

BUSINESS SERVICES ORGANISATION

Minutes of Proceedings

The one hundred and forty third meeting of the Board of the Business Services Organisation was held on Thursday 24 June 2021 at 10.00am via Video Conference.

Present:

Mrs Julie Erskine (Chair)

Mr Robert Bannon
Mr Mark Campbell
Miss Patricia Gordon
Mr Sean McKeever
Professor Dorothy Whittington

Mrs Karen Bailey (Acting Chief Executive)
Mrs Karen Bryson (Director of Finance)
Mrs Paula Smyth (Director of HR&CS)
Mr Peter Wilson (Interim Director of Operations)

In Attendance:

Mr Alphy Maginness (Chief Legal Adviser)
Mr Mark Bradley (Interim Director of CCP)
Miss Amanda Mills (Board Secretary)

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Conflicts of Interest Declarations

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

2. Minutes of BSO Board Meeting held on 27 May 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

3. Action Template – Paper BSO 40/2021 refers

Members noted the Action Template for 2021/22. Members were reminded that the BSO Board workshop is scheduled for Thursday 22 July 2021 where members will receive presentations on the HSCB Migration Project, Re-accreditation of Investors in People (IIP) for BSO and Review of Decision Making during Covid Report.

4. Chairs Business

The Chair briefed members on the key meetings she attended during the month of June. She advised members that she is scheduled to attend the official launch of the Full Fibre NI (FFNI) project which is a consortium made of the 10 rural councils outside of Belfast and BSO. The project is hosted by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. The Government's Department

for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) has awarded FFNI funding to help roll out the next generation of faster, full fibre broadband connections to a number of public bodies including council sites, health, GP surgeries, NI Fire and Rescue and community centres. The Chair added that the project demonstrates the value of collaboration across public sector organisations.

5. Acting Chief Executive's Report

Karen Bailey briefed members on the meetings she has recently attended; these included meetings with Directors and her direct reports to finalise their year end objectives for 2020/21 and the setting of objectives for 2021/22, an update meeting with the consultants on the BSO Review, and attendance at the Equip Programme Board.

A further meeting of the HSCB Oversight Board took place where significant discussion on the GP Responsible Officer (RO) issue. In particular, what would the implications be for BSO in terms of Governance? The Acting CEO went on to advise members that the Director of HR and Corporate Services, along with the Interim Director of Customer Care and Performance, were part of a Governance working group looking at this issue and assured members that they will be updated on the outcome in due course.. Members were reminded that the Director of Transformation, DOH, will be making a presentation to the Board Workshop on 22 July 2021 which will provide a good opportunity for members to raise any issues of concern.

6. Draft 2020/21 BSO Annual Report and Accounts

(i) Draft NIAO Report to those charged with Governance: Audit of 2020/2021 Financial Statements

The Director of Finance advised that the draft NIAO Report to those Charged with Governance was presented to the GAC at its meeting on 17 June 2021 by the appointed auditors PwC LLP.

Members noted the draft Report to those Charged with Governance in respect of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021.

(ii) Draft BSO Annual Report and for Year-Ended 31 March 2021 and Letter of Representation –

The Director of Finance presented the Executive Summary to the BSO Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 along with the Draft BSO Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021.

She explained that the Annual Report and Accounts were presented to GAC at its meeting on 17 June and confirmed that the External Auditors have provided an audit opinion confirming BSO has met the statutory break-even financial targets and BSO's financial transactions are regular. To that end the External Auditors have recommended to the NIAO to certify the 2020/2021 financial statements with an Unqualified audit opinion. In particular the DoF thanked Mr Simon McGrattan, AD Finance, for his tireless work in co-ordinating the audit of the annual accounts and his invaluable support to the Director of Finance in developing the annual accounts during a very complex and challenging period.

The Board endorsed the GAC's recommendation that the Annual Report and Accounts of the BSO for 2020/21 should be signed by the Chair, Acting Chief Executive and Director of Finance along with the Letter of Representation.

7. *2020/21 GAC Annual Report to the Board – Paper BSO 44/2021 refers*

Mr McKeever, Chair of GAC, presented the GAC Annual Report for 2020/21. He highlighted the considerable contribution made to the GAC from the Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) who served on GAC during the year.

The overall opinion of the GAC is that the assurances provided to GAC are sufficient to support the BSO Board and the Accounting Officer in the decisions taken by them and in their accountability obligations and that a sound system of Internal Control is in place.

Members noted the GAC Annual Report for 2020/21.

8. *Finance Report – Month 2 – Paper BSO 45/2021 refers*

The Director of Finance presented paper BSO 45/2021; a finance report for the two month period ending 31 May 2021.

The summary financial position shows the reported income and expenditure position for the period, with an overall surplus reported for this period and at this stage in the year a break even position is forecast for year end.

The DoF drew members attention to an issue around the expenditure for the Encompass programme whereby due to difficulties around recruitment of staff and finalising the development of the programme plan to support the infrastructure. This will impact on the run rate of the expenditure position in year and will require an update to the financial plan. She advised that a contingency plan is currently being drafted by the CDIO to consider other options to resolve both Programme Plan issue and he is intending to present a highlight report to the Programme Board for their approval. .

Members noted the finance report.

9. *Five Year Review of BSO Equality Scheme – BSO 46/2021 refers*

Professor Whittington presented the Five Year Review of the BSO Equality Scheme which is a mandatory requirement for all public bodies. She advised that the purpose of the review was to take learning and set direction for the coming years by critically evaluating the way the organisation has implemented Section 75 over the past five years. Members welcomed the chance to comment on the Review and asked Professor Whittington to pass on their thanks to Equality for a very ambitious report.

Members approved the Five Year Review of the BSO Equality Scheme for onward transmission to the Equality Commission.

10. *Corporate Balanced Scorecard – Paper BSO 47/2021 refers*

The Interim Director of CCP presented paper BSO 47/2021 which set out the performance of key service areas in the BSO for the period up to 31 May 2021. He highlighted those measures with a red rag rating and explained the circumstances which led to the evaluations. He stated that it is hoped to organise a workshop in the Autumn to review the contents and presentation of the Scorecard Report.

Members noted the BSO Corporate Scorecard.

11. *Executive Summary for the Office for Research Ethics Committees (RECs) NI for 2020/21 – Paper BSO 2020/21.*

Members noted with interest the Executive Summary for the Office for Research Ethics Committees NI for 2020/21. In particular it was recognised that despite the pressures of Covid both HSC RECs A and B remained compliant with all its KPI targets and this was to be congratulated.

12. *Governance and Audit Committee (GAC)*

(i) *Report of Meeting held on 17 June 2021*

The Chair of the GAC briefed members on the key issues discussed at the GAC meeting held on 17 June 2021. As outlined earlier in the Board meeting a large proportion of the meeting was dedicated to consideration of the Annual Report and Accounts for 2020/21. A presentation was made to GAC on the whistleblowing process for BSO and the committee was presented with 4 internal audit reports for review, including a report on the Encompass Responsibilities and Accountabilities which GAC found very beneficial from a governance perspective. The minutes of the GAC meeting held on 15 April 2021 were noted by members.

13 *Business and Development Committee (BDC)*

(i) *Report of Meeting held on 14 June 2021 – Paper BSO 50/2021 refers*

The Chair of BDC briefed members of the key issues discussed at the BDC meeting held on 14 June 2021. The Terms of Reference for the Committee were considered and a revision was suggested regarding the frequency of the meetings. The sickness absence rate has decreased compared to the same period in 2019/20. It was recognised that with so many staff working remotely due to the pandemic the lower absence figure is an attributer to the reduction in staff absence. BDC raised concern on the increased number of recruitment agency staff employed by the organisation and the Director of HR&CS assured members that BSO SMT are keeping a watchful eye on this matter and plan to undertake a “deep dive” analysis on this issue and present a report to SMT. Members were also provided with an update on the Migration of HSCB and it was agreed that this matter would become a substantive agenda item for BDC along with the Portfolio of ITS programmes.

(ii) *Minutes of BDC - 15 February 2021 – Appendix A*

The minutes of the BDC meeting held on 15 February 2021 were noted by members.

(iii) *Revised Social Media Policy – Appendix B*

Members considered and approved the revised Social Media Policy following the recommendation from BDC that it be approved.

14. *AOB*

There was no any other business.

15. *Date of Next Meeting*

The next meeting of the BSO Board will take place on Thursday 26 August 2021 at 10.00 am

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Chair

Chief Executive

Date _____