HSC Business Services Organisation

BSO 186/2025

BUSINESS SERVICES ORGANISATION

Minutes of Proceedings

The one hundred and eighty sixth meeting of the Board of the Business Services Organisation was held on Thursday 23 October 2025 at 10.00am in the Boardroom, BSO HQ, 2 Franklin Street, Belfast, BT2 8DQ.

Present:

Mrs Julie Erskine (Chair)

Mr Robert Bannon
Mr Mark Lowry
Mr Linus McLaughlin
Mr Maynard Mawhinney
Mr Fred Smyth
Prof Dorothy Whittington

Mrs Karen Bailey (CX)
Mr Simon McGrattan (DoF)
Mrs Paula Smyth (Director of People & Place)
Mr Peter Wilson (Interim Director of Ops)

In Attendance:

Mr Ben Doran (Director of Digital)
Mr Stephen Beattie (Interim Director, SP&CE)
Mr Thomas McCaffrey (Head of Communications)
Mr Robin Arbuthnot (AD, People & Place in attendance for Agenda item 14)
Miss Amanda Mills (Board Secretary)

1. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Sean McKeever, Lesley Young and Karen Hunter.

2. **Conflicts of Interest Declarations**

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

3. **Minutes of BSO Board Meeting held on 25 September 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. **Action Template – Paper BSO 69/2025 refers**

Members noted the contents of the Board Action Template.

5. **Chairs Business**

The Chair briefed members on her activity during the month of September 2025.

At the outset the Chair advised that she has sent a get well card to Sean McKeever on behalf of the Board and wished him a speedy recovery.
The Chair also wanted to take the opportunity, on behalf of the Board, to congratulate both Simon McGrattan and Ben Doran on their appointments as Director of Finance and Digital and

wished them every success for the future. The Chair attended the Public Sector Digital Transformation Awards in Dublin on 16 October where BSO Digital Team won 2 awards. Mr Lowry referred to the Nicon Conference held on 15 and 16 October and commented on the positive feedback relating to the presentations made at the conference by the Chief Executive and Equip Programme Director.

In preparation for the Chair, Mr Bannon, Mr McKeever and Professor Whittington's departure at the end of November it was agreed that the annual appraisal template should be completed for the period April – November 2025.

Members noted the Chairs Monthly Report to the Board.

6. **Chief Executive's Report - Paper BSO 70/2025 refers**

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

The refurbishment of the BSO Boardroom and 7th floor is complete with the work undertaken by qualified BSO Estates staff thus saving significant costs compared to using a commercial contractor.

The Equip project remains in a complex contractual phase with the team working through an intensive period of activity with resolution expected in the coming weeks. Focus will thereafter shift to the production and circulation of communications.

The outcome of the Kornferry exercise to evaluate Senior Executive job descriptions is imminent and will be sent to HSC Chairs in the first instance,

The Chief Executive attended All-Ireland CX Group and advised that she is a member of the Digital workstream.

Members noted the Chief Executive's monthly report to the Board.

7. **Euro Bank Account – Paper BSO 71/2025 refers**

Members considered and approved a proposal to open a Central Euro Bank Account which would replace the current manual process of making Euro currency payments via the Bank of Ireland portal on behalf of HSCNI. The Director of Finance highlighted the benefits of opening this account whereby it would negate manual inefficiencies in the current process and make a more streamlined process for the Accounts Payable Team. Once approved bank mandates will be processed and presented to the Board for formal approval.

8. **Finance Report – Month 6 – Paper BSO 72/2025 refers**

The Director of Finance (DOF) presented paper BSO 72/2025; a finance report for the six month period ending 30 September 2025. 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. Members were advised that the finance report includes the Pay Award for 2025/26.

Negotiations are still ongoing with DoH regarding the PPE obsolete stock issue (circa £12m) which still remains unresolved. The Chair of GAC requested a summary report on the PPE issue for presentation to the next Board meeting and the DoF agreed to liaise with the AD Supply Chain on this matter prior to producing a submission to the Board. All agreed that BSO is in an extremely difficult position and to that end the Chair recommended that BSO's Accounts must demonstrate that it is not envisaged to break even unless instructed otherwise by DoH. The Director of Finance was directed to maintain an audit trail demonstrating that DoH will not fund this inescapable pressure to date. The DoF confirmed to members that an audit trail already exists on this matter and that he continues to send emails on a regular basis to DoH.

The Finance report for month 6 was noted by members.

9. **Annual Quality Report (AQR) 2024-25 refers**

The Interim Director of SP&CE presented the AQR for 2024-25 which was developed in line with DoH guidelines. Members approved the AQR which will be published on the BSO website to coincide with World Quality Week commencing 10 November 2025.

10. **Corporate Risk and Assurance Report (CRAR) – September 2025 – Paper 74/2025 Refers**

The Interim Director of SP&CE presented the CRAR for September 2025 for members' consideration and it was noted that one risk has been removed from the Register relating to RSSC capacity. The Chair of GAC advised that the CRAR had been considered at GAC on 16 October where comments were made in that the report did not reflect management actions. The Chair informed members that the SP&CE Directorate are incurring high sickness absence at present and this must be recognised by members.

Members noted the CRAR for September 2025.

11. **Performance against Business Planning (PABP) – Quarter 2 Report – Paper BSO 75/2025 refers**

The Director of SP&CE presented paper BSO 75/2025 which set out a summary exception report on the performance against the Annual Business Plan for 2025/26 as at 30 September 2025. It was noted at the end of Quarter 2, 67% of the actions within the Annual Business Plan were reported as Green, ie progressing on target and within the agreed timescales. It was noted that the Franklin Street refurbishment project is near completion so will be RAG rated Green in Quarter 3.

Members noted the PAPP for Quarter 2.

12. **Quarterly Board Performance Dashboard (Quarter 2 – September 2025) – Paper BSO 76/2025 refers**

Members noted with interest the quarterly Board Performance Dashboard for Quarter 2. Discussion ensued regarding the KPI for Legal Services and the factors contributing to the KPI being outside the 100% target.

13. **Governance and Audit Committee (GAC)**

13.1 **Report of Meeting held on 16 October 2025 – Chair of GAC to Report**

The Chair of GAC briefed members on the key issues considered at the GAC meeting held on 16 October 2025. GAC welcomed the appointment of an Information Governance Manager who will take up post on 1 December 2025. The Chair stated in going forward and in light of best practice that written reports should be included with the Board agenda relating to reports from Board sub Committee meetings rather than verbal reports. This would also meet the recommendation arising from the recent Board Effectiveness Audit.

The GAC Annual Report for 2024-25 was presented to the Board for formal approval upon the recommendation of GAC – (**Paper BSO 77/2025 refers**).

Members approved the GAC Annual Report for 2024-25.

The minutes of the GAC meeting held on 20th June 2025 were noted by members (**Paper BSO 77/2025 (A) refers).**

14. **Presentation – BSO's Journey to Attain Silver IIP Accreditation**

Robin Arbuthnot, AD People & Place presented a high level overview of the BSO's journey to attain Silver IIP Accreditation. At the outset he thanked Robert Bannon for his involvement and pragmatism to the IIP Programme. It was noted that BSO has been shortlisted as a finalist for the IIP Health and Wellbeing Award. Following the comprehensive feedback from the IIP Assessor BSO will develop a coherent People Strategy for 2025-26 where progress will reported to the BaDC on a regular basis. It was noted that Linus McLaughlin has accepted the role of IIP Champion on an interim basis.

Members noted and thanked the AD People & Place for his informative presentation.

15. **AOB**

15.1 **List of Awards and Accreditations made to BSO Staff 2025- Paper BSO 78/2025 refers**

As requested by the Chair at the September Board meeting the Head of Communications presented a summary of list of BSO Awards Entries and awards relating to BSO service areas and staff. It was agreed that any awards won by BSO should be exhibited in a display cabinet in the Franklin Street Reception area

16. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the BSO Board will take place on Thursday 27 November 2025 at 10.00am in BSO HQ.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

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Chair

Business Services Organisation

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Chief Executive

Date ___________________________