**ULSTER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT LIMITED**

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

Minutes of a Board of Directors Meeting

**WEDNESDAY 28th February 2024 at 10.30am at Cambrai Street**

**In Attendance**

Mr W Leathem Chairperson

Mrs S Wakfer Director

Mr D Duffy Director

Mr D O’Hara Director

Mr S Jackson CEO

Mr D Cowan Head of Employment Services

Ms N Donnelly Head of Manufacturing & Recycling

Mrs L Beagan Minute-taker

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
2. Apologies R Donnelly, R Havlin & R Smyth
3. The Chair explains Louise Beagan will be standing in as note taker in R Smyth’s absence.
4. **Conflict of Interest**
5. Conflict of Interest None.
6. **Minutes of the previous meetings held on 31st Jan 2024**

Item 5 section f: Remove paragraph from April to Equality Commission.

Item 6 section c: Incorrect reference to be changed to NIUSE

Item 10 section a: Remove

Item 11 section 1b: Remove

Item 11 section 1c: Remove

On completion of the above amendments W Leathem to review before minutes are published.

1. **Matters Arising** on agenda or on action log.
2. **Action Log Items – For Review and Discussion:** Action log extensive. Look at populating on two tabs, one for active actions and one for closed actions. Look at outstanding actions in more detail in March’s Board.
3. **Chairman’s Report**
4. Closed Board session took place on 15th February 2024. Sarah Wakfer noted the meeting and minutes have been approved by attendees. Business Case submitted in relation to employee relations issue. Lessons learned report discussed and an action plan to be rolled out to SMT. Acton plan for Board Effectiveness including ARAC tracker discussed. Lessons learned report: Action plan to be rolled out to SMT and action plan for board effectiveness sessions including ARAC tracker. Procurement training this morning attended by board members is a further action to ensure good governance in the organisation.
5. Scott sent letter to all staff last week ‘Upholding Our Commitment to Excellence and Inclusivity at USEL’. The letter reminds staff of USEL’s commitment to ensure high standards and governance. It is also providing opportunities for staff to meet with Scott in an informal setting and have open 1-2-1 discussions. William and Scott to meet week commencing 4th March to discuss further. An update will be provided at March’s Board.
6. Ballycopeland Windmill: MLA for North Down contacted W Leathem regarding his concerns on the closure of the Ability Café at the site. W Leathem and S Jackson have contacted the Councillor for the area. There has also been media coverage from Irish News, UTV, Belfast Live and BBC. David Cowan gives update on the HR process with staff.
7. **Written Procedures:**

A number of policies were noted and discussed:

* 1. **Draft Equality Scheme**: This went before February POD. Board accepted.
  2. **Equality, Diversity & ~Inclusion Policy**: This went before February POD. Board accepted.
  3. **Flex Time Working Policy:** This went before February POD. Board accepted.
  4. **Code of Conduct Policy:** This went before February POD. Board accepted.
  5. **Redundancy Policy:** Amendment for compulsory redundancy notice to change to 3 months only. Board accepted.
  6. **Procurement Procedure:** Page 31 last word last paragraph to be changed to ‘date of issue’. Page 41 states IT Assist. W Leathem questions if this is required. S Jackson states it would be beneficial may be something down the line because of the frameworks. S Jackson explains if they are too costly it provides justification not to use. Passed once changes implemented.

1. **Chief Executive’s Report:**
2. Update on building at back of site funded by Belfast City Council. Project Manager has been appointed. Full cost budget is £518K. This will include £4k in professional fees. A ‘wish list’ will be devised around 3rd week in March if additional funds become available. Proposal for this would be an automated sprinkler system which has been suggested to reduce insurance costs. Scott confirms that the agreement should be with the Board between Belfast City Council and Usel for review.
3. Insurance: Meeting with Gallagher’s has taken place and business case preparation has started. Maybe potential to decrease insurance costs if Usel can avail of the framework. Insurance also has bases in Belfast for employment issues and contact 5 days for fleet.
4. Life Assurance expiring in April. Business case preparation to be completed and submitted to provide service for next 5 years.
5. **Head of Operations Report:**
6. Sales team in talks with organisation requiring sub assembly work. This would create two full time jobs and no complex costs or equipment required. Northern Ireland Fire Service are requiring testing of new reflective material. They have asked us to produce two prototypes. There is a likelihood that they will replace all clothing and equipment with this material. NIFS strong emphasis on social clauses and very supportive of USEL’s values.
7. NICS confidential shredding contract: 98% satisfaction levels. SLA extension until April 2026.
8. Tender for mattress recycling from Lisburn City Council completed. Awaiting results.
9. Operators licence to be renewed by end of June. D Duffy raises concern regarding Board members listed against the licence but do not understand the requirements. N Donnelly reassures of training and checks that take place to ensure compliance. Information session to be prepared for Board in March.
10. Procurement: W Leathem states that this morning’s session was very reassuring. N Donnelly explains the Procurement Manager has completed complex training will all relevant members in the organisation and procedures to ensure compliance have been discussed.
11. Accidents: 4 minor accidents recorded. 3 cuts and 1 burn. Chain mail gloves have been provided to all mattress recycling operatives to prevent future incidents occurring.
12. Recruitment: H&S Manager appointed. Recycling Manager appointed through internal recruitment exercise as temporary post.
13. **Head of Employment Services Report:**
    1. Empower: 270 participants so far. Likely to finish with 380 participants. 79% of participants have moved into work. The target was 50% and UK average 28%. Contract Manager to complete audit in March.
    2. Skills for Life and Work (SFLW): ISEF 2023 progressing well. ETI district inspection agreed low risk and likely to be a very good or outstanding. Intake aim for September 2024 is 20 participants.
    3. Workable: 2022-2023 audit report received. Achieved an amber. Corrective measures in place and Quality Manager internally auditing each file to ensure full compliance.
    4. Job Start: On target.
    5. Step Up Programme: Full 12 months confirmed for next year. Target completed for this year even though only 4 months of programme.
    6. Ability Café’s: £2k up on last month. HR process in place with staff at Belfast Castle and Ballycopeland. Media and publicity issues being addressed around the closure of the Ability Café at Ballycopeland.
    7. Safeguarding: Incident regarding participant in SFLW. Lessons learned for future responses. No injuries sustained.
14. **Finance Report:** 
    1. Finance committee met on 15th February 2024 and discussed report in depth. No further questions from Board on the Finance report.
15. **Risk register:** 
    1. **Next ARAC meeting in March**
    2. **Concerns regarding Operators License to be added.**
    3. **Full review of risk register in March.**
16. **Any Other Business**
17. Charity Commission Trustee declaration: D O’Hara to sign.
18. Update on Head of Finance
19. External auditor will attend next ARAC meeting.
20. **Date of next meeting:** 27th March 2024.