

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

26 JANUARY 2010

2.00 PM

PRESENT: Mr W F Gillespie, Chair presiding
Mr C Lammey, Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive
Mr P Bradley
Mr J Campbell
Mrs B Gilliland
Mr R Pollock
Mrs P Tally

APOLOGIES: Mr K Harper

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
Mr T McGonigal, Director of Finance & Performance Management
Dr D Michail, Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs
Mrs U McCambridge, Corporate Communications Officer
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Mrs H Robinson, DHSSPS

1 Apologies

Apologies were noted.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 November 2009, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Campbell, seconded by Mrs Gilliland.

Arising out of the Minutes:

Review of Action Plan

In response to a question from the Chair, the Director of Human Resources informed Members that the Tender for the provision of Job Evaluations should be issued in February.

Equality & Diversity Forum

The Chair informed Members that the Service Support Committee had been briefed with respect to the business discussed at the Forum Meeting held in December.

Mr Bradley, Chair of the Equality & Diversity Forum, gave Members a brief synopsis of the key items of business discussed, particularly in relation to the national targets in relation to female Firefighters, ethnic minorities, etc.

The Director of Human Resources referred to the national targets for female Firefighters and updated Members on the current position with respect to NIFRS. She explained that the targets had been considered and that the proposed target for NIFRS is 10% of each operational intake will be female by 2015. She highlighted that the Service Support Committee had endorsed this proposal and would be recommending approval to the Board.

At this point,
Mrs Tally entered the Meeting

Legal Advice on Repayment

At this point,
the Director of Finance & Performance Management left the Meeting

The Chair reminded Members that at the November Board Meeting he had advised that the Department had confirmed that the independent Job Evaluations of senior posts would be carried out retrospectively. He informed Members that the Department were now not carrying out retrospective evaluations.

Members noted that the Remuneration Committee would be convening a Meeting at the conclusion of the Board Meeting to discuss the matter.

The Chair stated that he did report that the Department were carrying out retrospective evaluations and reiterated that this was not now the case.

Grievance Appeal

The Chair explained to Members that, in accordance with normal practice, a date for a Grievance Hearing had been agreed with the Union Representative and subsequent to the documentation being forwarded the Union Representative indicated that he was no longer available. Due process was followed again and the hearing was rescheduled to 26 February 2010. Once again, following the issue of the documentation, the Union Representative indicated that he was not now available.

In accordance with advice received from the Department and the Labour Relations Agency, the Chair outlined options for a way forward:

- Proceed with the Grievance on the agreed date;
- If Members are agreeable to setting a third date, agree a suitable date in conjunction with the Union Representative or alternatively the Panel Members could set a date for a Hearing.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a suitable date for the Hearing be sought in conjunction with the Union Representative and that it be made clear that this date will not be changed.

Notice of Intention to Retire

Members noted that the Chief Fire Officer would retire on 26 February 2010.

At this point,
the Director of Finance & Performance Management
re-joined the Meeting

3 Minutes of Special Meeting – 11 December 2009

The Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 11 December 2009, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mrs Tally, seconded by Mr Pollock.

The Chair stated that the Meeting had approved the process for the recruitment of a new Chief Fire Officer but that events had been overtaken by a further Special Meeting.

4 Minutes of Special Meeting – 6 January 2010

The Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 6 January 2010, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Pollock, seconded by Mrs Tally .

Arising out of the Minutes:

Northern Ireland Quality Awards

The Chair informed Members that NIFRS would receive its Gold Award at the Northern Ireland Quality Awards Ceremony to be held on 28 January 2010. He explained that there was a place should a Member of the Board wish to attend.

Appointment of Chief Fire & Rescue Officer

The Chair reminded Members that Dr McCormick had been in attendance at the Special Board Meeting and a revised timetable for the recruitment of a Chief Fire & Rescue Officer had been agreed. He referred to the discussion which had taken place with respect to the acting-up arrangements and asked anyone with an interest to leave the Meeting.

At this point,
the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright
left the Meeting

The Chair reminded Members that, with respect to the acting-up arrangements for the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer, the traditional method of acting-up in place throughout NIFRS and which applies up to the role of Area Commander had been discussed and also the view that acting-up/temporary promotion should be subject to the merit principle. Subsequently the Director of Human Resources had been asked to prepare a process for the appointment of Acting Principal Officers based on the merit principle for consideration by the Board.

The Chief Fire Officer advised the Meeting that the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer's post had been advertised the previous week and the process was moving forward in accordance with the timetable.

With respect to the issue of Acting Principal Officers, the Chief Fire Officer circulated a draft Establishment Instruction he had prepared with the Director of Human Resources setting out the proposed process for appointing Acting Principal Officers for the consideration of Members. The Director of Human Resources highlighted that the Department's comments had been sought on the paper. She stated that the Department were content with same.

Following a full discussion, the Board approved the proposed process and agreed that the Panel for the appointment of temporary Principal Officers would consist of Mr Bradley, Mr Campbell and Mrs Gilliland.

It was further agreed that the Establishment Instruction be issued the next day and the Panel would meet on 11 February 2010.

The Chair reminded Members that recruitment and selection training would be held on 19 February 2010.

Members noted that the Panel for the appointment of the new Chief Fire & Rescue Officer would be as follows:

Mr W Gillespie (Chair);
Mrs B Gilliland;
Mr K Harper;
Mr R Pollock;
Mrs P Tally; and
Dr A McCormick.

At this point,
the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright
re-joined the Meeting

5 Service Support Committee Meeting

Members noted that a Meeting of the Service Support Committee had been held that morning. Mrs Gilliland, Chair of the Service Support Committee, gave a verbal report on the business discussed.

In particular she highlighted that the Committee had noted and received presentations on the current position with respect to the following Business Cases –

- Cars & Vans;
- Catering;
- Consultancy Support for Command & Control;
- Desertcreat Training College;
- Refurbishment of Dromore (Tyrone) Fire Station;
- New Fire Station in Ballycastle;
- Equipment;
- Fleet;
- New Fire Station in Omagh;
- One-Stop-Shop Project;
- Reinstatement of Rathfriland Fire Station.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright explained that the Committee were content with progress in respect of Cars & Vans; GD92 (Mobilising and Pager Network); Command & Control Replacement (Consultancy); One Stop Shop; OBC 2 elements relating to Information & Communication Technology and OBC 2 Red Fleet.

The Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs explained that he had given an overview of the current position strategic Business Cases pertaining to OBC 2 and NIFRS Capital Infrastructure Programme. He highlighted progress as follows:

- Fleet Business Case – working draft submitted July 2009;
- Equipment Business Case – working draft submitted June 2009;
- Omagh Business Case – working draft submitted December 2009;
- Ballycastle Business Case – working draft submitted December 2009;
- Dungiven, Fintona, Newtownstewart and Cushendall – work ongoing.

The Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs also advised Members of the current position in relation to the Business Case for the provision of Catering Service.

Mrs Gilliland stated that the Service Support Committee were recommending the Board approve the Business Cases.

The Board, on the motion of Mrs Gilliland, seconded by Mr Campbell, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve the Business Cases as previously listed”.

Mrs Gilliland invited Mr Bradley, Chair of the Equality & Diversity Forum, to update Members on matters from the Forum.

Mr Bradley referred to the brief synopsis which he had given Members earlier in the Meeting and drew Members’ attention to the matter of the national targets in relation to female Firefighters, ethnic minorities, etc. He stated that the Service Support Committee recommended that the Board approve the proposed target for NIFRS of 10% of each operational intake will be female by 2015.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Bradley, seconded by Mrs Tally, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve the target of 10% of each NIFRS operational intake will be female by 2015”.

6 National Joint Council Matters

Report on Meetings

The Chair informed Members he had attended Meetings on 15 December 2009 and highlighted that the main business discussed had been the 2010 pay increase. He explained to Members that the development of a formula for settling the Retained Pensions issue was progressing and that some changes to Role Maps were under consideration.

The Chair also informed Members of a meeting which he had attended at the Local Government Association along with the Scottish and Welsh Chairs regarding concerns in relation to the views being expressed regarding the constitution of the NJC by the Chair of Employers’ Side. He explained that they had received assurances that whilst a country could decide to leave the NJC it was not open for England to eject any of the others.

7 **Chair's Business**

The Chair gave the Meeting a brief overview of his activities since the last Board Meeting.

Recent Fires in Londonderry

Mr Bradley informed Members that the Environment Agency had met with Derry City Council in relation to the recent major fires in Londonderry. He highlighted that NIFRS had been highly commended as had Managers of neighbouring factories. He advised Members of concerns which had been raised in relation to environmental issues, proximity to the Airport, possible loss of jobs and deficiencies in Legislation.

Mr Bradley stated that he also had concerns that if NIFRS had had to attend another major incident resources would have been severely stretched.

The Chief Fire Officer circulated reports, for the information of Members, on the Campsie Tyre Fire and the Pennyburn Tyre Fire prepared by the Area Commander, Western Area Command. He gave Members a brief outline of the movements of appliances, etc, required for the incidents and assured Members that arrangements were in place should NIFRS need support.

Referring to the concerns raised by Derry City Council in relation to Legislation, the Chief Fire Officer stated that if necessary NIFRS would support a change in legislation and suggested that the Chief Executive of Derry City Council write to NIFRS regarding same.

The Officers answered Members' questions regarding the information presented.

Mr Pollock highlighted that Fire Emergency Support Units had also been in attendance at the incidents. The Chair acknowledged the excellent support provided by the Red Cross at such incidents.

Staffing Levels

The Chair outlined the background to an issue which had been raised in relation to NIFRS staffing levels as a result of concerns raised by the Director of Finance & Performance Management. He stated that he had received a briefing from the Chief Fire Officer which indicated that staffing numbers had been notified to the Department and also approved by the Board within the annual Budget. He also advised Members that he had received a letter from the Deputy Secretary (DHSSPS) in response to a communication from the Director of Finance & Performance Management and had attended a meeting at the Department on 19 January 2010 pertaining to governance issues.

The Chief Fire Officer explained to Members that staffing levels were set in the annual Budget paper presented to the Board in April following receipt of the Department's budget allocation letter. He emphasised that the Budget paper highlighted the numbers of Wholetime and Retained staff for the current financial year and that the Board had approved the Budget paper.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members of discussions which had taken place with the Department in relation to staffing levels and that it was still the intention to bring forward proposals to the Board once there was clarity on NIFRS budget.

Referring to the governance issue, the Chair explained that, within the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum, there was a requirement for the NIFRS Board to seek approval from the Department for any increase in staffing levels. He stated that whilst technically this had not happened formally, the figures had been provided in various documents provided to the Department.

During further discussion, the Chair reiterated that the Department were concerned that there had been a breach of the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum although figures had been available and known to the Department through various documents. He stated that he was still awaiting the final decision in respect of the matter.

8 Chief Fire Officer's Report

The Chief Fire Officer circulated the NIFRS Board Monthly News Brief, January 2010, for the information of Members.

Operational Activities

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave Members an overview of operational activities and incidents of note for the months of November and December.

Management Accounts

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave the Meeting a detailed overview of the revenue and capital positions for the period ending 31 December 2009.

The Officers answered Members' questions regarding aspects of the information presented.

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 –

Podium 4 Sport Limited – Fitness Equipment (Items 1 & 2);

Britannia Electrical Services – Appliance Room Door Replacement;

Emergency Medical Supplies – First Aid at Work Refresher Training (01.01.10 to 31.12.11);

David F Smyth – Renewal of Lease – Office Accommodation, 30 Fairhill Road, Cookstown.

11 Meetings of the Board and its Committees

Members noted a list of Meetings, etc, of the Board and its Committees for the month of February.

LIFE Schemes

Mrs Gilliland referred to concerns which had been raised within her Council area in relation to the reduction in the number of LIFE Scheme Courses to be provided. She stated that she felt that the Community and NIFRS had benefited from the Schemes and sought an update on the current position.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that, given the current financial climate, he had suggested to the Area Commanders that they hold 3, maximum of 4, courses during the next financial year. He stated that he had urged caution until NIFRS was more aware of its budget for next year. He added that he also had concerns in relation to the availability of Community Development staff in light of the imminent implementation of the new Fire Safety Legislation.

In response to Members' questions, the Chief Fire Officer stated that he would ask Assistant Chief Fire Officer Craig to prepare a report for presentation at the next Meeting setting the costs, benefits and the effectiveness of the LIFE Schemes and their contribution to NIFRS.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 4.30 PM
