

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 6th November, 2017

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

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

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 1st August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th September.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

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.

Shareholders' Performance Report – Quarter 2

The Managing Director of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.) provided the Committee with an overview of the Company's performance during July, August and September 2017.

The Business Support Director provided the Committee with an overview of the operating income, operating expenses and the sales mix.

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The Members were advised that, while Quarter 2 had been quieter than the preceding quarter, 79% of room hire sales had been secured throughout Quarters 1 and 2, the economic impact for Quarter 2 had been £12.4million, and that they expected to be ahead of their sales target for the year 2017/2018.

In response to a Member's question regarding how the economic impact was calculated, the Managing Director outlined that Deloitte and Oxford University had established a recognised calculation to estimate the economic impact of both national and international conferences and that this was an industry standard. She explained however, that the calculation was a number of years old and that a new one was being created, where, she estimated, the economic impact per delegate would likely increase.

The Managing Director reported that a Liquor Licence for Off Sales had been granted to the Belfast Waterfront on 13th October, 2017, which meant that the needs of events such as the BBC Good Food Show could now be fully met and would be a great asset to the company.

She provided the Members with an overview of ongoing engagement with the Trade Unions in relation to a pay award.

In relation to the creation of apprenticeships within BWUH Ltd., she explained that it needed to have, for example, a trained electrician on-site who could provide training to an apprentice, and that this was a challenge for the company.

She advised the Members that a European company had recently pulled out of negotiations to hold a conference in the Belfast Waterfront in 2020, stating that the decision had been attributed to the uncertainty in relation to Brexit.

During discussion, she explained that conferences were key to BWUH Ltd. and that the recent declaration by Lonely Planet that "Belfast and the Causeway Coast" was the best region to visit in 2018 was certainly beneficial and would hopefully put Belfast on the map. She outlined that transportation, particularly direct flights, was one of a number of key considerations for most conference organisers.

The Director of Development also pointed out that the Business Ambassador Programme, led by Visit Belfast, and the city's subvention fund, led by the Council and Tourism NI, were both very successful in attracting conferences to the city.

The Committee noted the update which was provided.

Schedule of Meetings 2018

The Committee noted that it had previously agreed to meet on the following dates in 2018:

- 22nd January;
- 19th February; and
- 21st May (AGM).

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The Committee agreed that it would also meet on the following dates in 2018, with all meetings commencing at 5.15pm:

- 13th August; and
- 12th November.

Chairperson