

FIRE AUTHORITY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

MINUTES OF A MEETING

22 FEBRUARY 2005

2.00 PM

PRESENT: Mr W F Gillespie OBE TD MBA JP DL FCIOB FSCA,
Chairman presiding
Mrs S Dixon
Mrs B Gilliland
Mrs A M McAleenan
Mr J Beattie MCIPD
Mr P Bradley CBE MA
Mr J Campbell BA MBA FAIA FCIS FInstAM FCMI
Mr G A Hatch TFA
Mr J Hughes
Mr O Molloy LLB
Mr J Ross FCA ATII

APOLOGIES: Mrs M Black
Mr J Clarke
Mr K Harper MIFireE
Mr J F McKeever
Mr S J Montgomery BSc MSc MCIQB MRICS MBEng
Mr R Pollock

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Development)
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Technical Development)
Director of Human Resources
Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs
Director of Finance & Performance Management
Corporate Communications Manager
Committee Clerk

Prior to the commencement of Business, the Chairman expressed his appreciation to Mr Molloy who had presented him with a plaque on behalf of Cookstown District Council.

1 MINUTES OF NOVEMBER MEETING OF THE AUTHORITY

The Chairman referred to the discussion at the last Meeting regarding the accuracy of the Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on 23 November 2004 and stated that these Minutes had been amended and re-circulated.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 November 2004, having been printed and re-circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Hughes, seconded by Mr Hatch.

The Chairman referred to discussions after the last Authority Meeting when some Members stated that they felt the Minutes of Authority Meetings were lengthy. He proposed that in light of the comments raised the Authority should move to decision Minutes.

Following discussion, it was agreed that two sets, one set in the current format and one set in the proposed format of Minutes would be presented to the next Meeting of the Authority.

2 MINUTES OF JANUARY MEETING OF THE AUTHORITY

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 January 2005, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Hughes, seconded by Mrs McAleenan.

Arising out of the Minutes:

Change to Standing Orders

Members were reminded that the Authority, at its Meeting on 25 January 2005, agreed that a motion to amend Standing Order No 11, Order of Business on the wording of item “(16) Routine Correspondence” be put on the Agenda of its February Meeting.

Members noted the proposal to amend the wording of Standing Order No 11 (16) from “Routine” Correspondence to “Relevant” Correspondence.

The Authority, on the motion of Mr Molloy, seconded by Mrs Dixon, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve the undernoted revision of Standing Order No 11”.

“The order of business at every Ordinary Meeting of the Authority shall be –

- (1) Deputations;
- (2) Confirmation of Authority Minutes;
- (3) Business arising from the Minutes confirmed;
- (4) Approval of Minutes of Standing Committees;
- (5) Business arising from Minutes confirmed;
- (6) Receipt of Minutes of Special Committees;
- (7) National Joint Council Business;
- (8) Chairman’s Business;
- (9) Notices of Motion in the order in which they have been received;
- (10) Chief Fire Officer’s Business;
- (11) Operational Matters;
- (12) Financial Matters;
- (13) Human Resources Matters;
- (14) Administrative Matters;
- (15) Other properly notified items;
- (16) Relevant Correspondence;
- (17) Sealing of Documents; and
- (18) Date of next Meeting”.

Members noted that the change to Standing Orders would require to be confirmed at the next Meeting of the Authority.

Northern Ireland Fire Brigade Band

The Chairman reminded Members that, with respect to starting a band, a preliminary meeting for those interested was scheduled to take place at 7.30 pm on 24 February 2005 at the Brigade Training Centre. He reiterated his invitation to any Members interested in attending.

News Article

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the outcome of the investigation in relation to the incident in Transport Workshops.

Chief Fire Officer's Report – Economic Appraisal Update – Brigade Training Centre

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that Officers were also anxious regarding progress on the Business Case for the Brigade Training Centre and had taken a fundamental look at the matter. He explained that it had been decided that the most expeditious way forward was to obtain the services of Consultants to pull all the areas of work together.

Members noted that the closing date for applications had been 18 February 2005. The Chief Fire Officer stated that the applications would be evaluated as soon as possible and it was anticipated that the appointment would be made at the beginning of March.

Payments and Receipts as Compared with Estimates

The Chairman sought clarification regarding the current position in relation to the underspend reported at the last Authority Meeting.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that a full report had been presented to the Strategy, Planning & Resources Committee at its Meeting on 8 February. He stated that the move to Resource Budgeting mid-year had brought additional pressures on the Organisation. He highlighted a number of key projects which were being progressed in order to address the current underspend.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Strategy, Planning & Resources Committee had been reasonably content with the steps being taken to address the issue.

In response to a question from Mr Bradley regarding Revenue funding, the Chief Fire Officer highlighted projects which were being taken forward.

Amendments to NILGOSC Pension Regulations

The Chairman sought clarification regarding the current position in relation to the lump sum payment to NILGOSC.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Director of Finance & Performance Management had met with Mr Stephen Knox and Mr Denver Lynn from the Northern Ireland Audit Office the previous day. He stated that both were content that the Authority makes the lump sum payment to NILGOSC to discharge its future obligation in respect of '*compensatory added years*'.

Retained Firefighters and the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations – Court of Appeal Decision

Mr Hughes referred to the case being contested by the Employers and the issue of the legal costs being shared by all the Fire Authorities with Retained personnel. He expressed concern in relation to how that would be viewed by the Authority's own Retained personnel.

The Chairman explained the background to the decision which had been taken by the Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the Consultation exercise which had been carried out by the ODPM in relation to a proposed new Pension Scheme and changes to the existing Pension Scheme. He stated that consideration was being given to commencing a Pension Scheme for Retained personnel.

3 MINUTES OF THE STRATEGY, PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Strategy, Planning & Resources Committee held on 8 February 2005, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record and the recommendations contained therein adopted by the Authority, on the motion of Mr Bradley, seconded by Mr Campbell.

4 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Liaison Committee Meeting held on 2 November 2004.

5 NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL MATTERS

Report on Meetings

The Chairman informed Members that he had attended a meeting of the Working Group of the National Joint Council for Principal Officers and reported that good progress had been made with respect to the Gold Book. He stated that a full meeting was scheduled to take place on 1 March 2005 and it was hoped to sign off the Gold Book.

Members noted that a full meeting of the National Joint Council Employers' Side was scheduled to take place on 23 March 2005.

The Chairman informed Members that the Chief Fire Officer and himself would be attending a Training Workshop for the National Joint Council for Local Authorities Fire Brigades on Friday, 25 February. He stated that members of the Fire Brigades' Union would also be in attendance at the Workshop which was being facilitated by ACAS.

National Employers' Circulars

It was noted that the following National Employers' Circulars had been circulated to Members since the last Meeting of the Authority:

- ◆ EMP/1/05 - Rolemaps;
- ◆ EMP/2/05 - Retained Firefighters and the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations – Court of Appeal Decision;
- ◆ EMP/3/05 - Adoption of a New Employers' Constitution for the National Joint Council; and
- ◆ EMP/4/05 - ACAS and recognition of RFU and FOA for Consultation Purposes.

The following National Employers' Circulars and National Joint Council Circulars were circulated at the Meeting for the information of Members.

- ◆ EMP/5/05 - Regional Control Centres;
- ◆ EMP/6/05 - Personal Insurance for Firefighters;
- ◆ EMP/7/05 - Substantive Move from Rank to Role;
- ◆ EMP/8/05 - Substantive Move from Rank to Role;
- ◆ NJC/01/05 - Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book); and
- ◆ NJC/02/05 - Technical Advisory Panel.

Paper on National Joint Council Nominations

Members noted a report regarding the appointment of Fire Authority Representatives on the National Joint Council following the recently revised Constitution.

The Chairman explained that the Authority's representation was much better at all levels and gave Members a brief overview of that representation:

- ◆ The Authority now had one seat, out of 14 seats, on the full National Joint Council;
- ◆ That one Representative would sit, as of right, as a full Member of the "Negotiating Group" (previously the JSSC) out of a total of six places on the Group;
- ◆ The Authority now had a place on the National Joint Council Advisory Panel, ie, the Chief Fire Officer;
- ◆ Have the right to a selected Officer present as an adviser to our National Joint Council Representative, as appropriate;
- ◆ The Authority now have a place for one non-voting nominee on the Employers' Side as an ex-officio Member;

- ◆ The Authority have a right to nominate a substitute when one of their Members is unable to attend any Meeting.

The Authority, on the motion of Mr Ross, seconded by Mr Hughes, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve the appointment of Fire Authority Representatives on the National Joint Council as follows:

- ◆ The Chairman shall be the Authority’s Representative on the National Joint Council;
- ◆ In his/her absence, the substitute will normally be the Vice-Chairman;
- ◆ Confirmed the nomination of Chief Fire Officer Colin J Lammey to the Advisory Panel;
- ◆ Where it is deemed that the Authority’s interests would be served by the attendance of an ex-officio (non-voting) Member at a National Joint Council (Employers’ Side) meeting, that person would normally be the Vice-Chairman;
- ◆ Where the Authority’s Representative (or substitute) considers it necessary to have an Officer present as an adviser, he/she will select the most appropriate Officer (uniformed or non-uniformed) to attend.

It was also agreed that nominations would be reviewed annually in September/October and the Employers’ Organisation advised of the Authority’s representation for the ensuing year”.

6 CHAIRMAN’S BUSINESS

Chairman’s Lunches

The Chairman informed Members he had hosted a number of lunches since the last Meeting of the Authority. On 27 January he had hosted the Lord Mayor and Chief Executive of Belfast City Council, the Mayor and Chief Executive of Lisburn City Council and the Deputy Mayor and Chief Executive of Antrim Borough Council. He stated that on 3 February he had hosted Archbishop Brady, the President of the Methodist Church and the Archdeacon of Connor, along with representatives from Christian Aid and Trocaire and the Chairman of the Irish News.

The Chairman stated that himself and the Chief Fire Officer had attended a working lunch hosted by Mr P Simpson at the Department. He stated that on 14 February he had also attended a working lunch with Mr C Gowdy.

Members were also informed of a lunch hosted on 9 February for the Chief Executive and Mr L McKenna of the Strategic Investment Board along with members of staff to discuss access to the SIB funding.

The Chairman informed Members of a lunch on 21 February at which he had hosted the Chairman and the Chief Executive of the Royal Hospitals, the Director of Estates for Queen’s University of Belfast, the Chairman of the Home Community Trust and the Chairman of BFPSA.

Visit to Station

The Chairman informed Members that he had visited Kilkeel Fire Station with Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright. He stated that Kilkeel had a very strong crew.

Centenary Celebrations for Fire Service in Bangor

The Chairman informed Members of the Fun Day which had been hosted at Bangor Fire Station to mark 100 years of the Fire Service in Bangor. He also informed Members that in the evening he had attended a dinner hosted by the North Down Borough Council, along with the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mrs Dixon and Mrs Gilliland, to mark the occasion.

Authority Meeting – March

The Chairman referred to the March Meeting of the Authority and asked Members to consider the possibility of holding the Meeting on the morning of 22 March as he was required to attend a meeting of the Advisory Council that afternoon. He explained to Members that he was a member of the Council offering advice to the Strategic Investment Board and the Minister.

Members unanimously agreed that the Authority Meeting scheduled to take place on 22 March 2005 should commence at 10.30 am.

7 PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN AUTHORITY REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

Members noted a paper setting out the background to a proposal to establish a Standing Remuneration Committee as a Sub-Committee of the Fire Authority. Members also noted the terms of reference for the Committee as follows:

- ◆ To conduct an evaluation of the salaries of the four Principal Officers in comparison with similar positions in other Brigades, taking account of all other relevant factors;
- ◆ To deal with all issues relating to the salaries of Directors;
- ◆ Such other business as may be delegated to it by the Authority; and
- ◆ To make recommendations to the full Authority.

Mr Bradley highlighted that Standing Orders would require to be amended should the Authority decide to establish the Committee.

Mr Hughes informed the Meeting that he believed that the people at the top of the Organisation should receive the same increases as per the rest of the Organisation and there was, therefore, no requirement for such a Committee.

The Chairman highlighted that the Principal Officers' conditions were governed by the Gold Book.

The Chief Fire Officer, on behalf of the Principal Officers, declared an interest and stated that the Principal Officers should leave the Meeting.

At this point,
the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer,
Assistant Chief Fire Officers Craig and Wright, the Director of Human Resources,
Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs,
Director of Finance & Performance Management
and Corporate Communications Manager left the Meeting

Mr Bradley stated that the minimum salary was specified and it was for the individual Fire Authority to decide a salary. He further stated that the Authority had two options, ie, always pay the minimum salary or set-up a system of evaluation as per other Authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr Hatch stated that there was a need for a group to dispassionately look at the issue. He further stated that establishment of such a Committee would provide a mechanism for looking at the performance of the Principal Officers and Directors.

The Chairman pointed out that the Committee only had the power to make recommendations and would be required to share its reasoning with the Authority.

Following further discussion, the Authority, on the motion of Mr Beattie, seconded by Mrs Dixon, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve the establishment of a Standing Remuneration Committee with its terms of reference as previously listed”.

Mr Hughes stated that while he did not totally disagree with the spirit of the Committee, he wished to dissent from the establishment of the Committee in its present form.

At this point,
the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer,
Assistant Chief Fire Officers Craig and Wright, the Director of Human Resources,
Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs,
Director of Finance & Performance Management and
Corporate Communications Manager re-joined the Meeting

Following discussion regarding the composition of the Remuneration Committee, the Authority, on the motion of Mrs Gilliland, seconded by Mrs Dixon, unanimously –

Resolved: “that the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Authority, the Chairman of the Audit Committee and the Chairman of the Human Resources Committee be, and are hereby elected, Members of the Authority Remuneration Committee”.

During further discussion regarding the composition of the Committee, Members highlighted the need to ensure that composition of the Committee was balanced with respect to equality issues. The Director of Human Resources stated that she would advise the Chairman of any difficulties with respect to the composition of the Committee.

The Authority, on the motion of Mrs Gilliland, seconded by Mr Ross, unanimously –

Resolved: “that Mrs A McAleenan be and is hereby elected a Member of the Authority Remuneration Committee”.

8 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER’S REPORT

Members noted the Chief Fire Officer’s Report and the Chief Fire Officer gave Members a brief overview of his Report.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Brigade had been reasonably quiet in recent weeks but pointed out that road traffic collisions continued to cause concern. He highlighted that the Brigade had been able to make a significant investment into new extrication equipment and added that two new Rescue Pumps had become operational in Magherafelt and Lurgan.

The Chief Fire Officer and Officers answered Members’ queries in relation to other aspects of the information presented.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members of the issue of several new policies to ensure family friendly leave provisions. A copy of the report detailing the policies was circulated for the information of Members.

9 PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE BRIGADE TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

The Chief Fire Officer gave Members a brief overview of the proposal to change the name of the Brigade to the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service which would be in keeping with the Modernisation Agenda. He also informed Members that the Department had been approached and saw no obstacle to the new title.

The Authority, on the motion of Mr Hatch, seconded by Mr Bradley, unanimously –

Resolved: “to endorse the Chief Fire Officer’s proposal that the name of the Northern Ireland Fire Brigade be changed to the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with effect from 1 April 2005”.

10 FINANCIAL MATTERS

Payments and Receipts as Compared with Estimates

Members noted a statement showing Payments and Receipts as compared with Estimates for the period up to 31 January 2005.

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave Members a brief overview of the statement. Referring to the Revenue budget and the underspend in Training and Uniforms, he explained that this had been due to slippage on IPDS as there had been a longer lead-in time than anticipated. With respect to the underspend in Community Fire Safety, he informed Members that he had been assured that this would be on budget by year-end.

Referring to the Capital budget, the Director of Finance & Performance Management reminded that this had been fully reported to the Strategy, Planning & Resources Committee. He emphasised that in order to address the underspend, a number of projects had been brought forward. He also highlighted that the Armagh Business Case had been submitted to the Department.

In response to a question from Mr Hatch regarding the possibility of securing carry-over of funding, the Director of Finance & Performance Management explained that the possibility of year-end flexibility had changed due to the introduction of resource budgeting. He further explained that where there would be a contractual obligation to spend at the year-end, the Authority should be able to accrue expenditure for that project.

11 HUMAN RESOURCE MATTERS

Sickness Statistics

Members noted the Sickness Statistics for the month of January 2005 which had been circulated for information.

Mr Ross stated that the statistics were commendable and indicated that significant progress had been made.

The Director of Human Resources informed Members that there was very good effective and dedicated liaison between the Attendance Manager and senior members of the Brigade, the Trade Unions and also the Occupational Health Unit.

Mrs McAleenan emphasised the need for the good work to be acknowledged.

Request for Approval of Private Medical Treatment

Members were informed of a Wholetime Firefighter who had sustained a knee injury. Members noted that he had been attending the Brigade Senior Medical Adviser on a regular basis.

The Brigade Senior Medical Adviser had advised the Brigade that, while the Firefighter was not off duty on sick leave at the moment, his condition was steadily deteriorating and a delay in medical intervention could result in the Firefighter having to be put on sick leave and having to await an operation. Members noted that with the delay of up to two years for such an operation, there was a likelihood that the Firefighter might have to be retired from the Brigade due to ill-health.

The Authority, on the motion of Mr Molloy, seconded by Mrs Gilliland, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve Private Medical Treatment for a Firefighter at an estimated cost of £3,000”.

12 ROUTINE CORRESPONDENCE

Members noted the following routine correspondence:

- ◆ Letter from the Treasury Officer of Accounts at the Department of Finance & Personnel setting out some principles behind the appraisal process and the commitments of the Department of Finance & Personnel in relation to that process.

A copy of the letter was circulated to Members for information.

13 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

Members approved the undernoted documents for sealing:

Fire Authority for Northern Ireland with –

W J McConkey & Sons – Improvements and full Redecoration at Ballymena District Headquarters and Fire Station;

Hutton (M & E) Services Limited – Supply and installation of CHP System at Bangor Fire Station; and

Vanguard Fire & Rescue – Purchase of seven (7) High Performance, Heavy Duty Hydraulic Road Traffic Collision Kits.

14 MEETINGS OF THE AUTHORITY AND ITS COMMITTEES, ETC

Members noted the list of Meetings of the Authority and its Committees scheduled for the month of March 2005. Members were reminded that the Authority Meeting on 22 March 2005 would now be held at 10.30 am.

Members were informed that the Joint Negotiating Committee Meeting rescheduled to take place on 24 February 2005 had been postponed.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Craig referred to the presentation which he had given at the Authority Away Day and his reference to the Brigade's first pilot for the LIFE Scheme. He informed Members that a Graduation Ceremony for the LIFE Scheme would be held at 11.45 am on Friday, 4 March 2005 at Westland Fire Station.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Tender for Fire Appliances

Members were reminded that at the Meeting on 22 July 2003 they had been informed that the Brigade had tendered for the supply and delivery of emergency fire appliances. The Tender was for a three-year call-off contract for the period 1 June 2003 to 31 March 2006 and had been for the supply and delivery of the following vehicles:

Appliance Type	Estimated Quantity (per year)		
	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
Rescue Pump	2	2	2
Rescue Tender	1	-	-
Control Unit	1	2	1
Water Tanker	1	-	-
Water Tender type B	8	8	9
Combination WRL/Aerial	1	2	2

Members noted that the Authority had decided to award the Tender to the undernoted suppliers –

Rescue Pumps	Browns' Coachworks	Lowest to tender
Rescue Tender	Browns' Coachworks	Lowest to tender
Control Unit	Browns' Coachworks	Lowest to tender
Water Tanker	Crossland Tankers Limited	Lowest to tender
Water Tenders type B	Browns' Coachworks and Sidhean Teo	

The Tender for the Combination WRL/Aerial appliance had not been awarded.

Members also noted that the Tender for Water Tenders had been split between Sidhean Teo and Browns' Coachworks because although Sidhean Teo had been the lowest tender price, they had never before built fire appliances for the Brigade and Officers wanted the opportunity to explore the quality of their service. This arrangement had continued in Year 2 of the contract.

Members were informed that in accordance with the terms of the Tender, Browns' Coachworks and Sidhean Teo had confirmed their prices for Year 3 of the contract.

The Authority, on the motion of Mr Hatch, seconded by Mr Campbell, unanimously –

Resolved: “that the contract for the purchase of fire appliances in 2005/2006 be awarded to the lowest tenderer Browns’ Coachworks as follows:

Three Rescue Pumps at a cost of £175,140.00 each;
One Control Unit at a cost of £140,270.00; and
Eleven Water Tender Type ‘B’ at a cost of £138,450.00 each”.

Visits to Fire Stations by Local Politicians

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that he had received a request from an MLA to visit six Fire Stations in the MLA’s constituency, all of which were Retained Fire Stations. He outlined his concerns in relation to the request given that the visits would have to be accommodated during Retained training nights.

The Chief Fire Officer stated that he welcomed the interest and support of local politicians with regard to the work carried out by the Brigade but expressed concern that if the Authority agreed to the request from one local politician, then it would be obliged to agree to similar requests from all other local politicians. He pointed out that political parties had a standing invitation to visit Brigade Headquarters for a briefing.

Members noted the Chief Fire Officer’s proposal that the Authority adopts a policy of facilitating politicians to visit Brigade Headquarters and Area Headquarters only. The Authority is not able to facilitate visits to individual Fire Stations. On one-off occasions the local Station may invite local dignitaries to a presentation or similar subject to District and Area approval. These occasions should continue to be permitted.

Mr Molloy acknowledged the Chief Fire Officer’s concerns regarding the facilitation of visits during Retained training nights but stated that he felt it was important to facilitate such requests as they gave recognition to the work fulfilled by Fire Brigade personnel. He also made reference to the Authority’s IRMP and the move to Community Fire Stations. He stated that the matter should be approached with flexibility and indicated that he was opposed to the proposed policy.

During discussion, Mrs McAleenan proposed that consideration be given to the hosting of Station Open Days with invitations being extended to local politicians.

Following further discussion, the Authority, on the motion of Mrs Gilliland, seconded by Mr Hatch, unanimously –

Resolved: “that the Authority was only able to facilitate visits by local politicians to Brigade Headquarters and Area Headquarters and that they only visit Fire Stations by invitation, subject to further consideration being given to the proposal to host Station Open Days”.

Mr Molloy dissented from the Authority’s decision.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 3.30 PM

ADOPTED _____

CHAIRMAN AT MEETING OF
AUTHORITY

CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF
EXECUTIVE

DATE : 22 MARCH 2005