

ACTIVE BELFAST LIMITED BOARD

Monday, 6th December, 2021

MEETING OF ACTIVE BELFAST LIMITED BOARD

(Held remotely via Microsoft Teams)

Attendees

- Directors:** Mr. J. McGuigan (Chairperson)
Councillor Carson
Councillor McLaughlin
Mr. P. Boyle
Mr. K. Ellison and
Mrs. K. McCullough.
- Officers:** Mrs. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. N. Munnis, Partnership Manager;
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.
- GLL:** Mr. G. Kirk, Regional Director;
Mr. J. Michael, Business Manager;
Ms. S. Owens, Regional Marketing Manager; and
Mr. A. Walker, Partnership Manager.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillor Corr, Councillor Newton and Mr. K. O'Doherty.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 25th October were approved. It was reported that those minutes had been noted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 19th November.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Matters Arising

Director Attendance Statement

The Board noted that Mr. K. O' Doherty would no longer be representing NIPSA on the Board and that the Partnership Manager had contacted NIPSA to request that it nominate a replacement.

Loughside Recreation Centre

The Partnership Manager reported that Loughside Recreation Centre had been closed during the first lockdown due to Covid restrictions for a number of operational

reasons, including ventilation. The Board was informed that the Centre was now open partially and was catering for external pitch bookings. He reported also that an order for the removal of graffiti had been placed and that he would update the Board at its next meeting. The Partnership Manager stated that a decision on the future of all phase 3 LTP buildings was under review and would be made following a consultation programme with all relevant stakeholders.

Policy and Procedure Alignment - Human Resources

The Partnership Manager provided the Board with an update on the alignment of GLL Human Resources policies with those of BCC Corporate Human Resources. He stated that Human Resources issues were a matter for GLL, its employees and their trade union representatives. He stated further that, if he was furnished with details of the specific Human Resource issues raised, he would consult with the relevant parties to ascertain whether the issues were under the Council's remit. Mr Ellison agreed to forward details of the specific issues by email.

Noted.

Director Attendance Statement

The Board noted that there were no issues to report in terms of the non-attendance of Directors at meetings.

Proposals for Future Board Meeting Agenda Items

No agenda items were identified by Directors for future meetings.

ABL Audited Accounts and Company Statement to 31st March 2021

(Mr. D. Moan, Advanced Accounting, attended in connection with this item.)

Mr. Moan informed the Board that the annual accounts and company statement in regard to Active Belfast Limited for the period ending on 31st March, 2021 had now been completed. He provided a brief overview of the accounts and recommended that the Board approve them for submission to Companies House, before the deadline date of 31st December.

The Board approved the annual accounts and company statement in respect of Active Belfast Limited and for the period ending 31st March 2021. The Board noted also that they would be signed by Mr. McGuigan, the Chairperson of the Board. The Board stated that it was anticipated that a replacement Treasurer, following the resignation of the previous Board member and second signatory to the accounts, would not be in place until the review was completed.

GLL Annual Schedule of Charges 2022-23

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided the Board with an update on the proposed GLL pricing structure for the period 2022-23. She informed the Board that the issue of GLL pricing had been debated at the Council meeting on 1st December and that a decision was taken that the proposed increase in prices be referred back to the Board for further consideration.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager confirmed that the proposed CPI/RPI price increases were a contractual entitlement and, as such, the Board could articulate a view on the proposed price increases, but did not have the authority to challenge the pricing review proposal. In response to a question from a Board member on the clauses contained within the contract between GLL and the Council, specifically in regard to its pricing schedule, the Partnership Manager confirmed that he would circulate a copy of the contractual clauses, on charges, to the Board members for their information.

The Board sought clarification in regard to who might be liable for any shortfall in revenue should the proposed increases not be implemented. The Neighbourhood Services Manager stated that she would seek legal advice in the matter and the Partnership Manager confirmed also that the proposed price increase was aligned to the CPI price index. The Partnership Manager stated that the Board was within its right to request that GLL reconsider the price review proposals for 2022/23. The Board accepted that any such decision would have financial implications for both GLL and the BCC.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - that the Chairperson write to the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council confirming that the decision taken by the Board on 25th October 2021 would remain unchanged. The Chair would further request clarification on the financial implications if the price increases were not to be implemented for 2022/23 and on how any shortfall in income would be met.

It was further resolved that the Chairperson would write to GLL requesting it to reconsider the percentage price increase proposals for the period 2022/23.

(The GLL representatives were admitted to the meeting at this point.)

2021/22 Quarter 2 KPI Scorecard Report

The Board was provided with information on the quarter 2 KPI scorecard performance report. The Board members were informed that Quarter 2 had represented a more normal operating profile, given the adverse impact of the Covid pandemic and which had been reflected in the statistics presented previously for Quarter 1.

The Business Manager provided information on the Clusters of GLL's leisure mix, including wet centres, dry centres and its two gyms. The Board was presented further with information in respect of income and expenditure and the number of visits recorded at its centres for the quarter 2 period. He confirmed that, during that period, Loughside Recreational Centre had not been operational due to Covid restrictions. In terms of occupancy, the Business Manager reported on the occupancy levels in connection with both its main sports halls and studio space. The Board was informed that pitch bookings had been extended, over the summer period, to facilitate a backlog of fixtures which had been deferred, due to the Covid pandemic. In terms of Holiday camps and summer schemes, it was reported that those bookings had been impacted severely by the Covid restrictions.

In response to a question from a Board member in regard to the usage of studio space and how that usage might be better utilised, the Business Manager responded by confirming that GLL was examining how studio space might be extended to cater for a number of activities, including, amongst other things, community engagement programmes. The Regional Director stated further that, as a result of the Council's extensive capital build programme, capacity had exceeded demand and that GLL was endeavouring to generate additional and alternative demand to maximise occupancy.

Noted.

GLL Annual Marketing Plan for 2022-23

The Board noted the contents of GLL's Annual Marketing Plan for 2022/23, which provided details of its marketing of leisure centres, promotion of health and wellbeing activities, partnership working and new products, together with its Partnership working with a range of health partners. The Board noted that each leisure centre would be required to contribute toward a marketing budget, which would incorporate an extensive range of media mix.

Six Monthly Report – Group Exercise Innovation and Development

The Board was provided with the undernoted six-monthly report in respect of GLL's YTD group exercise performance and programme developments:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update members on the YTD group exercise performance and programme developments.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Board is requested to note:

- Q1 and Q2 performance (April - September 2021)
- That performance monitoring is in place both locally and nationally

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Introduction:

3.1.1 Group exercise class access is included as part of the better membership package.

3.1.2 Group exercise classes are recognised as a key tool in attracting and retaining members/customers.

3.1.3 Group exercise classes continue to be particularly popular with female users, with females representing 4 in every 5 attendees.

- 3.1.4** The current citywide group exercise programme continues to evolve and change to increase usage figures, provide choice for the consumer and ensure quality across all centres
- 3.1.5** As a result of Covid-19 the leisure centres across Belfast were closed between January and March 2021. Group exercise classes returned on 12th April but only in an outdoor setting. 7 centres that had 3G pitches were able to offer group exercise at this time.
- 3.1.6** Group exercise remained outdoor until 24th May and, at this stage, 12 centres were able to open studios and sports halls again with a significantly reduced offer due to social distancing measures and the requirement to reduce touch points. Further details of what were offered between July and September is provided in the performance update below.
- 3.2** **Performance Update**
- 3.2.1** The overall strategic aim remains to get More People More Active More Often through an effective citywide group exercise programme.
- 3.2.2** In July, due to social distancing measures and the desire to ensure large groups could benefit from the group exercise programme the majority of group exercise classes remained in leisure centre sports halls. In this way the centres could mark out 3m x 3m spaces for group exercise and 2m x 2m spaces for group cycling.
- 3.2.3** The group cycle studio at Andersonstown, BGB and BGC were maintained but with reduced numbers to ensure a 2m x 2m distance could be maintained.
- 3.2.4** Outdoor spaces at Andersonstown, Brook, Olympia and Lisnasharragh were also utilised during the summer months when required.
- 3.2.5** Group exercise classes were delivered in July and August in Andersonstown, Ballysillan, BGB, BGC, Brook, Falls, Girdwood, Grove, Lisnasharragh, Olympia, Shankill and Whiterock. In September Belvoir was also added.
- 3.2.6** Between July and September the reduced programme included aqua aerobics, body pump, circuits, combat, group cycling, body conditioning, core conditioning, HIIT, Yoga, Pilates and Tai Chi.

- 3.2.7** Classes offered per week ranged from 271 in July to 293 in September. Classes in April were 19 and in May 79 which demonstrates the increase in the programme in Q2 with the return to indoors.
- 3.2.8** Virtual classes were offered in BGB due to their reduced studio capacity and in order to reduce cost for an instructor. The centre offered 6 classes a week and also provided members with the opportunity to participate in a virtual class of their choosing via the Wexer system.
- 3.2.9** In addition to this the Healthwise team delivered 4 walking groups per week and 8 virtual classes for participants with the Move More and Healthwise programmes
- 3.2.10** Attendance figures are
- 3.2.10.1** Overall attendance; 59,692 for Q1/Q2
- 3.2.10.2** Q1 Attendance: 18,596 – 672 (Apr), 4,827 (May), 13,097 (June)
- 3.2.10.3** Q2 Attendance: 41,096 – 12,136 (Jul), 13,544 (Aug), 15,416 (Sept)
- 3.2.10.4** Attendance increased throughout Q2 which was attributed to the return of members and increased class offerings.
- 3.2.10.5** All activities were pre booked via the Better website and Better UK app. The use of the app has continued to improve the reporting accuracy of fitness classes and attendance numbers.
- 3.2.10.6** Lisnasharragh had the highest attendance for a single centre with a total 10,026 participants for Q2, which was just slightly lower than a quarter of the total group exercise usage.
- 3.2.11** In Q2, the average attendance of classes was 11 participants. The utilisation of classes was 62.3% in July, 68.4% in August and 70.7% in September.
- 3.2.12** The most popular types of classes for Q2 were:
- Strength and Conditioning - 845 classes (24.1% of offering)
 - Cardio – 812 classes (23.2% of offering)
 - Mind and Body - 641 classes (18.3% of offering)
 - Aqua – 201 classes (5.7% of offering)
 - Taster Classes – 42 classes (1.2% of offering)
 - Dance – 33 classes (0.9% of offering)

3.3 Training and Development

- 3.3.1 The health team will build on the introduction of taster classes to establish a programme of step down/low functioning classes across the city.**
- 3.3.2 GLL will also look to recruit more dance coaches to build this element of the programme which is still small at present.**
- 3.3.3 The Regional Business Manager is working with the Group Exercise Co-ordinator to recruitment more casual instructors to meet the demands of the current group exercise programme. It is envisaged that utilisation will increase to 75% which will require additional classes to be offered across the city to meet demand.**
- 3.3.4 The Group Exercise co-ordinators has been participating in training to enable her to deliver group exercise workshops and courses in the near future. GLL will use this expertise to develop a programme of development opportunities over the coming months for all fitness teams and instructors across the City.”**

The Business Manager (GLL) confirmed that outdoor group exercise had been the only provision available during the Covid restrictions. He confirmed that those centres, with outdoor pitch facilities, were the first to see group exercise activities restored. He stated that those centres with covered outdoor 3G 5-a-side cages were at a particular advantage. The Board was informed that indoor classes returned on 24th May 2021 with classes being divided into a number of activity sections, including Strength and Conditioning, mind and body and Cardio-Vascular. He stated that, in addition, a number of taster classes had been organised to promote the range of group exercise options on offer. The Business Manager stated that dance classes remained a challenge in that it had proved difficult to recruit sufficient dance instructors.

The Board was informed that GLL was actively seeking to enhance its training programme as a means to expand that programme and improve further the standard of training offered.

In response to a question from a Board Member in respect of female participation, the Business Manager confirmed that female participation was significantly higher than that of male counterparts and acknowledged that, in trying to address different age groups for both female and male participants, a number of lower intensity classes had been developed.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, noted the report presented and thanked GLL for its efforts in continuing its leisure operation during a period of unprecedented uncertainty, as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.

(The GLL representatives left the meeting at this point.)

**BCC Review of Leisure Operating Model
Governance Arrangements**

Mr. P. Appleton, First Point Management and Consultancy, attended in connection with this item, as an observer, and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

The Board considered the following report prepared by the Partnership Manager, in respect of the Leisure Operating Model Governance Arrangements:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update members on the review of the leisure operating model governance arrangements.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the board notes the information provided below.

2.2 That board members confirm agreement that, for consultee engagement, the consultants will make initial contact by email with each director.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 At the meeting of 9th August 2021, the board noted the terms of reference for the review. The terms of reference including the proposed review timeline (below at 3.6) was subsequently approved by SP&R on 20th August and ratified by Council at the start of September.

3.2 A further update was presented to the board on 25th October when it was agreed that subject to contract award, the Partnership Manager would communicate directly with Board members to outline the consultation process and co-ordinate meetings/individual engagements as agreed with the successful consultant.

3.3 Following a commissioning meeting with ‘First Point Management and Consulting’ on 12th November, documentation has been provided for a desktop review and a list of consultees has been approved.

3.4 It was also agreed that the lead consultant could attend the ABL board meeting on 6th December as an observer. Following agreement in principle with the Chair, this intention was communicated to board members by email on 26th November.

3.5 Consultees are:

a) ABL current directors (9)

- b) ABL past directors (4) (subject to agreement to participate)
- c) BCC Party Group Leaders (8)
- d) BCC senior officers (7 including legal services)
- e) GLL (2)

3.6 Consultee names, under the above stakeholder groupings, together with email addresses have been provided for the purposes of initial contact by the consultants.

3.7 Consultees will be contacted individually. Meetings may be by phone, virtual meeting or face to face depending on consultee preferences. Given the recent Executive Office announcement on working from home, phone or virtual meetings would be advised.

3.8 The project remains on schedule as set out in the timeline below:

Agree Terms of Reference	CMT Active Belfast Ltd SP&R	June 2021 9th August 2021 20th August 2021
Appointment of independent contractor	CNS	October 2021
Commence review		October/November 2021
Draft report & findings	CMT SP&R Active Belfast Ltd	January/February 2022

3.9 This this stage it is anticipated that the following activities will be delivered within the above timeline:

- a) Desktop review of governance arrangements and associated documents – November - December 2021. Currently underway.
- b) Consultee engagement – December 2021 – Mid January 2022
- c) Draft report review – Late January - February 2022
- d) SP&R Committee report – 18th February/25th March 2022 (subject to review completion).

3.10 BCC officers will be in attendance to answer any questions.”

The Partnership Manager provided the Board with an update on its previous October report stating that Management Consultants had been appointed and that Mr Appleton was in attendance for the duration of the meeting as an observer. The Board were informed that, as part of the review process, thirty consultees had been identified and that each consultee would be contacted directly by the consultants to agreed dates

for one-to-one meetings. The Partnership Manager stated that, given the current Covid restrictions relating to social distancing and working from home put in place by the NI Assembly, consultations would most likely be conducted by phone or by virtual meeting.

The Board was advised that it was anticipated that the review would be completed by February, 2022 but, due to the Committee timetable, it was probable that the report would be presented to the March meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Mr. Appleton agreed to send out an updated schedule to arrange meeting dates with the relevant consultees.

Analysis of Pay and Play Activity Sales

The Partnership Manager provided the Board with an update in respect of a request, which it had made previously, to provide information on the number of transactions for Pay and Play, on a centre by centre basis, and categorised further into the number of pre-pay customers, residential and non-residential customers.

The Partnership Manager reported that, whilst that the customer inter-face part of the front desk management system was working very well, the back-office functionality was presenting some reporting challenges. He reported further that GLL was working to resolve any issues. A Board member highlighted the variation in fees paid by Belfast residents and non-resident customers and sought confirmation that the discounted Pay and Play membership was being promoted for the benefit of Belfast residents.

The Partnership Manager provided an assurance that the Pay and Play discount scheme was being promoted, but explained that the IT system was unable to identify anonymous customers, in terms of their residential status, unless they were either monthly pre-paid members or held a Pay and Play card.

The Partnership Manager committed also to present the Pay and Play sales data analysis, as previously requested, to a future meeting, once the reporting functionality within the front desk management system had been resolved.

The Board noted the information which had been provided.

Date of Next Meeting

The Board noted that its next meeting would be held on Monday, 17th January at 4:30 p.m.

Chairperson