

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 20th February, 2017

MEETING OF BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Walsh (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Campbell;
The High Sheriff, Alderman Haire; and
Councillors Copeland, Graham, Hargey
Johnston, Mullan and O'Donnell.

In attendance: Mr. D. Durkan, Director of Development;
Ms. C. Toolan, Managing Director, Belfast Waterfront
and Ulster Hall Ltd;
Mr. I. Bell, Business Support Director, Belfast Waterfront
and Ulster Hall Ltd; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

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

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 12th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

RESTRICTED ITEM

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

Quarter 3 Performance Report 2016

The Managing Director of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.) provided the Committee with an overview of the Company's performance during October, November and December 2016, and an overview of the year to date performance for the financial year 2016/2017.

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She outlined that Quarter 3 had been a very busy period for the company, with a wide variety of events having been held in the venues.

The Members were advised that by the end of Quarter 3 BWUH Ltd. had delivered 25 conferences, generating 41,742 delegate days, which had delivered an economic impact of £17.2million for Belfast.

The Managing Director reported that BWUH Ltd. had attended IBTM, the leading global event for the meetings, conferences, events and business travel industry. She advised the Committee that it had been a success and that a number of potential bookings were being planned.

She also advised the Committee that BWUH Ltd. would be attending a number of sales shows in Quarter 4, including the C&IT Corporate Forum in London, which provided access to sixty corporate buyers, and Confex in Olympia London, which attracted 7,500 agents, associations and buyers.

The Committee was advised that a client showcase would take place on 16th March, 2017. The Members were advised that BWUH Ltd. was targeting key local, ROI and UK professional conference organisers, associations and corporate clients. She outlined that unique city experiences would be facilitated for out-of-state clients and that it would conclude with a themed evening of food and entertainment showcasing the Belfast Waterfront.

In relation to customer feedback, the Committee was advised mystery shoppers were brought in from November 2016 and that the company was working to develop a satisfaction benchmark with the team. The Managing Director reported that anecdotal feedback from clients was generally positive but that there was an ongoing problem with the heating system in the Belfast Waterfront and that this had resulted in some negative feedback from clients in November. The Committee was advised that the Energy Management System had been raised as a defect in the new building project.

With regards to staff training and development, the Members noted that the Culture and Leadership Programme had commenced in Quarter 4, with 18 people taking part and that the first session had been successful.

The Managing Director advised the Committee that the Liquor Licensing legislation for Northern Ireland had been highlighted as a risk in that it was having a financial impact on Client Event Earnings. She reminded the Members that this was a particular challenge in relation to the BBC Good Food event and that if a solution could not be found that repeat custom from the event in 2018 was unlikely.

In response to a Member's comments regarding the catering at events in the Ulster Hall, the Managing Director advised the Committee that a review would take place. She also confirmed to the Committee that if a client was to encounter a problem with the catering in either venue, that the costs would be recouped from the franchised caterer.

In response to a further Member's question relating to the value of Sterling against the Euro since the outcome of the Brexit referendum, and whether European companies

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could book the Belfast Waterfront in Euro, the Managing Director confirmed that while they did not take bookings in Euro at present, they would examine it as an option.

In relation to employability opportunities for apprentices and work experience placements, the Managing Director confirmed to the Members that they were working with Employability South and Employment East and they were pleased that the work programmes could be customised to the company's needs.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update on the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.'s performance during Quarter 3 of 2016 and of the year to date performance for the financial year 2016/2017.

Chairperson