

BUSINESS SERVICES ORGANISATION**Minutes of Proceedings**

The one hundred and eightieth meeting of the Board of the Business Services Organisation was held on Thursday 27 March 2025 at 10.00am in the Conference Room, Encompass HQ, North Tower, Clarendon Dock, Belfast.

Present:

Mrs Julie Erskine (Chair)

Mr Robert Bannon

Mr Mark Lowry

Mr Sean McKeever

Mr Linus McLaughlin

Mr Maynard Mawhinney

Mr Frederick Smyth

Professor Dorothy Whittington

Mrs Karen Bailey (CX)

Mr Ben Doran (Acting Director of Digital Ops)

Mrs Karen Hunter (Director of SP&CE)

Mr Simon McGrattan (Acting DoF)

Ms Lesley Young (Director of Operations)

Mrs Laura Crilly (AD People & Place, deputising for Paula Smyth)

In Attendance:

Mr Thomas McCaffrey (Head of Communications)

Miss Amanda Mills (Board Secretary)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Paula Smyth.

2. Conflicts of Interest Declarations

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

3. Minutes of BSO Board Meeting held on 27 February 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. Action Template – Paper BSO 18/2025 refers

Members noted the contents of the Board Action Template.

5. Chairs Business

The Chair briefed members on the key meetings she attended during the month of March 2025.

The Board Risk Workshop is scheduled to take place on 15 April 2025 and the Chair advised that the agenda for this event will be circulated to members in early April. The main focus of the workshop will be on Risk Management Culture and Shared Risk and Assurance.

The Chair reminded members of the statutory responsibility to complete their Declaration and Register of Interest Template for 2025/26 which is scheduled to be presented to the April Board meeting.

The April Board meeting scheduled to take place on Thursday 24 April 2025 falls during the Easter holiday week and the Chair has been informed that a number of Executive Directors have planned to take annual leave. To that end the Chair proposed to push the Board meeting back a week to Thursday 1 May 2025. Members endorsed this suggestion and the calendar invitation will be amended accordingly.

6. Presentation – Encompass Update

Dr Dermot Hughes, Senior Responsible Officer (SRO), Encompass made an in depth presentation to the Board on the Encompass Programme. He was pleased to confirm that to date the Encompass programme has achieved all the outcomes along with NI HSC having the most digitally enabled healthcare system in the UK. He highlighted the risks to the programme and in particular the need to realign the governance process due to the interconnectedness of this system.

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of Encompass being rolled out to the private healthcare sector down the line and members were informed that to allow this to happen the legislation governing who BSO can provide services to would need to be amended and thereafter SLAs would need to be produced for each private care body. It was recognised that this would be a major piece of work and would have huge implications for BSO when it takes over Business as Usual (BAU). Accountability for the Encompass Programme was discussed and the Interim Director of Digital Operations stated that while the SRO retains overall accountability every member of the Encompass Programme Board takes ownership for delivery of the programme. Members were reminded that BSO will not own the Encompass Programme until it becomes fully operational and is deemed as business as usual; currently estimated to be 2027.

The Chair assured members that BSO has a robust governance process in place to provide assurance to the CX when authorising contract changes.

7. Chief Executive's Report - Paper BSO 19/2025 refers

The Chief Executive presented her monthly report to the Board which included details of key meetings attended during March 2025.

The Equip Programme continues to take up a considerable amount of time and is now at a critical period. The CX and Interim Director of Digital Operations are working diligently with the supplier to try and resolve a number of issues relating to timescales, payroll statutory issues and the Warehouse Management System. A detailed update will be provided to the April Board.

The AFC pay award for 2024-25 has successfully been implemented and the Chair on behalf of the Board asked the CX to convey congratulations to those involved in completing this mammoth task.

The Chief Executive briefed members on her appearance before the Covid Public Inquiry on 26 March 2025. Members were assured of the exhaustive work BSO undertook to prepare for this Inquiry and congratulated the Chief Executive on her professionalism and knowledge in addressing the Inquiry Panel's questions. An issue was raised at the Inquiry around a certain type of type 2 facemask which was available under the 4 Nations Contract however NI users refused to

wear these masks as they did not like the plastic strip across the bridge of the mask. BSO did attempt to return the masks to their 4 nations counterparts however they refused stating they had ample supplies; ultimately the masks were donated to Charity. The Chief Executive stated that to reduce the level of risk exposure to BSO she has instructed the Director of Operations to document in detail the background to this issue along with a lessons learned

8. BSO Pharmaceutical Committee Membership – Ratification of New Member – Paper BSO 20/2025

Members considered and endorsed the appointment of Mr Stephen Burns to the BSO Pharmaceutical Committee for the period 24 December 2024 to 23 December 2028. Mr Smyth requested a copy of the Terms of Reference for the Pharmaceutical Committee to help him understand the remit of this committee; the Director of Operations agreed to circulate a copy to members.

9. Disposal of Expired and Surplus PPE -Paper BSO 21/2025 refers

The Director of Operations presented Paper BSO 21/2025 detailing the volume of expired PPE stock requiring disposal and the disposal options for members approval. Members recognised that the recommended option (Energy from waste using refuse derived fuels) was the best option at the moment and endorsed the preferred option to dispose the expired PPE stock using the “energy from waste” route. Discussion ensued on the desirability and need to have a back-up supplier to the preferred ‘Energy from Waste’ provider in the event that, for whatever reason, that option was to be no longer available. Mark Lowry suggested a further option, to enter discussions with the cement industry, who actively use alternative fuels in the cement manufacturing process.

The Director of Operations agreed to investigate this option.

10. Finance Report – Month 11 – Paper BSO 22/2025 refers

The Acting Director of Finance presented paper BSO 22/2025; a finance report for the 11 month period ending 28 February 2025.

The summary financial position shows the reported income and expenditure position for the period, with an overall surplus reported for this period and still projecting breakeven at year end.

Work is ongoing to manage the slippage funds which is being invested in BSO service pressures. The Capital position has stabilised and is also projected to breakeven at year end.

Members noted the finance report for Month 11.

11. Corporate Risk and Assurance Report (CRAR) – Removal of Confidential Risks to Public Section of CRAR – Paper BSO 23/2025 refers

Members noted paper BSO 23/2025 which provided the Board with an update on the changes to the corporate risks since the last presentation of the CRAR in February 2025. It was noted confidential risks 3,4 and 5 had been removed from the confidential section to the public section of the CRAR.

These changes had been previously been considered and approved by ELT and GAC.

12. Board Governance Self Assessment Action Plan – Paper BSO 24/2025 refers

Members noted paper BSO 24/2025 updating members on the action plan arising from the 2023/24 self assessment tool. It was noted that one action remains red rag rated Red:- “Effective Board Level Evaluation”. The Chair informed members that BSO’s Internal Audit undertake the independent evaluation for other ALBs however DOH do not agree to either the Leadership Centre or Internal Audit to carry out the evaluation due to a perception of non-independence from BSO. BSO has written to DOH asking if an outside body could undertake the evaluation but to date BSO has not received a response. It was agreed to hold a Board workshop in July to undertake a thorough review of the Board Governance Self Assessment and ask the Leadership Centre to facilitate the session.

13. Report of Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee meeting held on 18 March 2025

The Chair briefed members on the key issues discussed at the Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee meeting held on 18 March 2025.

14. AOB**Chair and NED Skills Template**

The Chair informed members that DoH have submitted a draft skills template to the Chair for her comment in advance of commencing the recruitment process for BSO Chair and NEDS.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the BSO Board will take place on Thursday 1 May 2025 at 10.00 am, venue will be Boardroom, BSO HQ, Belfast.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Chair

Chief Executive

Date _____