC self-assessment checklist was done but, Department feedback to be incorporated and bring back to November board.
1. **Chairman’s Report**
	1. Chairman noted he sent minutes for the Departmental ALB Leaders forum that he attended. Chairman noted key message was likely another 2 years of 1-year budgets.
	2. Chairman notedUSEL hosted the Department Accountability meeting on 02/10/23, that went well.
	3. Chairman noted all appraisal meetings have been completed for the board.
	4. Chairman noted Cyber security training completed by Chair and R Donnelly.
2. **Written Procedures:**
	1. A number of policies were discussed as follows:
		1. Feedback was received from the Department on the 4 policies: Starting pay on transfer to a new substantive grade policy, Hours and Attendance policy, Overtime pay policy and Deputising allowance and Temporary Promotion policy. Feedback was reviewed by the board and responses collated. Head of Finance to circulate responses to Department and send them the approved policies. Options paper on honorarium’s to be brought to November board. Policies, once approved, need published for staff.
		2. Board reviewed the following other policies:
			1. Working from home policy – approved
			2. Disciplinary policy – approved.
			3. Organisational chart – approved post update to add Executive Officer role on chart. Board discussed who the role would report to and agreed Head of Finance.
			4. Family leave policy – noted change was to increase to 2 weeks in line with NICS. Approved.
			5. Safeguarding Policy – associated policies to be renamed and then approved.
			6. Fraud Policy – to come back to ARAC with tracked changes and then to board for approval again in January 24
			7. Fraud Response plan– to come back to ARAC with tracked changes and then to board for approval again in January 24
			8. Acceptable use of IT policy – D Cowan noted over next 6 months the team will look at combining the 3 policies into one policy. Board asked for policy to come back to board next month with formatting fixed.
			9. ICT Security Policy – come back to board next month with formatting fixed.
			10. Data loss prevention policy– come back to board next month with formatting fixed.
3. **Chief Executive’s Report**
	1. Chair noted that he assumed the CEO report has been read in advance by board members.
	2. Chair noted S Jackson had asked for delegated authority for USEL to run own procurements up to £30k, S Jackson noted governance meeting this afternoon so may get an update then.
	3. Classification template to be completed by end of this month. Department will review template and liaise with DoF on status.
	4. S Jackson noted options paper is underway for Canteen and is nearly finished. S Jackson noted that an architect is to come out and inspect Mezzanine floor, but temporary Canteen provision is needed in mean time.
	5. Chair noted his congrats to all industrial sewing staff for their hard work.
	6. D Cowan noted Empower programme is underspent due to the lack of ESOs and also as it started late down on participants costs too. Shortfall for FY23.24 to be included for FY24.25.
	7. D Cowan noted we are waiting on tenders to come out for workable and SFLW.
	8. D Cowan noted ES department are looking to reduce money on the programme.
	9. D Cowan provided an update on the DARE partnership with Belfast Met.
	10. D Cowan noted Belfast City council are disappointed USEL aren’t going for 5-year tender for Belfast Castle Ability Café.
	11. D Cowan noted that discussions are still ongoing re the future of Ballycopeland, and we will be asking for additional income from HED in FY24.25 to continue. Chairman noted that although cafes do not make money, it creates training value for people with health conditions and disability. D Cowan noted that USEL T&C are much more generous that other café providers.
	12. D Cowan noted there is 1 safeguarding issue and provided an update to the board. Chair noted domestic abuse training important for staff.
	13. D Cowan noted USEL has been shortlisted in the Social Enterprise Awards for excellence in customer service for ability café. Chair congratulated all staff.
4. **Finance Report**
	1. M Hegarty presented the finance report for September 23 performance against budget and YTD position.
5. **HR KPIs**
	1. KPIs noted and reviewed by board. Board noted that the labour turnover continues to be high as does long term sickness though it is moving in the right direction. The large volume of recruitment exercises was noted.
6. **Risk register**
	1. Risk register was noted and discussed. M Hegarty noted the insurance risk was reduced as appropriate level of insurance for building was now in place.
	2. Risk 22 was to be amended to red as 3 employment programmes are ending.
7. **Any Other Business**
	1. Chair noted that Cavanagh Kelly was to facilitate session with board and management team for strategy day. Normal board meeting to take place 10.30-12.30pm. Managers to attend session during strategy day.
	2. Chair noted Department asked USEL to do board effectiveness review, Cavanagh Kelly to facilitate as part of strategy day.
	3. POD to be held prior to board meeting and strategy day, to start at 9am and job evaluations to be discussed.
	4. Finance committee meeting to be rescheduled to 23/11/23.