

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 18th January, 2021

MEETING OF BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD.
SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Alderman Haire (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland;
Councillors Matt Collins, Flynn,
M. Kelly, Kyle, Magee, McAteer,
McCabe, Mulholland and Newton.

In attendance: Ms. J. Corkey, Chief Executive, ICC Belfast (Belfast
Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.);
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance and Systems, ICC Belfast
(Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.);
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Canavan.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd November.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following 4 items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2020

The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast (Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.) reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 15th June, 2020, it had been presented with the draft year-end position and overview. She explained that the full audited

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accounts were available and had been included for notation by the Shareholders' Committee, in addition to the Independent Auditors Report, which she advised was unqualified.

The Committee was advised that the Annual Report and Financial Statements had been agreed as final by the Board at its meeting on 19th November, 2020.

The Committee noted the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March, 2020.

Extending Directors' Contracts to 30th April, 2021

The Director of Economic Development advised that part of the Shareholders Committee's role included recommending the appointment of the Chairperson and non-executive Directors to the Board of the BWUH Ltd, and to agree remuneration.

He reminded the Committee that the Directors had reached the end of their initial appointment period on the 31st March, 2019. The Members were advised that, as outlined in the Service Level Agreement, a board evaluation process had been completed and the directors' contracts were subsequently extended to allow for the recruitment of new directors. In order to facilitate the recruitment of new directors, which had been paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Committee had been asked to extend the directors' contracts to the 31st December, 2020.

He explained that, given the ongoing impact of COVID-19, a recruitment exercise for Directors was still not possible at that time. As a result, a further extension of three directors' contracts had been required, until 30th April, 2021. The extension applied to the following three directors: Mr. A. Dixon, Mr. R. Holt and Mr. P. McClughan.

The Committee was advised that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Shareholders' Committee, in the absence of a Committee meeting, had approved that decision.

The Committee noted the extension to 30th April, 2021.

Draft Business Plan 2021 – 2022

The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast reported that, in January 2020, the BWUH Ltd Board and Senior Management team, Belfast City Council and the Shareholders' Committee had agreed a five year business plan, including a strategy execution map and tactical direction of the company.

However, given the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which had caused the ICC Belfast, the Waterfront Hall and the Ulster Hall to close, in April 2020, the agreed mission and aim was set aside for an interim mission.

She explained that the BWUH Ltd Board had held a virtual strategy day in October 2020, to discuss short and medium plans to take the business forward. The Members were advised that outputs from the session had included both strategic and corporate projects to ensure the long term sustainability of BWUH Ltd and eventual business preparedness for when it was safe to open again.

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The Committee was advised that it was usual at that time of year to agree amendments and extensions to the five year plan but, due to the uncertainty that Covid-19 had brought to the industry, the report sought to provide the Shareholders' Committee an overview of the direction of travel for 2021/2022.

She explained that a draft business plan would be submitted to the BWUH Ltd Board on 11th February, 2021, for its consideration, and would subsequently be presented to the next BWUH Shareholders' Committee.

The Members were advised that the anticipated re-opening date for the venues was 1st April, 2021, however, given the recent announcement from the NI Executive in January 2021, that was subject to change.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the Business's key achievements in 2019/2020, including that it had exceeded the £100M economic impact target one year ahead of schedule.

She provided the Members with the Interim Strategic and Corporate Projects 2021/2022 as well as an analysis of the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The Director of Finance and Systems provided a financial update in regard to income, room hire targets and overheads. He emphasised that there remained a great deal of uncertainty for events which were currently scheduled to take place between April and June 2021.

A Member cited the recent Supreme Court ruling which would mean that tens of thousands of businesses would receive an insurance pay out to cover financial losses occurring during the UK's first lockdown under Covid-19. The Director of Finance confirmed that he had been in touch with the Council's Insurance and Risk manager in relation to that issue.

A number of Members raised questions in relation to future proofing the venues, including hybrid-offerings and live streaming artists to a virtual audience. The Chief Executive confirmed that they had successfully held a "Live from the Ulster Hall" event over the festive period and had received a small grant from the Arts Council NI to do so.

A further Member asked for an update on the building maintenance programme. The Chief Executive advised that an update on the works could be submitted to a future meeting in conjunction with the Physical Programmes Department.

The Committee noted the contents of the draft Business Plan 2021/2022.

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Approach to Casual Workers

The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the financial support which had been given to casual workers throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, since March 2020.

She explained that, following the UK Government's announcement on 31st October, 2020, to extend the financial support offered by the Corona Virus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), BWUH Ltd would continue to pay casual workers until the end of the scheme, which was currently due to end on 30th April, 2021.

She outlined that casual workers at BWUH had been paid from the beginning of March 2020 in line with the CJRS. The Committee was advised that, following on from a review by the Board at its strategy day on 21st October, 2020, A&L Goodbody had been engaged to advise on the legal status of casual workers and the employment options which might be available to the company for further consideration.

The Committee was presented the details of the first review by A&L Goodbody.

A Member stated that he would like to see early engagement with the Trade Unions. The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast advised that extensive conversations had already taken place with the Trade Unions and would continue as part of the process.

Moved by Councillor Matt Collins
Seconded by Councillor McAteer and

Resolved – that the Committee noted the contents of the report and agrees to invite representatives from the Trade Unions in to a future meeting in respect of the issue.

Issued Raised in Advance by a Member

Belfast Multi Cultural Association - Cllr Flynn to raise

A number of Members expressed solidarity with the Belfast Multi Cultural Association, in light of the recent arson attack of their premises in Donegall Pass, and that they wanted to see the Council and all statutory agencies assist BMCA in any way it could.

The Director of Economic Development suggested that the ICC Waterfront might be a more suitable location than the Ulster Hall, which was currently closed, but that he and the Chief Executive of ICC would discuss the most viable option.

Moved by Councillor Flynn
Seconded by Councillor Mulholland and

Resolved – This Council recognises the important work of the Belfast Multi Cultural Association (BMCA) in delivering vital services to communities across Belfast, and expresses its solidarity after the racist attack on their premises.

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The Council requests that officers engage with its partners in the Belfast Waterfront & Ulster Hall Ltd to determine if the ICC Belfast could be used temporarily by the BMCA, so that the organisation may continue providing these key services to communities in Belfast.

Chairperson