

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING

6 JANUARY 2010

4.00 PM

PRESENT: Mr W F Gillespie, Chair presiding
Mr C Lammey, Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive
Mr P Bradley
Mr K Harper
Mr R Pollock
Mrs P Tally

APOLOGIES: Mr J Campbell
Mrs B Gilliland

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms A Conley, Director of Human Resources
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Dr A McCormick, Permanent Secretary, DHSSPS
Mrs H Robinson, DHSSPS

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and welcomed Dr A McCormick, Permanent Secretary, DHSSPS, to the Meeting.

Area Commander C Kerr Awarded QFSM

The Chair informed Members that Area Commander Chris Kerr had been awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal (QFSM) for distinguished service in the New Year's Honours List. On behalf of the NIFRS Board, the Chair extended congratulations to Area Commander Kerr on this well deserved award.

Northern Ireland Quality Awards

The Chair informed Members that NIFRS had achieved a Gold Award in the Northern Ireland Quality Awards Steps to Excellence process.

The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members of the background to NIFRS's submission to the Northern Ireland Quality Awards Steps to Excellence Process in September 2009, which was followed by an assessment conducted by external assessors in November 2009.

He explained that, just before Christmas, NIFRS had been advised of the outcome of its submission. He stated that the achievement of the Gold Award in the Steps to Excellence process was an excellent achievement especially as it was NIFRS's first application.

The Chief Fire Officer added that although the Gold Award confirmed that NIFRS are doing a lot of things very well, it also reflects on the areas needing improvement. He stated that it was important that NIFRS continues to improve. He also advised Members of the next stage of the process.

The Chair welcomed the achievement and, on behalf of the Members, extended congratulations to all concerned.

Appointment of Chief Fire & Rescue Officer

The Chair gave the Meeting a brief update on progress following the Chief Fire Officer's notice of retirement accepted by the Board at its November Meeting. He reminded Members that at a Special Meeting on 11 December 2009, the Board had considered the timetable and relevant documentation pertaining to the appointment of a Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and had approved same subject to minor amendments.

The Chair explained that, as a result of a request from the Deputy Secretary, DHSSPS, 23 December 2009 to delay the appointment process for one week, it had been necessary to convene today's Special Meeting in order to consult and prepare a revised timetable. He pointed out that he had drawn the Deputy Secretary's attention to the impact of delaying the process.

He informed Members that the Director of Human Resources had prepared a revised timetable and he appealed to all to make the necessary changes to their diaries in order to accommodate the dates indicated in the timetable. He highlighted that the key changes in dates were 19 February 2010 for training and shortlisting and 23 March 2010 for the interviews.

A copy of the revised timetable was circulated for the consideration of the Meeting. The Director of Human Resources explained that the dates of 19 February and 23 March had been subject to confirmation of availability from Sir K Knight (Assessor) and NIFRS Legal Team. She advised Members that Sir K Knight and the Legal Team had confirmed their availability on those dates.

Mr Bradley explained that he had rearranged a previous engagement in order to accommodate the original dates; as a result he was now not available on 19 February 2010.

Mr Harper, Mr Pollock and Mrs Tally confirmed their availability for 19 February and 23 March 2010. Dr McCormick stated that he would reschedule a meeting in order to ensure his availability.

In light of Members' availability, it was subsequently agreed that the Panel consist of Mr W Gillespie, Chair, Mr K Harper, Mr R Pollock and Mrs P Tally. As Mr Campbell and Mrs Gilliland were not able to attend the Special Meeting, the fourth Member of the Panel would be confirmed in due course.

The Director of Human Resources pointed out the need to be cognisant of the composition of the Panel.

The Chair referred to the requirement for the Board to seek approval for the appointment of the new Chief Fire & Rescue Officer from the Department and Dr McCormick confirmed that he would be acting as the Department's representative in this respect at the end of the process.

Discussion took place regarding various aspects of the process for the appointment of a Chief Fire & Rescue Officer. Members expressed concern regarding the issue of the salary for the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer in comparison with other UK Fire & Rescue Services. Dr McCormick acknowledged Members' comments and outlined the Department's position in relation to the matter.

With respect to the interview process, the Meeting noted that the Director of Human Resources would be working closely with Sir K Knight regarding the format for the interviews. The Chair suggested the need for the interviews to be held at a venue outside of NIFRS. Members agreed, in principle, to the interviews being held at an alternative venue. It was also agreed that the Director of Human Resources would explore alternative venues and report back at the training session on 19 February 2010.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Chief Fire Officer informed the Meeting that he would retire on 26 February 2010. The Members were content with this and sought clarification regarding the arrangements for filling the temporary vacancy.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Deputy Chief Fire Officer would automatically act-up into the role of Chief Fire & Rescue Officer. He further explained that he would propose that the more senior of the 2 Assistant Chief Fire Officers would then act-up to the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

A detailed discussion took place with regard to the acting-up arrangements pertaining to the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer. Dr McCormick expressed concern regarding the arrangements and stated that he felt a merit approach was more appropriate.

The Director of Human Resources was asked to prepare a process for the appointment of temporary Principal Officers based on the merit principle to be considered by the Board.

The Chair referred to the training scheduled to take place on 19 February 2010 and reiterated that it would be useful for all Board Members to attend the Panel training.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 5.05 PM
