

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 14th January, 2019

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

Members present: Alderman Haire (Chairperson); and
Alderman Copeland;
Councillors Attwood, Carson, Clarke,
Graham, Johnston, Mullan,
Nic Biorna and O'Neill.

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

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was received from Councillor Armitage.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 12th November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd December.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

RESTRICTED ITEMS

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

BWUH Performance Update - Quarter 3 (to 30th November) of 2018/2019

The Managing Director provided the Committee with an overview of BWUH Ltd.'s performance during Quarter 3 of 2018/2019, up to 30th November, 2018. She advised the Members that an update on the complete quarter would be submitted to its next meeting on 11th February.

Noted.

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BWUH Ltd. Annual Business Plan, 2019/2020

The Managing Director of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.) presented the 2019/2020 Business Plan to the Shareholders' Committee, which she explained had been approved by the BWUH Ltd. Board in December, 2018.

She provided the Committee with an update of the strategic goals for the company, which included:

- attracting 50,000 annual conference delegate days (per annum) to the City;
- attracting 35,000 (of the 50,000) out-of-state conference delegate days;
- contributing £100million of economic return to the City by 2020; and
- meeting the requirements of the MOU Table and Letter of Offer.

She explained to the Committee that the newly repositioned ICC Belfast provided an exciting opportunity for the team to target the conferencing market. She emphasised the importance of Business Tourism to the venue, in both the national and international markets.

She highlighted to the Members that, in May 2018, the Belfast Waterfront had hosted its largest conference to date with the Royal College of Nursing's Annual Congress.

The Committee was advised that the ICC Belfast had recently won the "Best Venue 2018" at the C&IT Awards and the "Best Industry Partnership Award" at the Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO) in December 2018, and that such industry awards were key in raising awareness of the venue.

The Managing Director provided the Committee with an update on the recruitment of a new Director of Event Operations and a Head of Technical.

The Business Support Director provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the Financial Plan for 2019/2020. He also updated the Members on the sales pipeline and the five year revenue and management fee.

The Committee noted a number of challenges which 2019/2020 would bring, including the continued uncertainty around Brexit and increased competition with other new conference venues across the UK and Ireland.

The Managing Director advised the Committee that the catering contract would be going to tender in the next few weeks, and that the company would hopefully be in a position to award it in April.

She explained that discussions were ongoing regarding a policy on customers bringing drinks into the auditorium.

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In response to a Member's question, the Committee was apprised of the working relationships between staff and management. She outlined a number of policies which BWUH Ltd. had employed in relation to motivating and rewarding its staff for achieving targets.

In a discussion about the importance of sustainability, the Managing Director stated that she was keen to see Belfast join the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDSI), which had been created specifically to help destinations, event planners and suppliers to evaluate the sustainability strategies of destinations and their events industry.

The Members were also given an overview of the work which was ongoing as part of the company's health and wellness, corporate social responsibility and community outreach plans.

The Committee noted the update which had been provided and agreed the 2019/2020 Business Plan.

Audit & Risk

Internal Audit of BWUH

(Mrs. C. O'Prey, Acting Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services, attended in connection with this item)

The Committee was advised that, in November 2018, Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) had completed an internal audit review at the Company, which focused on risk management, procurement/contract management, sales and marketing and operations. It noted that a second audit was planned for early 2019, which would focus on key financial controls and performance management.

The Committee noted an update on the outcome of the review, where AGRS had been able to provide a positive assurance with the overall outcome of "some improvement needed", and that management had agreed an action plan to address the issues arising from the audit.

Chairperson