

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING

19 FEBRUARY 2007

3.20 PM

PRESENT: Mr W F Gillespie, Chair presiding
Mr C Lammey, Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive
Mr J Beattie
Mrs B Gilliland
Mr J Campbell
Mr J McKeever

APOLOGIES: Mr P Bradley
Mr K Harper
Mrs P Tally
Mr R Pollock

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Craig, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Development)
Mr T Wright, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Technical Development)
Dr D Michail, Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs
Mr T McGonigal, Director of Finance & Performance Management
Mr N Carson, DHSSPS
Mr C McMinn, DHSSPS
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary

1 Apologies

Apologies were noted.

2 Chair's Business

Members' Resignations

The Chair informed Members of the resignations of Mr A Hatch and Mr D McKay as they had been nominated as candidates in the forthcoming Assembly Elections.

World Police & Fire Games 2013

The Chair referred to the recent Press Release regarding the Belfast Bid to host the World Police & Fire Games in 2013 and asked the Chief Fire Officer for more information regarding the Bid.

The Chief Fire Officer outlined the background to Belfast being shortlisted against Innsbruck, Austria, in their bid to host the World Police & Fire Games in 2013. He informed Members that the Games were held every 2 years and were open to Police, Fire, Customs and Prison Service Officers from around the world.

He explained that the final decision would be announced before this year's Games get underway in Adelaide, Australia on 15 March. He stated that Dame Mary Peters was President of the Bid Committee and she would be leading a delegation made up of representatives from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service, The Prison Service, Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure, Belfast City Council and the Northern Ireland Events Company.

The Chief Fire Officer added that if successful in its Bid, hosting the Games would be a huge sporting event for Northern Ireland with approximately 25,000 people coming to compete and support the Games.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that funding was required to facilitate the final presentation in Adelaide and as the Belfast Bid was a joint bid, each of the Services and Agencies involved had been asked to make a pro rata contribution to the costs. He stated that he had written to the Department regarding the matter and read an extract from the Department's letter indicating that it would support NIFRS contributing £10,000 to the costs.

The Board, on the motion of Mr McKeever, seconded by Mr Beattie, unanimously –

Resolved: **“to approve the contribution of £10,000 towards the costs associated with the presentation of the Northern Ireland Bid to host the World Police & Fire Games in 2013”.**

3 Update on Progress on Business Cases

The Chair referred to the frustrating delays which NIFRS experienced in getting Business Cases through the Department over the past few years despite many representations made at various levels and despite a joint seminar with the Business Case Unit which was supposed to lead to a speedier turnaround. He stated that the delays had been mentioned at many of the Fire Authority's Meetings and NIFRS Board Meetings and informed Members that, in addition to the efforts of the Chief Fire Officer and his staff, he had constantly maintained some pressure on the Department on the Board's behalf. Members noted that the 3 major Cases currently outstanding were Cars and Vans, Replacement/Refurbishment of Fire Stations and new Training Centre.

At this point,
Mrs Gilliland entered the Meeting

Cars and Vans

The Chair gave Members a brief synopsis of the background and history to the Business Case for Cars and Vans, which had been an issue when he joined the Fire Authority in January 2003.

The Chair invited Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright to bring Members up-to-date on progress following a recent meeting with representatives of the Department.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright gave a presentation which gave Members a brief overview of the Business Case for Cars and Vans. He explained that it had been decided to take the Business Case forward in 3 strands and highlighted progress attained in relation to 2 aspects of the Business Case –

- Flexible Duty Officer Fleet – agreement reached establishing:
 - 1 96 frontline emergency response vehicles;
 - 2 High technical specification ensuring a vehicle fit for purpose;
 - 3 Balance between Health & Safety and value for money.

- Ancillary Support Fleet – Vans – agreement reached establishing:
 - 1 94 ancillary support vehicles;
 - 2 Large/small van specification satisfying Health & Safety requirements;
 - 3 Multi-role fleet satisfying value for money requirements.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright informed Members that the third strand of the Business Case was the Procurement Phase and outlined briefly how this Phase would be taken forward along with progress to date.

Mr McMinn outlined briefly the difficulties associated with the Business Case from the Department's view, especially in light of the PAC recommendations. He acknowledged the progress which had been made and the agreement reached mutually on Phases 1 and 2 of the Business Case.

The Chair welcomed the progress which had been made and expressed his appreciation to Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright, the Director of Finance & Performance Management and the Chief Fire Officer for all their work.

Replacement/Refurbishment of Fire Stations

The Chair informed the Meeting that it had been 5 years since the Prime Minister had announced an additional £200 million infrastructure funding for the Province and reminded Members that it had been determined that NIFRS would receive about £25 million of this funding to use for new and upgraded Fire Stations and for appliances. He highlighted that the first of this money was to be available to NIFRS in the year 2005/06 but that, to date, despite much effort at staff and Board level NIFRS had not yet found the pathway to that funding.

The Chair gave a brief overview of the background to the development of the Overarching Business Case (OBC1) which had been submitted to the Department in November 2005. Members noted that, to date, no approval had been received. He stated that, meanwhile, serious problems were arising at Fire Stations, particularly Retained Stations, where in many cases the existing location and facilities were no longer fit for purpose.

He informed Members that in response to his latest representation in December 2006, he was advised by the Department that yet another review of the process for approving Business Cases would be completed by the end of March. Meanwhile, he and the Chief Fire Officer had been invited to meet the Chief Executive of the Strategic Investment Board on 10 January. He invited the Chief Fire Officer to bring Members up-to-date.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the current position with respect to the Emergency Services Investment Programme. He explained that Outline Business Case Advisers were being engaged by the Department to work closely with NIFRS and NIAS and would also offer Project Support for both Services. He outlined briefly how the Outline Business Case would now be taken forward.

Mr McMinn acknowledged the significant work which had been progressed in recent weeks and gave a brief overview of how the Department had progressed the matter and how it would now be taken forward.

The Chief Fire Officer and Mr McMinn answered Members' questions on aspects of the information presented.

The Chair expressed his appreciation to all those involved for the work which had been achieved.

Training Centre

The Chair reminded Members that when he had taken up post in January 2003 the Training Centre issue had been described as one of urgency and importance. He gave Members a brief overview of the history surrounding the Training Centre and progress to date with respect to the latest Business Case for the Training Centre.

He reminded Members that it was not until November 2006 that the Board had been finally briefed on the Business Case which apparently identified a site near Portadown as the best option and Cookstown as second. He informed Members that the Business Case had been submitted to the Department in November 2006 and invited the Director of Finance & Performance Management to advise Members of the status of the Business Case and remind Members of the site options.

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave a presentation outlining briefly the criteria for the site search and the evaluation process which had resulted in more than one suitable location for the Training Centre. He explained that the differentiating factor between the options of Portadown and Cookstown had been the associated risk of the Cookstown option.

Mr Carson referred to the frustrations and issues associated with the Business Case process and explained that the Department was conducting a review of that process and would report back to the Board when that review was complete.

Referring to the 2 options for the location of the Training Centre, Mr Carson acknowledged the uncertainty associated with the Cookstown option. He informed Members of the outcome of a recent meeting with the Minister, Paul Goggins, at which the Northern Ireland Office had agreed in principle to a training facility at Cookstown for PSNI. He stated, therefore, that the Cookstown site was now a viable option for NIFRS.

Mr Carson explained that the Minister had indicated that Cookstown would be considered as a co-location opportunity for the Police, NIFRS and the Prison Service. He outlined the advantages of such an opportunity and how an Integrated Business Case would be taken forward.

In answer to a question from the Chair, Mr Carson confirmed that the progress already made on the current Business Case for NIFRS Training Centre would not be wasted as the agreement reached on accommodation schedules and other aspects would be accepted and observed at Cookstown.

The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged that NIFRS were being asked to support an integrated training facility at Cookstown and outlined his views regarding the proposal. He informed Members that he felt that co-location presented NIFRS with the best opportunity for a purpose-built training facility.

During discussion regarding the proposal, Mr Campbell acknowledged the logic for a shared facility but expressed reservations regarding possible security implications of being co-located with PSNI.

The Chief Fire Officer assured Members that careful consideration would be given to all aspects of the proposal.

Following further discussion, the Board, on the motion of Mr Campbell, seconded by Mr McKeever –

Resolved: **“to support the principle of co-locating the new Training Centre along with the Police and Prison Service at Cookstown, and agreed to proceed to an Integrated Business Case to explore that option in greater detail”.**

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 4.40 PM
