

**BUSINESS SERVICES ORGANISATION****Minutes of Proceedings**

The one hundred and eighty second meeting of the Board of the Business Services Organisation was held on Thursday 29 May 2025 at 10.00am in the Conference Room, Recruitment Shared Services, Rosewood Villa, 73 Loughgall Road, Armagh, BT61 7PR.

**Present:**

Mr Sean McKeever (Deputy Chair)

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| Mrs Julie Erskine        | Mrs Karen Bailey (CX)                         |
| Mr Robert Bannon         | Mr Ben Doran (Acting Director of Digital Ops) |
| Mr Mark Lowry            | Mrs Karen Hunter (Director of SP&CE)          |
| Mr Sean McKeever         | Mr Simon McGrattan (Acting DoF)               |
| Mr Linus McLaughlin      | Mrs Paula Smyth (Director of People & Place)  |
| Mr Maynard Mawhinney     | Ms Lesley Young (Director of Operations)      |
| Mr Frederick Smyth       |   |
| Prof Dorothy Whittington |   |

**In Attendance:**

Mr Thomas McCaffrey (Head of Communications)  
Mrs Ciara McCann (Head of RSSC) in attendance for agenda item 15.  
Miss Amanda Mills (Board Secretary)

At the outset of the meeting Mr McKeever who was chairing the majority of today's meeting thanked colleagues for their condolences following the recent death of his mother.

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies received.

**2. Conflicts of Interest Declarations**

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

**3. Minutes of BSO Board Meeting held on 1 May 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

**4. Action Template – Paper BSO 32/2025 refers**

Members noted the contents of the Board Action Template. The Director of SP&CE alerted members that Internal Audit (IA) will be issuing a questionnaire to the Board to assist them with the independent review of the Board Governance Self-Assessment, which is scheduled to take place in July. Members were urged to complete the questionnaire and return to IA in a timely manner.

## **5. Chairs Business – Mrs Julie Erskine**

The Chair briefed members on the key meetings she attended during the month of May 2025; these included attendance at BaDC and GAC on 12 and 20 May 2025 respectively

Mrs Erskine thanked members for good wishes and flowers following her recent accident. The Chair referred to the Annual appraisal documentation for 2024-25 which had been circulated to NED colleagues and urged members to complete the appraisal templates. The Chief Executive's Office will liaise with NEDs regarding their individual appraisal meeting with the Chair.

## **6. Chief Executive's Report - Paper BSO 33/2025 refers**

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

The Chief Executive briefed members on her attendance at the last meeting of the Performance Transformation Executive Board (PTEB) which is chaired by the Permanent Secretary. The key focus for the Permanent Secretary is to establish a short term plan to meet the identified savings target of £300m and thereafter development a long term plan. A number of workstreams have been established to review cost efficiencies and HSC Chief Executives have been encouraged to review their internal costs. The Chief Executive has been nominated as Chief Executive support of the Collaboration Workstream for System Financial Management Work. Discussions have already commenced at ELT around this matter and a number of options have been suggested at an ELT and AD Innovation Workshop which was facilitated by Gartner; and these will be worked through and brought back to ELT and ultimately the Board. One option is for BSO to manage large contracts on behalf of the region to generate savings. The BSO Realignment Exercise is proving to be very timely and will ultimately feed into the cost savings exercise providing an opportunity to demonstrate to customers which service areas are immensely pressurised and require additional funding. It was recognised that BSO is in a strong position to support HSC in finding solutions to find future savings and discussion ensued around using Artificial Intelligence as an enabler. The Chief Executive briefed members on some of the proposals put forward by the Permanent Secretary to reduce costs.

The Equip Programme Team are continuing to work to address the mitigating issues which will allow the Programme to return to Green status. The Equip Programme Director will make a presentation to the June Board and provide an in-depth update.

## **7. BSO Financial Strategy 2025-26**

The Acting Director of Finance presented the financial strategy and opening budgets for 2025/26 financial year and reported a forecasted breakeven budget for 2025-26. Members were briefed on the process to formulate the budget which is linked closely with the production of the BSO SLA which will be sent out to customers. Mr Smyth asked for more detail on the Income Realignment Project and requested that a summary be presented to the Board. Mr McGrattan agreed to prepare a briefing paper for a future Board meeting.

Members approved the Financial Strategy for 2025/26 and acknowledged the work done to date and the challenges which lie ahead in these uncertain times.

**8. Revisions to BSO Standing Orders (SOs) and Standing Financial Instructions (SFIs) – Paper BSO 34/2025 refers**

The Director of SP&CE presented Paper BSO 34/2025 setting out the revisions to the BSO SOs and SFIs for 2025-26. The key change to the SOs is the inclusion of reference to the new Procurement Regulations 2023 (the Procurement Act) which came into operation on 24 February 2025.

Members approved the revisions to the SOs and SFIs.

**9. Update on Management of PPE and Audit Qualification – Paper BSO 35/2025 refers**

The Director of Operations and Acting DoF updated members on the mitigating actions being taken to manage the levels of surplus PPE. It was noted that there was no material update on the mitigations and to that end it was proposed to reduce the submission of progress reports from monthly to quarterly following the next meeting of the PPE Project Board in September 2025 when it is anticipated that that BSO will have exited the first lease on Unit 7A at Carrickfergus, thereby reducing the PPE storage footprint by 100,000 sq ft.

The Board endorsed this proposal

**10. Corporate Risk and Assurance Report (CRAR) – Paper BSO 36/2025 refers**

The Director of SP&CE presented the CRAR for April 2025 for members' consideration and it was noted that no new risks had been added to the Register. Mr McKeever queried the rationale for highlighting the 3 confidential corporate risks on the public section of the CRAR detail report, however the Director of SP&CE advised that Internal Audit have recommended that all confidential risks must be referred to in the public section of the report. She advised that she will raise this matter again with Internal Audit for assurance purposes. Mr Smyth enquired if the risk score around PPE should be reviewed given that it is no longer considered a reputational or financial risk; it was agreed that ELT would review the risk description in June.

**11. Corporate Performance and Assurance Framework – Schedule of Assurances - Paper BSO 37/2025 refers**

The Director of SP&CE presented the Board with a copy of the update Schedule of Assurances for 2025-26 and asked members for their views. Members all agreed this was a very worthwhile document and it was noted that GAC had suggested that a breakdown of the relevant assurance documentation should be presented to the Board sub-committees (GAC and BaDC) for visibility and assurance purposes.

Members noted the Schedule of Assurances for 2025-26.

**12. Integrated Governance and Assurance Framework – Paper BSO 38/2025 refers**

Members considered the Integrated Governance and Assurance Framework for 2025-26 which sets out the Board's arrangements for Integrated Governance, organisational structure and accountability arrangements. The Framework also sets out how the BSO Board can be assured

that the objectives of the organisation can be achieved. The document is owned by the Accounting Officer and used to help meet obligations to maintain a sound system of risk management and internal control.

### **13. Year End Customer Assurance Letter 2025-26 – Paper BSO 39/2025 refers**

The Director of SP&CE presented a draft copy of the annual Customer Assurance letter for 2025-26 which is issued to BSO customers. As a service provider to 17 customer organisations BSO is required to provide assurance to on the delivery of services outlined in the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to support year end processes. Members commended the comprehensive details contained in the Assurance letter which feeds into the agenda for the bi annual Ground Clearing meetings with DOH Sponsor Branch.

### **14. Report of GAC Meeting held on 20 May 2025**

The Chair of GAC briefed members on the key issues considered at the GAC meeting held on 20 May 2025. A total of 9 internal audit reports were presented to the Committee, 8 of which were recommended as Satisfactory. The Chair congratulated both Internal Audit and BSO management on the level of work required to achieve the satisfactory level. GAC discussed the area of shared risks and the need to have documentary oversight, however it was recognised that BSO is in a much better position now that it is aware of the risks, which are fully documented.

The GAC minutes of the meetings held on 11 October 2024 and 20 February 2025 were noted by the Board – **Paper BSO 40/2025 refers.**

### **15. Report of Business and Development Committee (BaDC) held on 12 May 2025 – Paper BSO 41/2025 refers**

The Chair of BDC briefed members on the key issues discussed at the BaDC meeting held on February 2025.

The revised Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy was presented to BaDC for final approval. Members will recall that it was previously presented to the February BaDC where it was approved in principle to allow some regional AI pilots to commence. To that end the AI Policy was presented to the Board for formal ratification. Mr Smyth requested that it would be useful to see at an appropriate time how BSO is utilising this policy to allow the Board a better understanding.

The Board approved the AI Policy.

BaDC received an indepth presentation from the Directorate of People & Place on the updated Asset Management Strategy. The Committee recommended that the Asset Management Strategy be presented to the Board for final approval.

The Board approved the Asset Management Strategy.

The Chief Legal Adviser presented the PPE report on the Legal Transformation Programme to BaDC. The Committee noted the positive outputs from the report and recommended that it be presented to the Board for noting.

Members noted the PPE Report on the Legal Transformation Programme.

The Annual Complaints Report for 2024-25 was considered by BaDC and recommended for noting by the Board. The Report will be published on the BSO's website and also sent to DoH and Patient Client Council (PCC).

The Board noted the BSO Annual Complaints Report for 2024-25.

**16. Presentation – Overview of Recruitment Shared Services (RSSC)**

Mrs Ciara McCann made an indepth presentation on the BSO Recruitment & Selection Shared Services. Members were briefed on the level of activity over the last two financial years, the responsibilities and challenges for RSSC. Members were particularly interested in how RSSC have enhanced the service with the introduction of the Amiqus System (pre employment check service) which creates visibility for hiring managers and helps reduce the time to hire.

**17. AOB**

There was no AOB.

**18. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the BSO Board will take place on Thursday 26 June 2025 at 10.00 am, venue will be Boardroom, BSO HQ, 2 Franklin Street, Belfast.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

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Chair

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Chief Executive

Date \_\_\_\_\_