

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 22nd January, 2018

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

Members present: Councillor Walsh (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Copeland);
Alderman Haire; and
Councillors Campbell, Dorrian,
Graham and Johnston.

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

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Nicholl and O'Donnell.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th November, 2017, 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 December.

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.

2018/2019 Business Plan

The Managing Director of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.) provided the Members with an overview of the key contents of the 2018/2019 Business Plan.

She provided the Committee with an update on how BWUH Ltd. was meeting its Strategic Goals, which included:

- delivering 50,000 annual conference delegate days, 35,000 of which would be out-of-state visitors, by 2020;
- delivering six National Large Association conferences each year from 2020;
- delivering six International/ European Association conferences each year from 2020;
- reducing the subsidy by £1.6million by 2020;
- creating employment development programmes;
- developing partnerships with other city businesses; and
- supporting local sourcing/procurement strategies where appropriate.

The Business Support Director explained that BWUH Ltd. had exceeded its sales targets for the year and was projected to generate an economic impact of more than £33million.

The Managing Director advised the Committee that she was delighted to report that the Belfast Waterfront had recently won the “Best Event Space 2017” against tough competition and that such accolades were important in the promotion and sales of the venue. She pointed out that they had recently welcomed a new Sales and Marketing Manager to the team, Ms. O. O'Reilly.

She advised the Committee that the level of competition for attracting business tourism was growing with three new conference centres opening in the U.K. later this year. She outlined that competitiveness of hotels, transportation and direct airline routes were all critical to BWUH's success.

The Members were advised that BWUH Ltd. would focus on ensuring that there were clear identities for the conference and entertainment websites in order to minimise confusion.

The Managing Director outlined to the Members that a key consideration was the repositioning of the Belfast Waterfront as an “International Convention Centre (ICC)” within the National and International market to ensure that buyers and ambassadors related to what the building could deliver for them. She advised the Committee that she hoped that the relaunch of the new name could coincide with the 21st Birthday celebrations of the building, which would take place in May, 2018.

During discussion, the Members expressed their support for the repositioning of the Belfast Waterfront, either as the Belfast ICC or ICC Belfast, depending on focus group feedback.

The Managing Director also outlined to the Committee that one of the Non-Executive Directors had stepped down and that a replacement was therefore being

sought. She also explained that discussions had taken place around the recruitment of a new Non-Executive Director to the BWUH Board of Directors.

The Committee noted this course of action.

The Managing Director highlighted that the staff were critical to the success of the business and that the Reward and Recognition Programme to reward the management team for exceeding targets was extremely important. She emphasised that they continued to move from an operationally focused delivery team to a sales-drive, customer-focused culture within the organisation.

She advised the Members that, through the Facilities Management structure review, they were seeking to recruit an assistant Facilities Manager with an electrical qualification which could then lead to the creation of an apprenticeship opportunity.

In response to a Member's question, the Managing Director provided the Committee with an update on the ongoing discussions with the Trade Unions.

In relation to the Ulster Hall usage, the Managing Director provided the Committee with an update on the discussions which had taken place with the Ulster Orchestra regarding use of the venue.

The Director of Development advised the Committee that he could provide further information at the next meeting on what assistance the Council had provided to the Ulster Orchestra.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed the Business Plan for the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. for 2018/2019.

Chairperson