

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 15th December, 2025

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

Members present: Councillor Hanvey (Chairperson); and
Councillors Bell, Bower, Brennan, R. Brooks,
de Faoite, Ferguson, Flynn, McCann, McCormick,
McKay, Ó Néill and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

(Councillor McCormick, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors McCabe and Verner.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item is 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 item 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.

Extension of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Operating Contract

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report in relation to the contract between the Council and Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.) for the operation of the Waterfront Hall, Ulster Hall and International Convention Centre (ICC) Belfast.

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The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided the Committee with an overview of the establishment of BWUH Ltd., the company's operating and governance structures, its alignment with the Belfast Agenda, the current landscape of the industry and economic outlook, and BWUH Ltd.'s performance.

The Committee was advised that the Services Contract and Shareholders' Agreement, signed between the Council and BWUH Ltd. in 2016, had set out the terms and conditions required for the company to operate. It was reported that the contract was signed for a term of ten years, 2016-26, with an option to extend for a further five years until 2031. The report highlighted that the current model continued to provide the most appropriate model to deliver the agreed objectives and that, should the Committee approve the extension of the contract, further engagement would take place between the Council and BWUH Ltd. in respect of governance.

During discussion, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy, the Director of Economic Development and the Divisional Solicitor answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the option to extend the contract between the Council and BWUH Ltd.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Ó Néill,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the option to extend the contract with BWUH Ltd. until its next meeting, and that a dedicated workshop be held in advance to enable further information to be provided on the contract's option to extend and governance arrangements.

At the request of Councillor McCormick, the proposer and seconder agreed that information be provided to Members at the workshop in respect of potential legal implications.

During further discussion, Members also requested that further information be provided at the workshop on socio-economic benefits, BWUH Ltd.'s ten-year performance, the role of the Committee in respect of BWUH Ltd.'s Business Plan and targets, social inclusion and BWUH Ltd.'s alignment with the Belfast Business Promise, and the role of the Waterfront Hall in context of the city's development and animation of its waterfront.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the option to extend the contract with BWUH Ltd. until its next scheduled meeting on 19th January, 2026, and that a dedicated Committee workshop be held in advance of the meeting to enable further information to be provided on the contract's option to extend, governance arrangements, and the above-mentioned matters raised by Members.

Chairperson