

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 15th September, 2025

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

Members present: Councillor Hanvey (Chairperson);
Alderman Sonia Copeland; and
Councillors Bell, Bower, Brennan, R. Brooks,
Canavan, de Faoite, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Flynn,
Maghie, McCabe, McCallin, McCann,
McDowell, McKay, Ó Néill, Verner and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. C. Haughey, Principal Auditor, Audit Governance and
Risk Services;
Mr. A. McKinley, Internal Auditor, Audit Governance and
Risk Services;
Mr. R. McConnell, Chief Executive, ICC Belfast
Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.);
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate
Services, ICC Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.
(BWUH Ltd.); and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

(Councillor Flynn in the Chair)

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16th June, 2025, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July, 2025.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Capital and Maintenance Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1** Members have requested regular updates on capital and maintenance works at the ICC Waterfront and Ulster Hall. This paper provides an update since the last report to Committee.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the update on capital and maintenance works at the Waterfront and Ulster Halls.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Waterfront Hall Chiller Units

Members will be aware that this project is at *Stage 2 - Uncommitted* on the Capital Programme. Approval has been received to proceed with the detailed design. The Consultants are continuing to work on the designs, and have also been exploring heat recovery options with the Energy Management Team. It is anticipated the designs will be complete by end September 2025. Once the business case is complete the project can be taken forward to the next stage.

3.2 Waterfront Hall Smoke Curtains

Members are reminded that this project is at *Stage 1 - Emerging* on the Capital Programme. The Consultants have now completed the modelling exercise. The results of the CFD model were positive and are currently being reviewed by the Fire Officer and Building Control with a view updating the current Fire Strategy. It is anticipated that minimal works will be required and will relate primarily to decommissioning of the existing smoke curtain.

3.3 Ulster Hall – Lighting Scheme

This project involves the installation of an LED lighting display on the façade of Ulster Hall capable of changing colour similar to City Hall's Illuminate scheme. The lighting project at the Ulster Hall was added as a Stage 1 – Emerging project to the Capital Programme in April 2025 by the SP&R Committee. Design and delivery costs are being funded by DfC and the Linen Quarter BID. It is anticipated that the contractor will be appointed in October with the works to take place in February/March 2026. Concurrent to this while the scaffolding is up for the installation of the lighting system the front of the Ulster Hall (both sides of the main entrance and the metal canopy) will be redecorated.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial – None at this time; *Resources* – Officer time to deliver as required.

**5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.

The Director of Property and Projects also provided the Committee with an update in relation to the 'Knotted Gun' sculpture, which was currently on display within Girdwood Community Hub in North Belfast. She reminded Members that the sculpture was gifted to Belfast by the Olsson Family, owners of Stena Line, to symbolise peace and non-violence, and that the family had recently requested that the sculpture be displayed in a location with a higher footfall. The Director reported that the Waterfront Hall had been identified as a potential new location for the sculpture, and that further engagement would take place with Stena Line and Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall (BWUH) Ltd. in respect of the potential relocation. She advised that an update on the potential relocation would be reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee noted the update provided on the capital and maintenance works at the Waterfront and Ulster Hall.

Restricted Items

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the meeting during discussion of the items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**Annual Report and Financial Statements
for the year ended 31st March 2025**

The Committee noted the BWUH Ltd. Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March, 2025.

2025/26 Quarter 1 Performance Update

The Chief Executive, BWUH Ltd., and the Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate Services, BWUH Ltd., provided the Committee with an update in respect of BWUH Ltd.'s performance for Quarter 1 of 2025/26.

The Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate Services provided the Committee with an overview of the financial figures for Quarter 1 of 2025/26, which included the overall actual income and expenditure figures against targets. He also outlined the occupancy rates for both the Waterfront and the Ulster Hall in Quarter 1.

The Chief Executive presented the Committee with a business update including detail on BWUH Ltd.'s work in relation to:

- **Local community** – recent announcement by BWUH Ltd. that it had selected Dementia NI as its charity partner for 2025; continued support for local communities and businesses to help tackle issues such as food poverty, and help raise suicide prevention awareness;
- **Sustainability** - continued focus on the reduction of carbon emissions through a waste management strategy and further implementation of the Re-usable Cup Scheme;
- **Event Curation** – new event 'Sip and Savour' to celebrate local distilleries and brewers and an event in August to mark the 80th birthday of Van Morrison;
- **Apprenticeships** – continued support of local apprenticeships; and
- **Business Plan** – Five-Year Business Plan launched on 15th September, 2025, in the Waterfront Hall.

The Chief Executive also highlighted BWUH Ltd.'s work in respect of VIP memberships, social seating, community pricing, reprogramming and grassroots initiatives.

During discussion, the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate Services answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to social seating, community pricing, accessibility and neurodiverse spaces.

The Committee noted BWUH Ltd.'s performance update for Quarter 1 2025/26.

Internal Audit Update

The Committee was provided with an update on the outcome of the 2024/25 internal audit of BWUH Ltd., which included a summary of the key findings and highlighted that an action plan would be implemented to address the issues identified.

The Committee noted the update in relation to the internal audit of BWUH Ltd.

Review of Governance Arrangements

The Committee was provided with an update in relation to a recent review of the governance arrangements between the Council and BWUH Ltd., which was undertaken by the Council's Audit, Governance and Risk Services.

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in December 2024, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had agreed that the governance arrangements between the Council and BWUH Ltd. be added to the assignments to be undertaken by Audit, Governance and Risk Services. The Principal Auditor advised that the independent review had now been completed and outlined the key issues and areas for improvement which had been identified.

The Committee noted the update in relation to Audit, Governance and Risk Services Review of the governance arrangements between the Council and BWUH Ltd., including key issues and areas for improvement.

Reserved Matters

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which outlined a number of reserved matters, which required approval of the Council.

He provided the Committee with an overview of the following reserved matters which BWUH Ltd. had sought approval:

- to enter into a contract with MCI;
- to enter into a five-year contract with Aruba Systems;
- to appoint a Chairperson to its Board of Directors; and
- to appoint the role of a Facilities Manager.

During discussion, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy, the Director of Economic Development, and BWUH Ltd.'s Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate Services, answered a range of question from the Members in relation to the above-mentioned reserved matters.

After discussion, the Committee approved:

- i. that BWUH Ltd. enter into a contract with MCI;
- ii. that BWUH Ltd. enter into a 5-year contract with Aruba Systems;

- iii. the appointment of a Chairperson to the BWUH Ltd. Board of Directors; and
- iv. that BWUH Ltd. appoint the role of a Facilities Manager, and agreed that, in accordance with Standing Order 48(a), the aforementioned decision would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an inability to immediately implement the decision would result in a breach of statutory duty.

Chairperson