

BUSINESS SERVICES ORGANISATION

Minutes of Proceedings

The one hundred and seventy ninth meeting of the Board of the Business Services Organisation was held on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 10.00am in the Boardroom, BSO HQ, 2 Franklin Street, Belfast, BT2 8DQ and via MS Teams.

Present:

Mrs Julie Erskine (Chair)

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)

Mrs Paula Smyth (Director of People & Place)

Ms Lesley Young (Director of Operations)

In Attendance:

Mr Thomas McCaffrey (Head of Communications)

Miss Amanda Mills (Board Secretary)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Robert Bannon.

2. Conflicts of Interest Declarations

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

3. Minutes of BSO Board Meeting held on 23 January 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. Action Template – Paper BSO 09/2025 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 months of February 2025; these included attended a number of budget briefings facilitated by Nikon and her participation on several FOI and Complaints Review panels. She held an introductory meeting with the new Chair of NI Blood Transfusion Service who commended the work of the BSO's Digital Operations Directorate for their support for the Regional Blood Production and Tracking (BPAT) programme which has replaced the former NIBTS Blood production system.

The Chair informed members of her intention to hold a number of Board meetings off site this year to allow members the opportunity to meet with staff and receive presentations from the particular service areas. Dates have provisionally been agreed to hold Board meetings in the following sites:-

- March Board meeting – Encompass HQ, North Tower, 31 Clarendon Dock.
- April Board meeting – BSO HQ to include a presentation followed by a tour of BSO's Family Practitioner Services (FPS) Directorate
- May Board meeting – Recruitment Shared Services Centre (RSSC), Armagh
- August Board meeting – Accounts Payable, Ballymena

The date for the Board workshop has been confirmed for Tuesday 15 April and the Chair will liaise with the Director of SP&CE on drafting the agenda.

The Chair confirmed that Linus McLaughlin has been appointed as the BSO Whistleblowing Champion.

Members were advised that DoH Public Appointments Unit (PAU) had commenced the recruitment process for BSO Chair and 4 NEDS.

Mr Peter May is scheduled to retire from his post as Permanent Secretary on 11 April 2025 and Mr Mike Farrar has been appointed as Interim Permanent Secretary and HSC Chief Executive. Dr Paul Rice has been appointed as Chief Digital Information Officer (CDIO) and will take up post in the Summer; invitations will be extended at an appropriate time for them to meet the Board.

6. Chief Executive's Report - Paper BSO 10/2025 refers

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

The Equip Programme continues to take up a considerable amount of time and is now at a critical period, with the main focus on the decision making in respect of the design and implementation phase of the project. This is proving to be a very challenging period due to the introduction of some legislative and statutory changes which have to be factored into the planning and is presenting some challenges in designing the system. An Equip Partnership Forum has been established and meets on a monthly basis. A Charter has been produced which has been well received by third party suppliers. It was agreed that the Board shall receive a further detailed update on the Equip Programme in May/June 2025.

The Chief Executive has met with the Barrister to help preparation for the public Covid Inquiry in March 2025. Hard copies of the file documentation relating to the Covid Inquiry is available for members if they wish to review however the Chief Executive stressed that members can only view the files in BSO HQ and are not allowed to take them off site. Members were informed that following a hearing on 17 February 2025, BSO judgement was granted in the High Court in favour of the BSO to recover funds including legal costs from a supplier who supplied unacceptable PPE facemasks.

ELT held a workshop focussing on the realignment process and to take stock on progress to date. It was agreed at an appropriate time the Director of SP&CE and Acting DoF would make a presentation to the Board on this matter. Discussion ensued regarding the importance of

digitisation to enhance and drive efficiency and members were reminded that under the BSO Strategic Review there is a Digital Workstream and an update will be presented to the next meeting of the BSO Oversight Programme Board.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the AFC and Medical & Dental Pay Award will now be delivered for the full year 2024-25, and to date all is on schedule to implement the pay award in March 2025.

7. Corporate Risk and Assurance Report (CRAR) 2025 – Removal of Risk No 6 – Paper BSO 11/2025 refers

The Director of SP&CE presented a summary report of the CRAR which had previously been presented to ELT and GAC. Following discussion at ELT it was recommended to remove Corporate Risk Number 6: HSC Pensions Scheme Regulations however it will remain on the Pensions Service Risk Register; GAC subsequently endorsed ELT's recommendation. Members noted the rationale for removing this risk from CRAR and were assured that all the mitigating actions had been completed.

Members approved the CRAR and the recommendation to remove the risk relating to Pensions Flexibilities Scheme.

8. Risk Management Strategy 2025-29 – Paper BSO 12/2025 refers

The Director of SP&CE presented the updated Risk Management Strategy for 2025-29 which detailed the significant improvements in risk management and reporting since 2024-25. In answer to a question from Maynard Mawhinney the Director of SP&CE briefed the Board on the Risk management process and stressed the importance the organisation places on this matter. The BSO's Governance and Risk Offer meets with Directors and Heads of Service on a regular basis ensuring that the risk process is being adhered to, reviews the service risk registers and if necessary escalates risks to the Corporate Risk Register. ELT review the CRAR on a monthly basis and key staff have been trained on the new Digital Risk Platform. Members welcomed the assurance provided by the Director of SP&CE on BSO's process in managing the risk process and acknowledged that BSO's approach is cautious. Members were reminded that Risk will be a key agenda item at the Board workshop scheduled for 15 April which will allow members to have a robust discussion. Discussion ensued around the risk relating to Cyber Security which is RAG rated Red and the mitigations BSO has in place to mitigate the risk to the best of its ability.

Members approved the Risk Management Strategy for 2025-29.

9. BSO Dental Committee – Ratification of 3 New Members – Paper BSO 13/2025 refers

Members considered and endorsed the appointment of the following nominations for the BSO Dental Committee with effect from 11 March 2025 for a period of 2 years.

- Mary Claire Carroll
- Jennifer McCloskey
- Catriona Hegarty

Mr Smyth asked for details on how these members were appointed and it was agreed in future papers reference should be made confirming that due process has been applied for assurance purposes.

10. Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) – BSO Business and Development Committee (BaDC) – Paper BSO 14/2025 refers

Members considered and approved the revised ToR for the BaDC which had been recommended for approval by the BaDC at its meeting on 19 February 2025.

11. Finance Report – Month 10 – Paper BSO 15/2025 refers

The Acting Director of Finance presented paper BSO 15/2025; a finance report for the 10 month period ending 31 January 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. Capital is projected to breakeven at year end.

Members noted the finance report for Month 10

12. Update on the Management of PPE and Audit Qualification – Paper BSO 16/2025 refers

The Director of Operations and Acting DoF updated members on the mitigating actions being taken to manage the levels of surplus PPE. Work is ongoing to produce a cost benefit analysis regarding the Wannunde issue (Facemasks)

Members noted the position.

13. Report of Business and Development Committee (BaDC) Meeting held on 19 February 2025

The Chair of BDC briefed members on the key issues discussed at the BaDC meeting held on 19 February 2025. The Interim Head of ITS presented a draft AI Policy for members consideration however the draft policy is currently being reviewed by the Chief Legal Adviser (CLA). The policy was approved in principle to allow ITS to proceed with some regional pilot projects and the revised policy will be presented to the May BaDC for formal approval and subsequently the May Board meeting. The BSO Digital Report for 2024-25 was presented to the Committee for information; the Report will be circulated with BSO's customers.

14. Report of GAC Meeting held on 20 February 2025

The Chair of GAC briefed members on the key issues discussed at the GAC meeting held on 20 February 2025. The GAC self assessment was considered by GAC and it was agreed that some of the recommendations contained in the self assessment will be raised the Board Risk Workshop.

15. Update on Covid Communications

The Director of SP&CE informed members that in preparation for BSO Chief Executive attending the Public Covid Inquiry in March the Head of Communications has been liaising with

DoH Press Office on how to manage any questions directed to BSO on the Covid Inquiry. To that end it has been agreed that any queries around Covid or PPE must be directed to DoH Press Office.

16. *AOB*

OneAdvanced Meetings Module

In answer to a question from Mark Lowry the Director of SP&CE advised that the OneAdvanced Meetings Module is currently being piloted by ELT with the intention of being rolled out to the Board once the pilot has finished.

The Chair reminded members that in the efficiency of time if anyone has any comments on the Board meeting agenda they would contact her in advance of the Board meeting. She also requested that members hold the provisional date set for the July Board meeting (Thursday 24 July) as she may organise a further workshop if required.

17. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the BSO Board will take place on Thursday 27 March 2025 at 10.00 am, venue will be Boardroom, Encompass HQ, Clarendon Dock, Belfast.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Chair

Chief Executive

Date _____