

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

19 APRIL 2011

2.00 PM

- PRESENT: Dr J McKee, Chair presiding
Mr P Craig, Chief Fire Officer
Mr J Barbour
Cllr M Carr
Mr A Hanna
Ald A Hatch
Mr C Mack
Ald Mrs G Rice
- APOLOGIES: Cllr D Barbour
Mrs S Grant
Mr M Kerr
Mrs P Tally
- IN ATTENDANCE: Mr C Kerr, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Mr E Doyle, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
(Technical Development)
Mr D Ashford, Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer
(Safety Services)
Mr T McGonigal, Director of Finance & Performance
Management
Dr D Michail, Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs
Mrs H Ellis, Senior Human Resources Manager
Mrs C McNally, Corporate Communications Manager
Mr R Turley, Estates Manager
Mrs A Davidson, Equality Manager
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Mr D Jordan, DHSSPS

The Chairman referred Members to the Self-Assessment Forms which had been circulated and asked that completed Forms be forwarded to him by the May Board Meeting.

1 Apologies

Apologies were noted.

2 Declaration of Interests

The Chair sought clarification as to whether any Members of the Board wished to declare any potential conflict of interest with any of the Business Items on the Agenda. Members confirmed that there were no conflicts of interest.

At this point, the Board, given the subject matter of 2 Items of Business to be discussed, deemed the Meeting to be in Closed Session.

The Chairman declared the Meeting in Open Session. He welcomed Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer D Ashford to the Meeting.

3 Minutes – 15 March 2011

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 March 2011, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Hanna, seconded by Mrs Rice.

Arising out of the Minutes:

Audit Commission Report – Organisational Assessment of NIFRS

The Meeting noted that, as yet, no response had been received from the Audit Commission.

In response to a question from Mrs Rice, the Chief Fire Officer assured Members that NIFRS would continue to challenge the Audit Commission Report.

Mrs Rice welcomed the Chief Fire Officer's comments and reiterated the need upon receipt of the final Report to challenge that Report.

Accounting for Firefighters' Pensions

Members noted that a response had been received from DHSSPS.

Position of Vice-Chairman of NIFRS Board

The Chairman reminded Members that at the March Meeting, Mrs H Robinson, DHSSPS, had undertaken to look at the possibility of the election of a Vice-Chairman of the Board. He informed Members that Mrs Robinson had responded and indicated that the Board could elect a Vice-Chairman but emphasised that there would be no remuneration for the position.

Members noted that the Chairman proposed to elect a Vice-Chairman at the June Board Meeting, following the outcome of the Elections.

Equality & Diversity Training

Mrs Rice, Chairman of the Equality & Diversity Forum, referred to discussions at the Forum in relation to Equality & Diversity training and, whilst acknowledging that work was ongoing with budgets, asked that consideration be given to set funding aside for such training in the incoming year.

The Board, on the motion of Mrs Rice, seconded by Mr Hanna, unanimously –

Resolved: **“to recommend that funding be set aside for Equality & Diversity Training”.**

4 Reports from Board Committee and Other Relevant Groups

Special Board Meeting – 19 April 2011

The Chairman explained that the NIFRS Board Standing Committees, with the exception of the Remuneration Committee and the Joint Negotiating Committee, had been elected at the Special Meetings held that morning.

Service Delivery & Performance Committee

It was noted that the Service Delivery & Performance Committee had met and had elected Mr A Hatch as Chairman and Mr D Barbour as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Human Resources Committee

It was noted that the Human Resources Committee had met and had elected Mr A Hanna as Chairman and Mr C Mack as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

The Chairman explained that the Finance Committee and Audit & Risk Management Committee had not met given the absence of a number of Committee Members. He stated that the Committees would complete the Business of electing a Chairman and Vice-Chairman at their May Meetings. Subsequently, the Remuneration Committee would be elected.

Members noted Meetings of the Standing Committees as follows:

Service Delivery & Performance Committee – 10 May 2011 at 10.45 am;
Finance Committee – 10 May 2011 at 2.00 pm;
Audit & Risk Management Committee – 12 May 2011 at 10.30 am;
Human Resources Committee – 17 May 2011 at 10.45 am.

5 Chairman's Business (including National Joint Council Matters)

National Joint Council – Induction Training

The Chairman informed the Meeting that he had attended further National Joint Council Induction Training on 4 April 2011 and gave Members a brief overview of the training.

Chairman's Activities

The Chairman reminded Members that each quarter he would circulate an Activities Log. However, he informed Members of his attendance at the recent PSNI Graduation Ceremony.

7 Standing Items

Report from DID Working Group

Mr Hanna, Chairman of the DID Working Group, gave the Meeting an update on progress.

Review of NIFRS Standing Orders

Members noted revised NIFRS Standing Orders circulated for the consideration of Members.

Mr Hanna gave Members a brief background to the review of NIFRS Standing Orders and drew Members' attention to the salient points.

The Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs informed Members that the revised NIFRS Standing Orders was a working document and had been circulated to Members for consideration. He explained that it was the intention of the DID Working Group to consider any further proposals prior to presenting the final draft at the May Board Meeting.

6 Chief Fire Officer's Business

2011/12 Budget Allocations

Members noted the 2011/12 Budget Allocations. The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave Members a detailed overview of the 2011/12 budget allocation which had been set in accordance with DHSSPS. He also explained that the late notification of the financial position had made the budget allocation setting process difficult this year. Members noted that interim budgets had been put in place to ensure continuation of business.

The Officers answered Members' questions on the information presented.

Management Accounts

Members noted the Management Accounts for the period ended 31 March 2011. The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave Members an overview of the Revenue and Capital positions. He emphasised that this was not the final year-end position, as additional accruals and other adjustments need to be considered as part of the process for the preparation of the year-end statutory accounts.

The Director of Finance & Performance Management highlighted the need for Members to consider the financial position in terms of ensuring value for money. At the end of March 2011, expenditure by NIFRS was some £1.5 million lower year-on-year for the same period as at 31 March 2010 although this was not the final position. He asked Members to note the final budgetary position, after taking account of NIFRS declaring an anticipated underspend to DHSSPS. DHSSPS were able to use these easements to offset year end pressures across various Health & Social Care Bodies.

Contracts Awarded for the month of March 2011

Members noted a list of Contracts Awarded for the month of March 2011.

Carbon Management Plan 2011-2016

Members noted NIFRS Carbon Management Plan 2011-2016, along with a Memorandum from the Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs. This provided further background information on the Plan which was launched on 24 March 2011 in the new energy efficient Fire & Rescue Station in Armagh by the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer.

Refurbishment of Rathfriland Fire & Rescue Station

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Mr R Turley, NIFRS Estates Manager, gave Members a presentation with regard to the refurbishment plans for Rathfriland Fire & Rescue Station.

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

At this point,
Mr Turley left the Meeting

Business Case Approvals

Members noted that NIFRS received approval in March 2011 for Business Cases for the construction of new Fire Stations in Omagh and Ballycastle and for the purchase of replacement fire appliances.

Chief Fire Officer's Report

Referring to the Chief Fire Officer's Report, the Chief Fire Officer explained that in light of the Board's Information Needs, he had reviewed the format and content of this Report. He circulated a sample Report for the consideration of Members and explained the type of information he proposed to include within the Report to the May Board Meeting. In the meantime, he asked Members to forward any comments to him.

The Officers answered Members' questions regarding the proposed content of the Report.

8 Standalone Strategic Items

Fair Employment Annual Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Members noted the Fair Employment Annual Monitoring Return as at 1 January 2011.

The Equality Manager explained that the statutory fair employment statistical return must be submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland by 1 May 2011 and gave Members a synopsis of the key areas within the Return. She further explained that Members were being asked to approve the Return on the understanding that figures may be amended after the submission date, on points of clarification or modification by request of the Commission.

The Equality Manager answered Members' questions on various aspects of the information presented.

Draft 2nd Edition NIFRS Equality Scheme and Consultation

Members noted the Draft 2nd Edition NIFRS Equality Scheme. The Equality Manager informed Members that the Draft 2nd Edition Equality Scheme had been written in response to the call from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland for revised Equality Schemes from across the public sector on a phased basis. NIFRS is in the first tranche along with other government departments. She added that NIFRS had worked collaboratively with counterparts from across Health and Social Care Trusts and Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to revise NIFRS Equality Scheme and Action Plan. Members noted that the draft is closely based on the Scheme Model Template recommended by the Commission.

The Equality Manager also explained that the stakeholder consultation exercise on the Draft 2nd Edition NIFRS Equality Scheme ends on 29 April 2011 for submission to the Equality Commission by 1 May 2011. It was noted that the Draft Scheme had also been submitted to NIFRS Equality & Diversity Forum for a response.

The Equality Manager asked Members to approve the Draft Scheme for submission to the Equality Commission and to respond to the Consultation exercise. The Equality Manager pointed out that NIFRS will have the opportunity to submit a further amended approved Scheme to the Commission after 1 May 2011, if necessary.

The Board, on the motion of Mrs Rice, seconded by Mr Hanna, unanimously –

Resolved: **“to recommend approval of the Fair Employment Monitoring Return as at 1 January 2011 and the Draft 2nd Edition NIFRS Equality Scheme”.**

9 Relevant Correspondence

The following relevant correspondence was noted:

Letter from DHSSPS confirming NIFRS current expenditure allocations for 2011/12-2014/15.

10 Sealing of Documents

Members approved the undernoted documents for Sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Donnelly & Taggart Limited – Lease of Vans (with maintenance) for 2 years with an early termination provision after 12 months);

Ricoh UK Limited – Colour Photocopiers – Quality 4 plus 5 year running costs.

11 Any Other Business

Operational Assurance Audits

The Chairman informed Members that the annual Operational Assurance Audits would be commencing and explained that each year, the Chief Fire Officer and his Principal Officers hold audits of certain designate Stations. At these visits, the Principal Officer inspects the Station and its equipment, as well as overseeing a number of operational drills. The Chairman stated that as far as possible, he hoped the relevant Principal Officer will often be accompanied by a lay Member of the Board.

The Chairman stated that these annual visits are very useful opportunities for Board Members to get a feel for the organisation across the country, and that he proposed to draw up a proposed schedule for Board Members and himself to attend taking into consideration geographical spread. He stated that it was also important for our local Firefighters to have a chance to meet Board Members face to face and to hear about any proposed developments within NIFRS. He added that the visits tend to be well structured and quite formal as personnel are being assessed.

Members noted that they will often be invited by the Inspecting Officer to say a few words and the Chairman undertook to prepare a shared message from the Board.

Elections

The Chairman extended his best wishes to the Board's elected Representatives in the forthcoming Council elections.

At this point,
Mrs Rice left the Meeting

12 Meetings of the Board and its Committees

Members noted a Schedule of Meetings, etc, of the Board and its Committees for the month of May 2011.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 4.05 PM
