

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING

10 MARCH 2017

9.30 AM

PRESENT: Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding
Mr G Thompson, Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
Mr C Enright
Mr K Henning
Mr R Irvine
Mr P Martin
Mr G Smyth

APOLGOIES: Mr J Barbour

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Graham, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operational Support)
Mr A Walmsley, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Protection)
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Finance
Ms P Wylie, Head of Corporate Communications
Ms D Reynolds, Interim Head of Planning, Performance & Governance
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary

Item 1: Apologies

There were no apologies.

Item 2: Conflicts of Interest

The Chairperson enquired as to whether any Members of the Board wished to declare any potential conflicts of interest with any of the business items on the Agenda. Members confirmed that there were no apparent conflicts of interest.

Item 3: 2017/18 Business Plan and Corporate Performance Indicators

Members noted the draft Business Plan for 2017/18 and the revised Corporate Performance Indicators which had been developed in line with Departmental requirements.

The Chairperson sought Members' comments.

The Director of Finance explained that the Business Plan and budget proposals would normally be considered in tandem, however, as NIFRS was not aware of its budget allocation as yet only the Business Plan had been presented. She further explained that NIFRS' budget allocation may have an impact on the Business Plan and it may, therefore, be necessary to revisit the 2017/18 Business Plan.

At this point,
Mr Enright joined the Meeting

Mr Irvine expressed concern regarding NIFRS not having received notice of its budget. He acknowledged that NIFRS has a plan in place but explained the need for NIFRS to have a definitive steer from DoH regarding its budget. He proposed that NIFRS write and seek a definitive answer regarding the budget to enable the organisation to plan for the year.

During further discussion, the Director of Finance referred to NIFRS budget planning scenarios and informed Members that DoH was seeking further information regarding same. She noted that discussions were ongoing and that a meeting with DoH officials was scheduled for 21 March.

The Chairperson noted that she felt Mr Irvine's proposal was the appropriate way forward. Members agreed.

The Director of Finance noted Members' comments that the Business Plan covering letter should make reference to the Board's concern that NIFRS has no indication of its budget allocation and that clarification be requested with regard to the budget position and noting that NIFRS may need to revisit the 2017/18 Business Plan when its budget allocation is known.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Ms McKinney, unanimously agreed to approve, in principle, the 2017/18 Business Plan and revised Corporate Performance Indicators for submission to DoH.

Item 4: Revised Scheme of Delegation

Members noted the revised Scheme of Delegation.

The Interim Head of Planning, Performance & Governance explained that following approval of a draft Scheme of Delegation in November, DoH, on review, have made a small number of amendments. She gave Members an overview of the minor changes.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously agreed to approve the revised Scheme of Delegation subject to a minor amendment.

Item 5: Resources Committee

Members were informed that a Meeting of the Resources Committee had been held on 23 February 2017 and that the Minutes of the Meeting will be presented to the Board for noting at its Board Meeting in April.

Mr Henning, Chairperson of the Resources Committee, noted the recommendation relating to a managed service arrangement with BSO and that the Committee had been fully briefed by the Director of Finance.

The Director of Finance outlined briefly the background to the managed service arrangement with BSO for IT services and gave an overview of the current position including an update on the Pensions position.

Ms McKinney proposed that the Committee's recommendation, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Martin.

Resources Committee Recommendation

- **Approval to proceed with the implementation of a managed service arrangement with BSO for IT services, previously agreed by the Board with the resultant transfer of 7 IT posts to BSO.**

Additional Item of Business

Key Lessons Learned from the NIAO Report and PAC Hearing into the Northern Ireland Events Company

The Chairperson informed Members that she and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer had completed an initial piece of work with regard to the above and circulated a presentation for the information of Members. She explained that, going forward, the Board will consider this matter in more detail.

At this point,
the Director of Finance left the Meeting

The Chairperson outlined the background to the matter and gave an overview of her initial observations with regards to the NIFRS Board's performance against the indicators within the report and noting the key lessons highlighted within the report. She stated that she was content the Board was compliant across all areas and that she and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer were content that the matter had been appropriately raised and addressed.

The Interim Head of Planning, Performance & Governance informed Members that the Committees' Terms of Reference were under review and explained that Members' information needs would be considered as part of that process.

The Chairperson referred to the recent Peer Review follow-up and noted the positive feedback received from Chief Fire Officer Etheridge.

With regard to the current number of Members on the Board, the Chairperson noted that the Public Appointments Unit (PAU) will be progressing the filling of the vacancies on the Board. It was suggested that the skills set required for new Board Members was indicated to PAU by the Chairperson. **Members agreed.**

The Chairperson referred to her attendance at Committee Meetings and advised Members that, in line with best practice, going forward she would not be attending Committee Meetings.

The Officers left and the Meeting adjourned at 10.10 am

The Meeting reconvened at 10.15 am in Closed Session
the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and ACFO Graham re-joined the Meeting

Item 6: Correspondence from Minister

Members noted a Briefing Paper providing an update following receipt of a letter from Health Minister Michelle O'Neill on 2 March 2017 which included a report and recommendations from the Department of Health (DoH).

The Chairperson noted that Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham had been appointed as the Lead Officer and also noted that DoH will be working with NIFRS to progress same.

The Chairperson invited Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham to brief Members on progress.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham referred to the Briefing Paper and gave Members an overview of the information presented. He explained that the Corporate Management Team would consider the recommendations contained within the report from DoH and subsequently provide the Board with any relevant information to inform their response to same.

The Chairperson updated Members with respect to her actions following receipt of the letter.

During discussion, the Officers noted Members' comments with regard to the matter.

The Chairperson suggested that the matter be considered in further detail by the Board at a Special Meeting, to be held in closed session, on 11 April. She asked that the Corporate Management Team consider Members' comments and provide a full briefing to the Board to enable a decision to be taken. **Members agreed to this.**

Following further discussion, the Chairperson suggested that a letter of acknowledgment to Mrs McCloskey be drafted and circulated to Members in the first instance. **This was agreed.**

The Chairperson informed Members that the April Board Meeting would be Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford's last Meeting with the Board before his retirement. She advised Members that a presentation and lunch would be held to mark Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford's retirement.

The Chairperson thanked the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham for their attendance.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 11.05 AM
