

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 20th June, 2022

MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE HELD IN HYBRID FORMAT

Members present: Councillor Maghie (Chairperson);
Alderman Haire; and
Councillors Bradley, Flynn, Howard,
McAteer, McCann, Newton and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. J. Corkey, Chief Executive, ICC Belfast
(Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.);
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance and Systems, ICC Belfast
(Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.);
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Cobain, Hutchinson and Nelson.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21st February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

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 item, 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.

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Performance Report for Q4 YTD 2021/2022

The Chief Executive of the ICC Belfast provided an update on the company's performance for Quarter 4 and covering the period 1st April, 2021, to 31st March, 2022.

She advised that, as the venues had been mandated to close for half of the financial year 2021/2022, there had inevitably been a major impact on the sales revenue, overall financial results, and the majority of the Key Performance Indicators. However, as the venues had re-opened at the beginning of October 2021. She reported that there had been an increase in activity with increased sales income across all revenue streams.

The Committee was provided with the challenges and opportunities that the company faced.

The Committee was updated in respect of the company's work in terms of its Corporate Social Responsibility. She outlined that employee fundraising had taken place for their chosen charity, Autism NI. The Members were reminded that the Ulster Orchestra continued to use the Ulster Hall for its rehearsal space and that the company would continue to support the orchestra.

In terms of making the venues as accessible as possible, the Chief Executive highlighted that over 80% of the permanent staff had completed the Just a Minute (JAM) card training, to ensure that their customers could communicate their accessibility needs discreetly, highlighting that they might need extra time and patience during their visit. A Changing Places facility had been installed in the ICC Belfast, in partnership with the Council, to ensure that there were adequate accessible spaces available for all customers.

She highlighted that the recent Harkin International Disability Employment Summit 2022 had taken place at the ICC Belfast. The Members were shown a short video which illustrated what a success it had been for all involved. The Members were pleased to note that the organisers of the Summit had stated that it had been so successful that it had, in fact, set a new standard for its future meetings.

The Members were advised that the company was working in partnership with Work+ to deliver apprenticeship opportunities commencing in August 2022. The Chief Executive outlined that Work+ specialised in bringing employers, potential apprentices, colleges and universities together to support all aspects of recruitment. The Members were advised that a Queen's University Belfast student had recently commenced working with the team to support sustainability practices and to work closely with the BWUH ESG (Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance) Committee. In respect of student placements, a Customer Services student had recently started with the company, in April 2022, for one year. Another student would soon complete their year with the company in June 2022, having worked in the Sales and Marketing Team, and two further students had been confirmed for a year-long placement from July 2022. The Committee noted that further student placements were planned for the remaining quarters.

The Director of Finance and Systems provided the Committee with an overview of the financial affairs of the company.

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A Member asked for further information in relation to the company's work in terms of sustainability.

The Committee was advised that BWUH Ltd. was committed to building on the Green Meetings Silver award that it had received in 2021. The Director of Finance and Systems advised the Committee that 50% of the lighting was fitted with LED lights and that they were working on converting the rest, with a number of motion sensors fitted throughout the building. He added that they were working with Queen's University on increasing the company's sustainability.

The Members were advised that a sustainability audit for reducing waste and carbon offsetting had been completed in partnership with Tourism NI. He explained that that would form the basis of the ongoing sustainability strategy and that BWUH would welcome the All-Ireland Sustainability Summit in June. The Committee agreed to receive an update in relation to the sustainability of the business at a future meeting.

A further Member requested an update on the National Merchandise issue. The Chief Executive advised the Committee that, since 1st June 2022, BWUH Ltd. now operated an in-house merchandise model. She added that it was working well, with smaller acts paying a smaller percentage than larger acts. At the request of a Member, it was agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting on the merchandising model.

A Member raised the issue that the UK would potentially be asked to host Eurovision 2023, given the ongoing war in Ukraine. He suggested that he would like to see the ICC Belfast, and Belfast as a City, participate in some way if the UK was to host the major international event.

The Director of Economic Development added that he had already been in touch with the BBC and had spoken with Visit Belfast in response to a request from Members which had been sent to the Chief Executive of the Council. He advised the Committee that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in order to update the Members on any progress in respect of Belfast's role in the UK hosting Eurovision 2023.

After discussion, the Committee:

- noted the update which had been provided in respect of the performance report;
- agreed to receive an update report on the in-house approach to merchandise sales at a future meeting;
- agreed to receive an update report on the sustainability measures at BWUH; and
- noted that a report on any progress in respect of Belfast's role in the UK hosting Eurovision 2023 would be submitted to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

Chairperson