

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

26 FEBRUARY 2008

2.00 PM

PRESENT: Mr W F Gillespie, Chair presiding
Mr C Lammey, Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive
Mr J Beattie
Mr P Bradley
Mr J Campbell
Mr S Clarke
Mr K Harper
Mr A Hatch
Mrs B Gilliland
Mr R Pollock
Mrs P Tally

APOLOGIES: Mr J McKeever

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr L Jones, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Mr T Wright, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Technical Development)
Ms A Conley, Director of Human Resources
Dr D Michail, Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs
Mr T McGonigal, Director of Finance & Performance Management
Mrs T McCormac, Strategic Planning Manager
Miss G Bryce, Research Officer
Mr P O'Neill, Strategic Investment Board
Mr D Gavaghan, Strategic Investment Board
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary

1 Strategic Investment Board - Presentation

The Chair explained that the representatives from the Strategic Investment Board had been unavoidably detained. This item was, therefore, deferred until the SIB representatives joined the Meeting.

2 Apologies

Apologies were noted.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 January 2008, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mrs Gilliland, seconded by Mr Campbell.

Arising from the Minutes:

**Draft Investment Strategy 2008-2018 and
Draft Budget 2008-2011**

The Chair acknowledged the improvement in the Capital allocation for NIFRS but pointed out that the Revenue position remained unclear.

The Chief Fire Officer outlined the current position with respect to the Capital allocation explaining that formal notification was awaited. He stated that he was hopeful that at the next Meeting of the Board he would be in a position to inform Members of the Capital allocation for NIFRS and how it would be allocated.

With respect to Revenue funding, Members noted that the Chief Fire Officer and Director of Finance & Performance Management were working with the Department regarding the matter.

At this point,
Mr Clarke entered the Meeting

4 Service Support Committee Meeting

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Service Support Committee held on 31 January 2008.

Arising out of the Minutes:

Equality & Diversity Forum

The Members noted that the Service Support Committee at its Meeting on 31 January 2008 had agreed that the Proposal Paper on a new Equality & Diversity Forum be revisited and presented to the Board.

Members noted the Proposal Paper, along with a copy of Mr Bradley's discussion paper relating to the proposed Equality & Diversity Forum.

Mr Bradley outlined his concerns with respect to the purpose of the Forum, the membership composition and the meetings schedule and agenda. He acknowledged that his comments regarding the terms of reference of the Forum had been taken on board in the revised Paper.

Referring to the purpose of the Forum, the Chair assured Mr Bradley that the role of the Equality & Diversity Forum would be advisory and read an extract from the constitution which stated "*the Forum will act as an advisory group to the NIFRS Board*".

Mr Bradley welcomed same and suggested that the wording relating to the purpose of the Forum be amended to reflect that role.

At this point,
Mrs McCormac, Mr O'Neill and Mr Gavaghan
entered the Meeting

The Director of Human Resources referred to Mr Bradley's concerns regarding the composition of the Forum and explained that the Forum was a Working Group and that the role of the Chair of that Forum was to ensure that any recommendations made by the Forum were broadly representative of all interests of the Organisation. She added that the Forum's role was also to ensure that equality was properly implemented.

At this point
Mr Hatch entered the Meeting

With respect to Mr Bradley's concerns regarding the Agenda, the Chief Fire Officer highlighted that it was the norm for the Committee Chair to consult with staff regarding the business for Meetings. Mr Bradley pointed out that that was not his concern. He agreed that it was indeed good and routine practice to do so. The proposed terms of reference for the Equality Forum require more than consultation – the Agenda has to be agreed by the Forum Chair and the Equality Manager – a departure from the position that pertains in relation to the various Committees of the Board.

Following further discussion, during which Officers answered Members' questions regarding aspects of the information presented, the Board, on the motion of Mr Harper, seconded by Mrs Tally, unanimously –

Resolved: **“to approve the Equality & Diversity Forum Proposal Paper subject to a minor amendment”.**

In response to a question from Mr Campbell, the Chair explained that the Board would select a Member as Forum Chair. He stated that Members might want to discuss the matter informally at the Board Information Day on 14 March 2008.

1 **Strategic Investment Board – Presentation**

The Chair welcomed Mr Pat O'Neill and Mr David Gavaghan, Strategic Investment Board, to the Meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

The Chair outlined the background to Members' frustrations with respect to the timeframes associated with progressing Business Cases particularly the Training Centre. He referred to the work which had been carried out since July 2002 relating to the Training Centre which had been superseded by pressure for NIFRS to join with PSNI at Cookstown. He stated that he hoped today to have some indication as to whether the end-game can be predicted.

Regarding the replacement or refurbishing of 26 of NIFRS Stations, the Chair explained that in 2004 NIFRS were advised that the pathway to progress and funding was to prepare an Overarching Business Case for the 26. He stated that OBC1 had been submitted to the Department in November 2005 and explained that for the past 18 months staff had been working with Consultants, the Department and SIB updating the OBC. He stated that he hoped Members today would learn whether NIFRS were near the end of the trail especially when at last some funding has been earmarked to enable NIFRS to make a start on this urgent programme.

Mr Gavaghan and Mr O'Neill gave a presentation relating to the Emergency Services Infrastructure Project.

Mr Gavaghan outlined the background to the Investment Strategy 2008-2018 and informed Members that it was the role of the Strategic Investment Board to deliver that Strategy.

Mr O'Neill informed Members of progress to date on SIB's current work with NIFRS in taking forward the Infrastructure project. In response to a request from the Chair, Mr O'Neill also informed Members of the current position with respect to the Training College.

Mr O'Neill and Mr Gavaghan answered Members' questions regarding aspects of the information presented. Members also reiterated their frustrations with the ongoing timeframe in respect of NIFRS gaining access to the funding to commence the replacement/refurbishment programme.

The Chair thanked Mr O'Neill and Mr Gavaghan for their presentation and their attendance at the Meeting.

At this point,
Mrs McCormac, Messrs O'Neill, Gavaghan and Clarke
left the Meeting

5 Service Delivery Committee Meeting

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Service Delivery Committee held on 11 February 2008.

Mr Harper, Chair of the Service Delivery Committee, referred to the presentation which both the Service Delivery and Service Support Committees had received from Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright. He explained that the Committee had felt that where presentations were solely for the information of Members it may be more appropriate for such presentations to be given to the full Board.

The Chair acknowledged the Committee's comments.

Arising out of the Minutes:

IRMP 2008/09

Members were informed that the public consultation for the IRMP 2008/09 closed on 31 January 2008 and noted the Summary of the Draft IRMP 2008/09 Consultation Exercise and IRMP Action Plan 2008/09.

Mr Harper explained that the consultation responses had been considered by the Service Delivery Committee on 11 February 2008 and the Committee recommended the IRMP 2008-09 to the Board for approval.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Harper, seconded by Mr Pollock, unanimously –

Resolved: **“to approve the IRMP Action Plan 2008/09”.**

At this point,
Miss Bryce left the Meeting

6 National Joint Council Matters

Report on Meetings

The Chair informed the Meeting that the Lead Members of the National Joint Council had met with RFU representatives on 30 January 2008. He gave Members a brief account of the business discussed which had included the 2008 pay settlement and pensions.

He informed Members that he had also attended a meeting of the Fire Forum on 22 February and gave Members a brief overview of the key items of business.

Members noted that the next NJC Meeting would be held on 13 March 2008.

The Chair highlighted that the NJC Meeting scheduled to take place on 10 June 2008 was being held in Belfast. He explained that a reception would be held at the FRS Training Centre on 9 June and Board Members would have an opportunity to meet Members of both Sides of the NJC.

7 Chair's Business

The Chair gave Members an overview of his activities since the last Board Meeting.

With respect to visits to Fire Stations, the Chair explained that due to the intensive training programme currently in place, the Chief Fire Officer had asked that Members refrain from visits until the end of March. He stated that specific arrangements will then be made for Members to visit Stations.

8 Chief Fire Officer's Report

The Chief Fire Officer referred to Item 3 of his Report, Capital Development Projects, and informed Members that NIFRS had been allocated £8.1 million in 2008/09, £9.1 million for 2009/10 and £29.9 million for 2010/11 for the upgrading of Fire Stations and the procurement of new fleet and equipment. Members noted that £20 million of this allocation has been ring-fenced for the new Integrated Training facility at Cookstown in the year 2010/11.

He explained that he was working with the Principal Officers and Directors to determine priority needs for the allocation of capital resources. In relation to buildings, discussions were based on a number of factors including priority, funding and availability of land at a suitable location for emergency response.

The Chief Fire Officer stated that he anticipated that available resources would be directed first towards the construction of Stations that are shown as a priority for replacement or requiring significant refurbishment in the Business Case and where NIFRS already owns the land for the development.

Members noted the Stations for which resources would be targeted initially as land availability at these Stations was not a constraint.

The Chief Fire Officer answered Members' questions on aspects relating to capital development projects.

Operational Activities

Members noted details of operational activities during the month of January 2008. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave Members a brief overview of the information presented.

Management Accounts

The Director of Finance & Performance Management outlined to Members the financial position for the period ending 31 January 2008.

The Officers answered Members' questions regarding the Management Accounts.

9 Relevant Correspondence

There was no relevant correspondence.

10 Sealing of Documents

Members approved the undernoted documents for Sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Saintfield Window Systems – Window Replacements at Antrim, Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Knock Fire Stations;

Masons Communications Limited – Consultancy Services – Mobile Data Project;

Donnelly Fleet – 3 Renault Kangoo, 2 Renault Trafic and 2 Renault Master Vans;

Lisburn Astral Limited – Window Replacements at Springfield Fire Station; and

Podium 4 Sport – For the supply of Elevating Treadmills.

11 Meetings of the Board and its Committees

Members noted a list of Meetings, etc, scheduled for the month of March 2008.

12 Remuneration Committee - Verbal Report and Recommendations

The Chief Fire Officer declared an interest on behalf of himself and other Principal Officers. The Principal Officers and Directors left the Meeting.

The Chairman delivered a presentation which highlighted that NIFRS Principal Officers' salaries had fallen well behind their colleagues in GB and that within the Service their increases over the past 5 years were considerably less than those awarded to all other ranks. All Board Members present were in agreement that an independent Consultant's Report be obtained to recommend what the appropriate salaries of these 4 posts should be.

As a holding measure there was a recommendation from the Remuneration Committee that one-off non pensionable payments under Article 10(b) of The Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 be made. This amounted to 4% of existing salaries. Mr Harper referred to a letter he had written to Members of the Remuneration Committee, outlining his concerns about the proposed one-off payments and addressed the Meeting accordingly, answering a number of Members' questions.

After discussion, it was proposed by Mrs Gilliland and seconded by Mrs Tally that this recommendation be accepted. A vote was taken resulting in 6 Members voting in favour, 2 against and one abstention. Mr Harper asked to be recorded as against the proposal.

The motion was carried.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 5.15 PM
