

BUSINESS SERVICES ORGANISATION

Minutes of Proceedings

The one hundred and ninety first meeting of the Board of the Business Services Organisation was held on Thursday 23 April 2026 at 10.00am in the Boardroom, BSO HQ, 2 Franklin Street, Belfast, BT2 8DQ.

Present:

	Sharon O'Connor (Chair)
Mr Mark Lowry	Mrs Karen Bailey (Chief Executive)
Mrs Bernie McCrory	Mr Simon McGrattan (DoF)
Mr Linus McLaughlin	Mr Robin Arbuthnot (Interim Director of People & Place)
Mr Fred Smyth	Miss Linda O Hare (Interim Director of Ops)
Mr Joe Stewart	
Mr Alan Todd	

In Attendance:

Mr Ben Doran (Director of Digital)
Mrs Karen Hunter (Director, SP&CE)
Miss Amanda Mills (Board Secretary)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Maynard Mawhinney, Peter Russell and Lesley Young.

2. Conflicts of Interest Declarations

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

3. Minutes of BSO Board Meeting held on 26 March 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026 were considered by members.

In answer to a question raised by a Board member regarding the decision to stand down the year end breakeven agenda item, the Chair confirmed this matter was addressed and agreed at the February Board meeting (Minute 8.1 refers – Year End Break Even Position).

To that end the Minutes of the Board meeting held on 23 April 2026 were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. Action Template – Paper BSO 26/2026 refers

Members noted the contents of the Board Action Template; the Chair asked if the outstanding actions could be reviewed and the action template updated accordingly.

5. Chairs Business

The Chair outlined the rationale for postponing today's planned Board financial workshop. As alluded to at the March Board meeting a Finance Summit meeting, chaired by the Permanent Secretary, is scheduled to take place on 12 May 2026 and it would be more prudent to hold the workshop thereafter and brief the Board on the key issues arising from this meeting.

The Chair advised that a letter of comfort had been received from the Permanent Secretary in relation to stock provision and it was agreed this would be circulated to members.

6. Chief Executive's Report - Paper BSO 27/2026 refers

The Chief Executive presented her monthly report to the Board which included details of key meetings attended during April 2026.

The Chief Executive confirmed that she is in receipt of the Health Check report in respect of the Equip Programme and advised that a meeting was held with DOH to review the recommendations and policy decisions. She added that the Report has not yet been shared with the Equip Programme Board.

Overall HSC is facing significant financial pressures following the requirement to deliver 6% savings for this financial year, pay award risks and accountability expectations set by the Permanent Secretary. She assured members that BSO continues to work on the savings proposals in conjunction with DoH. Members were reminded that 3% savings are required for 2027/2028 and a further 3% in 2028/2029 financial year.

The Committee in Common forum continues to meet on a monthly basis and actions are starting to take momentum, particularly the BSO's procurement project to support transformation across HSC.

Following an invitation from the Permanent Secretary the Chief Executive attended a Health Innovation Network Group meeting which was constituted to work towards establishing Northern Ireland as a world-leading health and social care research and innovation ecosystem, which is underpinned by strong policy, effective planning and the active involvement of clinical teams working in partnership with academic institutions and industry.

The Chief Executive advised that Lesley Young is scheduled to return to work week commencing 11 May 2026 on a phased return.

BSO is keeping DOH apprised on a number of operational risks, including cyber security threats, procurement issues, global stock volatility, and fuel cost increases. The Chief Executive assured members that ELT are closely monitoring these issues.

The Chief Executive noted the Permanent Secretary's request for BSO to undertake a feasibility study on clinical and non-clinical waste and ongoing work to support Net Zero objectives. Bernie McCrory offered support with this matter as she has significant experience around this area or work.

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

7. Approval Items

7.1 BSO Annual Business Plan for 2026-27 – Paper BSO 28/2026 refers

The Director of SP&CE presented the revised Annual Business Plan following feedback from the Department of Health, particularly in relation to savings targets, financial planning, and language.

Discussion took place regarding BSO's role in innovation, digital transformation ambition, and the need for further strategic clarity with DoH. To that end it was suggested that ELT should consider inviting the Permanent Secretary to a future Board meeting.

Members approved the updated Annual Business Plan 2026–27 and draft response to DoH.

7.2 Partnership Agreement between Department of Health (DoH) and BSO – 2025/26 Review – Paper BSO 29/2026 refers

The Director of SP&CE presented the annual review of the Partnership Agreement between DoH and BSO for 2025/26. She advised that this was a “light touch review” required by DoH, however for 2026/27 a full review will be undertaken as per the stipulated guidelines. Members noted progress but identified the absence of a detailed action plan. The Director of SP&CE advised that she will consider the proposed improvements suggested by members and will raise this matter at the BSO's Ground clearing meeting with DoH scheduled for 22 June 2026.

The Chair advised that NIAO has produced guidance documentation on partnership agreements which may be useful.

The partnership effectiveness review and summary assessment were approved by the Board.

7.3 Board Governance Self Assessment – Update on 2025-26 Action Plan – Paper BSO 30/2026 refers

The Director of SP&CE presented the year end update on progress on the action plan arising from the Board Governance Self Assessment which was undertaken in 2024-25. Members noted that most actions had been completed, except the action relating to the development of strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which will be carried forward into 2026–27.

Following a suggestion from a Board member the Chair and Director of SP&CE agreed to explore use of an external facilitator to review Board effectiveness.

Members approved the Year end update on the Action Plan for 2025/26.

8. Finance Agenda Items

8.1 Finance Report – Month 12 – Paper BSO 31/2026 refers

The DoF presented paper BSO 31/2026; a draft finance report for the twelve month period ending 31 March 2026. The summary financial position shows the reported income and expenditure position for the period projected a £30k surplus with total income for the year at £277m. The capital position was confirmed as closed with no surplus and therefore break even.

The Finance report for month 12 was noted by members.

8.2 Memorandum on Stock Provision – Paper BSO 32/2026 refers

The Board discussed in detail the accounting treatment of stock provision, including:

- The historical context and ongoing qualification of accounts.
- Two options presented by management, with Option 1 (continuation of current methodology) identified as the preferred option by the ELT.

Members expressed concerns regarding assurance, documentation and audit implications. A member challenged the assumptions which underpinned the paper and sought further confirmation from the Department.

The Board acknowledged the professional advice provided by the Executive Leadership Team and the letter of comfort from the Permanent Secretary.

Members unanimously agreed that Option 1 was preferred recommendation.

The Board requested that the minutes clearly reflect the level of challenge, concern and assurance sought and that further engagement with the Department of Health be pursued.

9. Quarterly Board Performance Dashboard (Quarter 4 – 31 March 2026) – Paper BSO 33/2026 refers

Members considered Quarter 4 Performance Dashboard for Quarter 4 – 31 March 2026.

An SLA issue was highlighted and discussed with a member stating that it was his understanding that BSO's Sponsor Branch were not being supportive of this issue. The Director of SP&CE contested the Board member's view and stated that BSO had the full support of Sponsor Branch.

The Quarterly Board Performance Dashboard for Quarter 4 was noted by members.

10. Performance against Business Planning (PABP) – Quarter 4 Report

The Director of SP&CE briefed members on progress against the Annual Business Plan for 2025/26 with 86.2% of objectives expected to be completed by year-end with KPI development to be presented to BaDC in the Autumn.

11. AOB

There were no items raised under AOB.

12.. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the BSO Board will take place on Thursday 28 May 2026 at 10.00am in BSO HQ.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Chair

Chief Executive

Date _____