

BUSINESS SERVICES ORGANISATION

Minutes of Proceedings

The one hundred and ninety second meeting of the Board of the Business Services Organisation was held on Thursday 28 May 2026 at 10.00am in the Boardroom, BSO HQ, 2 Franklin Street, Belfast, BT2 8DQ.

Present:

Sharon O'Connor (Chair)

Mr Mark Lowry

Mrs Bernie McCrory

Mr Linus McLaughlin

Mr Maynard Mawhinney

Mr Peter Russell

Mr Fred Smyth

Mrs Karen Bailey (Chief Executive)

Mr Simon McGrattan (DoF)

Mr Robin Arbuthnot (Interim Director of People
& Place)

Miss Lesley Young (Director of Ops)

In Attendance:

Mr Ben Doran (Director of Digital)

Mrs Karen Hunter (Director, SP&CE)

Miss Linda O Hare (Interim Director of Ops)

Miss Amanda Mills (Board Secretary)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Alan Todd and Joe Stewart.

2. Conflicts of Interest Declarations

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

3. Minutes of BSO Board Meeting held on 23 April 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2026 were agreed as a true and accurate record of proceedings and approved by the Board.

4. Action Template – Paper BSO 35/2026 refers

Members noted the status of the actions included in the Action Template and agreed they were appropriately progressed.

5. Chairs Business

The Chair reported that she attended the Finance Summit on 12 May along with a number of executive colleagues which focussed on the significant challenging financial outlook; this was also the main discussion item at a recent meeting of the Chairs' Forum. Members noted the

seriousness of budget pressures across ALBs and Trusts and the likely impact on BSO operations and in particular BSO's commercial viability.

The Chair confirmed that a Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee meeting is scheduled to take place on 22 June 2026. She highlighted Board development opportunities will be explored, including holding some Board meetings around BSO sites which would incorporate meetings with staff in BSO service areas.

6. Chief Executive's Report - Paper BSO 36/2026 refers

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

At the outset the Chief Executive briefed members on the development of the £42m E-Pharmacy Business Case, with delivery led by BSO Digital. The Chief Pharmaceutical Officer (CPO) will be the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this programme however delivery will sit with BSO Digital with significant input from Procurement, Legal and Family Practitioner Services (FPS).

Following recent press coverage regarding contract prices for Nurses, BSO has been actively working with DoH and the regional Agency Reduction Group in relation to the Agency Framework. Members were reminded that HSC NI cannot legislate recruitment agency fees which are considerably higher than our counterparts in England.

Challenges remain within the Evolve Programme due to affordability constraints, with interim leadership currently in place. The Director of Digital advised that the preferred direction of travel is to roll the Evolve programme out on a piecemeal basis and the Evolve Team are investigating the feasibility of this option. In answer to a question the Board were advised that at present there is no SRO for this programme however in the interim the Chief Digital Information Officer (CDIO) is taking the lead. It was recognised the difficulty in gaining momentum to take this programme forward especially without an SRO.

The Equip Programme shows improved progress and it was noted that the Board will receive a detailed update by the Equip Programme Director today.

A significant discussion ensued on the impact of the significant financial pressures on Trusts and members were advised that BSO is already experiencing the reduction in some Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

The Executive Leadership Team continues to engage in development sessions with the Kings Fund and it was suggested that later in the year that it would be prudent to hold a Board development session..

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

7. Approval Items

7.1 BSO Financial Strategy 2026-27

The Director of Finance (DoF) presented the financial strategy and opening budgets for 2026/27 financial year and reported a forecasted breakeven budget for 2026-27. 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.

Members noted the system-wide deficits and savings requirements and it was acknowledged that BSO is a key enabler to achieve potential savings for customers, eg Procurement and Agency Framework. The DoF advised that he plans to make a presentation to HSC DoFs on BSO's income realignment process.

The Board approved the Financial Strategy for 2026/27, noting BSO remains in a balanced position but must deliver £772k in savings through efficiency measures.

The DoF also advised members on a proposal to present the monthly Board finance report in a revised format to allow further clarity.

7.2 Revisions to BSO Standing Orders (SOs) and Standing Financial Instructions (SFIs) – Paper BSO 37/2026 refers

The Director of SP&CE presented revisions to the BSO's Standing Orders following a detailed review. She highlighted the key updates to the SOs which included clarification on Board composition, removal of the Head of Shared Services role with the responsibilities reassigned to the DoF, updated Risk Management arrangements and the inclusion of the NED "Champion" roles. Mr Smyth commended the work undertaken to update the SOs and stated that a full review of the SFIs is scheduled to be undertaken in Quarter 2, 2026/27.

The Board approved the revised BSO's Standing Orders.

7.3 Integrated Governance and Assurance Framework 2026/27 – Paper BSO 38/2026 refers

Members considered and approved the Integrated Governance and Assurance Framework for 2026/27

9. BSO Annual Report on Risk Management 2025/26 and Action Plan for 2026/27 – Paper BSO 39/2026 refers

The Director of SP&CE presented the Annual Risk Report for 2025/26 which provided an overview of the organisation's risk profile and how risk management arrangements have operated during the year. Members noted with interest the developments undertaken to strengthen risk management practices, alongside areas where further improvement is required. The Annual Report also included a forward-looking action plan for 2026/27 which focussed on supporting continuing development, improving consistency in risk management practices and strengthening governance and assurance arrangements.

The Chair suggested that it would be useful, down the line, for the Board to have a briefing session on the Risk Management process. The Chair of GAC added that he welcomed BSO's robust risk management process which provides enhanced assurance to both GAC and Board.

Members noted the BSO Annual Report on Risk Management for 2025/26 and the Action Plan for 2026/27.

10. Corporate Risk and Assurance Report (CRAR) – April 2026 – Paper BSO 40/2026 refers

The Director of SP&CE presented the Corporate Risk and Assurance Report (CRAR) for April 2026. She advised that the format of the report has been revised to help improve the clarity, consistency and overall quality of risk and assurance reporting process.

Members noted the CRAR for April 2026.

11. Report of Business and Development Committee (BaDC) held on 11 May 2026 – Paper BSO 41/2026 refers

The Chair of BaDC briefed members on the key issues considered at the BaDC meeting held on 11 May 2026.

The minutes of the BaDC meeting held on 18 February 2026 were noted by members (Appendix A refers).

The bi-annual Service Development Proposal report was presented to BaDC and it was recommended that it should be presented to the Board for noting (Appendix D refers).

Members noted the bi-annual Service Development Proposal report.

BSO Conflicts of Interest Policy and BSO Communications Policy

BaDC considered the BSO Conflicts of Interest Policy and BSO Communications Policy and recommended that it be presented for formal ratification by the BSO Board. (Appendix B and C refers).

The Board approved the BSO Conflicts of Interest Policy and the BSO Communications Policy.

12. Report of GAC Meeting held on 19 May 2026

The Chair of GAC briefed members on the key issues considered at the GAC meeting held on 19 May 2026.

The GAC minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2026 were noted by the Board.

13. Equip Programme Update

Mr Charlie O'Neill, Equip Programme Director updated the Board on the Equip Programme including timelines for Release 1 – Finance and PaLs (November 2026) and Release 2 HR and Payroll (estimated 2027). Risks were noted, including delays and resourcing constraints. The Equip Programme Board met on 22 May 2026 and endorsed the recommendation to progress with an assured entry into User Acceptance Testing (UAT) at the earlier point in June 2026, subject to the agreed strict entry criteria with the Systems Integrator being fully met.

14. Members' Declaration and Register of Interests 2026/27 – Paper BSO 42/2026 refers

Members noted the Declaration and Register of Members' interests for 2026/27 and were reminded that any changes should be notified to the Board Secretary.

15. **AOB**

(i) **Board Self Assessment Evaluation Questionnaire**

The Director of SP&CE informed members that the Board Self-Assessment Evaluation Questionnaire is scheduled to be issued to members in an anonymised form later today. A report on the analysis of members responses will be presented to the Board in the Autumn. The Chair stated that any issues arising from the report can be debated at a Board Development Workshop scheduled for later this year.

(ii) **E Pharmacy Programme**

The Chair wished to place on record the Board's thanks to BSO (FPS and Digital) in securing funding for the E-Pharmacy Programme

16. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the BSO Board will take place on Thursday 25 June 2026 at 10.00am in BSO HQ.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Chair

Chief Executive

Date _____