

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

22 NOVEMBER 2016

1.30 PM

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Ashford, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations)
Mr M Graham, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operational Support)
Mr A Walmsley, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Protection)
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Finance
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources
Ms P Wylie, Head of Corporate Communications
Mr S Fitzsimons, Interim Head of Estates
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Mr J Millar, DoH Observer

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.

The Chairperson asked all Members and the Corporate Management Team to review their declaration of interests to ensure currency.

Item 3: Minutes – 27 September 2016

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 27 September 2016, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to an amendment, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Enright.

The Chairperson noted that a number of matters arising will be covered in the business of the Meeting.

Item 4: Reports from Board Committees, including noting of Committee Minutes and adoption of Recommendations

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 13 September 2016

The Minutes of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee Meeting held on 13 September 2016 were noted. Members also noted that the Board, at its Meeting on 27 September 2016, adopted the recommendations as contained within the Minutes.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 27 October 2016

The Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 27 October 2016 were noted.

Mr Smyth, Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, highlighted the key points of the business discussed, including –

- Internal Audit Reports – Mr Smyth noted the positive outcomes with respect to Internal Audit reports. He welcomed the excellent results and paid tribute to the work of the Director of Finance.
- Mid-Year Follow-Up Report – Mr Smyth advised that Internal Audit had acknowledged the progress being made.
- Internal Audit – New Definitions – noted that new definitions of assurance and audit recommendation priorities will be implemented from April 2017;
- BSO Internal Audit Annual Report 2015/16 – noted first such annual report produced by BSO and circulated to NIFRS for information.

Mr Smyth proposed that the recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Irvine.

Audit, Risk & Governance - Recommendations

- Acceptance of the Audits of Bank & Cash; Payroll; and Non-Pay Expenditure;
- Approval of the Mid-Year Follow-Up on Outstanding Internal Audit Recommendations 2016/17;
- Approval of the Quarter Progress Update on the Corporate Business Plan (April to September 2016) and Balanced Scorecard;
- Approval of the revised NIFRS Assurance Framework; Corporate Risk Management Strategy; and Corporate Risk Management Policy & Procedure.

The Chairperson acknowledged the positive Internal Audit reports and paid tribute to Mr Smyth, as Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, for his work and leadership.

Mr Smyth stated that the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee was a strong Committee. He further stated that the Corporate Management Team was working with Members, there was a clear focus and good work being done.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer acknowledged the positive direction of travel and thanked all for their work.

The Chairperson noted that a Business Improvement Seminar was being held in January to provide Members with an update on progress.

Service Delivery Committee – Minutes – 20 October 2016

The Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee held on 20 October 2016 were noted.

Mr Barbour, Chairperson of the Service Delivery Committee, summarised the key business discussed, including –

- Command & Control Project – noted that the Committee had received a presentation on the joint Command & Control project with SFRS and that a visit from SFRS was pending.
- Community Protection – noted key progress with respect to NIFRS People at Risk Strategy and Partnership working; and highlighted the success of Fire Safety Week.

Mr Barbour gave an overview of an issue relating to availability at Carrickfergus Fire Station informing Members of the outcome of the review and the recommendation approved by the Committee.

With respect to the IRMP consultation, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford updated Members on the current position. He explained that the Committee had approved NIFRS IRMP 2016-21 and the Plan would now be published and implemented accordingly.

Mr Barbour proposed that the Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Smyth.

Service Delivery – Recommendations

- Approval to proceed with the change from Variable Crewing to Day Crewing at Carrickfergus Fire Station with RCC monitoring the availability of RDS personnel;
- Approval to implement NIFRS IRMP 2016-21.

With respect to the Emergency Medical Response (EMR) Pilot in Lurgan, Members were informed of the positive publicity received regarding the Pilot and noted that a 6-month review of the Pilot will be undertaken in March 2017.

Resources Committee – Minutes – 15 September 2016

The Minutes of the Additional Meeting of the Resources Committee held on 15 September 2016 were noted. Members also noted that the Board, at its Meeting on 27 September 2016, approved the recommendations as contained within the Minutes.

Resources Committee – Minutes – 20 October 2016

The Minutes of the Resources Committee held on 20 October 2016 were noted.

Mr Enright, Resources Committee Member, provided a synopsis of the key business discussed particularly in relation to Wholetime recruitment. He proposed that the Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Smyth.

Resources – Recommendations

- Approval of the following in relation to Wholetime recruitment:

Large Volume of Applications - Encourage self-selection through detailed application pack/process; Use job-related online tests to shortlist prior to PATs;
Maths and English GCSEs - Continue to ask for GCSEs and offer level 2 test as pre-employment check in line with process for RDS; Use online tests to test for specific job-related abilities and shortlist accordingly;
Online Tests/Other Tests - Procure suitable test from professional provider and ensure satisfactory reliability, validity and equality proofing;
PATs (Practical Aptitude Tests) - Remove dead lift; Use 4 job-related tests – based on RDS tests;
Appeals Process - No right of appeal through process; Introduce an amended process for dealing with issues/concerns raised during the PATs;
Retained Duty System - *Do not require RDS candidates to complete the PATs but all other 'meritorious' stages must be completed;

- Approval of the Wholetime Recruitment Project Plan, subject to minor amendment, and the commencement of a recruitment exercise as detailed in the Plan; and approval for the Director of HR and the Lead Operational Officer to amend the intake as required depending on the establishment and strength levels at the time of appointment;
- Approval of the revised Code of Procedures on Recruitment & Selection, subject to clarification as required and subject to consultation as appropriate;
- Approval of the revised NIFRS Overtime Policy & Procedure subject to ongoing consultation;
- Approval to engage with RDS Day-Time only personnel at Carrickfergus Fire Station with a view to varying their contracts of employment.

Resources Committee – Minutes – 4 November 2016

The Minutes of the additional Resources Committee held on 4 November 2016 were noted.

Mr Enright, Resources Committee Member, provided an overview of the business discussed.

Mr Barbour referred to the matter of Wholetime recruitment and commented on the recently published report on the Thomas Review noting that the report encourages academic selection.

The Director of HR sought confirmation that the Board was content that the Resources Committee scrutinise and approve resourcing activity, and that any proposed amendments to the process or decisions taken by the Committee, are to be referred back to the Resources Committee and escalated to the Board as appropriate. **Members confirmed same.**

The Director of HR noted that correspondence from the Chairperson will be forwarded to DoH regarding the outstanding Hale recommendations.

At this point,
Mr Henning joined the Meeting

Mr Enright proposed that the Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Smyth.

Resources – Recommendations

- Approval, in principle, for a partial transfer of Procurement Services (sourcing only) with a final decision on staff location to be taken when the full costs are known; approval to fully outsource the Procurement function as a long-term goal which is to be discussed by the Resources Committee at a later stage;
- Approval of the Counter Fraud & Probity Project Plan (from 1 January 2017 for a 3-month period);
- Endorsement of the recommendations to improve Employee Engagement in NIFRS.

Item 5: Chairperson's Business

Ground Clearing Meeting with DoH

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer reported positively on the recent meeting with DoH. He commended those Directors who had been in attendance.

The Chairperson noted that the Accountability Meeting with DoH was scheduled to take place 5 December 2016.

Road Safety Week – 21-27 November 2016

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Walmsley noted that it was Road Safety Week and encouraged Members to pledge to adopt safer behaviours on our roads by signing up to 'Share the Road to Zero' pledge.

Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards

The Chairperson informed Members that she had been shortlisted in the "Most Influential Woman in Fire" award category in the Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards taking place on 2 December 2016.

Medal Presentation and Employee Awards Ceremony

The Chairperson reported positively on the recent Long Service & Good Conduct Medal Presentation and Employee Awards Ceremony. She commended Group Commander K Black and Mrs P Scott for all their work with regard to this excellent event which showcased the tremendous work of NIFRS personnel.

The Chairperson paid tribute to the valuable contribution and outstanding dedication of the Board Administrative Secretary, Irene Hill. In recognition of services rendered to the NIFRS Board, the Chairperson and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer made a presentation to the Board Administrative Secretary.

Item 6: Standalone Strategic Items NIFRS Scheme of Delegation

Members noted a Briefing Paper relating to the review of NIFRS Scheme of Delegation, along with the revised Scheme, with the changes tracked, and associated Decisions Log.

The Director of Finance outlined the background to the review of the Scheme of Delegation noting that it will address a number of Internal Audit recommendations.

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

NIFRS Standing Financial Instructions

Members noted a Briefing Paper relating to the review of NIFRS Standing Financial Instructions, along with the revised Financial Instructions, with the changes tracked, and associated Decisions Log.

The Board on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Irvine unanimously approved the revised NIFRS Standing Financial Instructions subject to a minor amendment.

Finance Report

A Briefing Paper updating Members on the financial position as at 31 October 2016 was noted.

The Director of Finance highlighted the key points from the paper noting in particular the revenue position as at 31 October 2016. She drew Members' attention to the budget pressures and noted the actions being taken to address same.

The Director of Finance noted there remained a budget pressure at the projected year-end position. She also gave an overview of additional risks which included the move to Day Crewing, Estates maintenance costs, higher levels of RDS activity and recruitment costs for Wholetime. She assured Members that the Corporate Management Team are committed to ensuring that NIFRS achieves a financial breakeven position in terms of revenue allocation and are closely monitoring same.

The Director of Finance answered Members' questions relating to the information presented.

Mr Irvine referred to the 3-year Finance Plan and enquired if there was any indication as to the budget allocation for the next financial year. The Director of Finance outlined the discussions at the Ground Clearing Meeting and explained that it was clear there will be pressures. She further explained that she would be discussing projections with DoH. The Director of Finance outlined preparations underway with respect to budget planning.

At this point,
Mr Martin joined the Meeting

Mr Irvine suggested the need for a 5-year plan. He explained that continued improvement would require investment and stressed the need for NIFRS to work hard to secure the appropriate funding.

The Director of Finance updated Members on the capital position as at 31 October 2016 noting in particular the current position with respect to the Desertcreat project.

Banking Mandates

A Briefing Paper relating to changes to signatories to NIFRS main Bank Accounts was noted.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Enright, unanimously –

Resolved: “that Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Thompson is set-up as a signatory with effect from 7 November 2016; and Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Ashford is removed as a signatory”.

Losses and Write-Offs

Members noted a Briefing Paper relating to losses and write-offs.

The Director of Finance outlined the background to a loss arising as a result of an HRMC inspection and seeking Board approval to write-off this loss prior to submission to DoH for final approval.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Irvine, unanimously agreed to approve the write-off of a loss arising as a result of an HRMC inspection.

Desertcreat

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham stated that the Interim Head of Estates would give a presentation to Members on the Desertcreat project and provide an update on same.

At this point,
the Interim Head of Estates joined the Meeting

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Fitzsimons to the Meeting.

The Interim Head of Estates gave a brief history of the project and summarised the principal elements of the preferred option for Desertcreat. He gave an overview of the current status of the project noting that the Design Consultants had been appointed for the Phase 1 Enabling Works.

The Interim Head of Estates outlined the governance for the project and the next steps. He also noted the timeframe for the programme.

The Officers answered Members' questions relating to various aspects of the Desertcreat project including the project governance, funding and the potential for income generation.

Mr Barbour outlined his continuing concerns with regard to the project. He stated that he welcomed further clarification with respect to the project governance and also the construction map, visuals, etc. He expressed his concern with respect to the Board's role in the governance of the project.

With regard to the governance aspect, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford noted that documentation relating to the project governance had been previously circulated to the Board and explained that, following discussion regarding Board representation on the Project Board, it had been agreed that Mr Henning would represent the Board. He also noted that Mr Henning had been briefed on the project.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford referred to the construction map and explained that it was an artist's impression at this stage. He noted Mr Barbour's comments with regard to working at height training, etc, and explained why NIFRS require such facilities and emphasising the need to ensure personnel are trained and trained to meet statutory obligations. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford acknowledged that the project was not risk free pointing out that it is a significant project. He stated that NIFRS has inadequate facilities currently and it was a key project for the organisation. He stated that he would ensure that the Board has full visibility of the project. He noted that NIFRS has consistently raised concerns with regard to revenue costs but highlighted the need for NIFRS to invest in its training.

Mr Henning reported on his briefing with Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford and the Interim Head of Estates and noted that he had discussed all of the issues raised by Members and how these are being addressed/progressed. He stated the need for NIFRS to lobby to ensure when enabling works are complete that funding is secured for the remainder of the project.

In response to a question from Mr Smyth regarding his concerns with respect to the land and funding position, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford explained that OBC2 was crucial going forward and that there would be a reduction in risk to the Organisation with the completion of the early works. He updated Members on the current position with regard to the transfer of land.

The Chairperson thanked the Interim Head of Estates for his attendance.

At this point
the Interim Head of Estates left the Meeting

Business Cases

Renewal of Maintenance Support – current NIFRS Command & Control System

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the Renewal of Maintenance Support – current NIFRS Command & Control System.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham outlined the background and purpose of the Business Case noting that the matter had been considered by the Resources Committee.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Smyth, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for Renewal of Maintenance Support – current NIFRS Command & Control System.

Provision of Fire Boots

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the provision of Fire Boots over 3 years.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham gave an overview of the purpose of the Business Case.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Smyth, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for the provision of Fire Boots over 3 years.

BSO ITS Shared Service

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for BSO ITS Shared Service was noted.

The Director of Finance gave an explanation as to the purpose of the Business Case.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for BSO ITS Shared Service for the period April 2016 to March 2017.

Appointment of Media Agency

Members noted the Executive Summary pertaining to the Business Case for the appointment of a Media Agency for NIFRS Fire Safety advertising campaigns.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Walmsley provided an overview of the need for NIFRS to appoint a Media Agency.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Smyth, unanimously approved the Business Case for the appointment of a Media Agency for NIFRS Fire Safety advertising campaigns.

Strategic Outline Case – Renewal of Lease – Dunmurry Fire Station

The Strategic Outline Case for the renewal of the lease for Dunmurry Fire Station was noted.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Irvine, unanimously agreed to approve the Strategic Outline Case for the renewal of the lease for Dunmurry Fire Station.

MIS and Retained Payroll Hardware and Line Printers Refresh

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the MIS and Retained Payroll Hardware and Line Printers Refresh was noted.

The Director of Finance outlined the purpose of the project.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Irvine, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for the MIS and Retained Payroll Hardware and Line Printers Refresh.

Interim Provision of a Laundry and Repair Service

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the interim provision of a Laundry and Repair Service.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham gave an overview of the purpose of the project and answered Members' questions.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Irvine, unanimously approved the Business Case for the interim provision of a Laundry and Repair Service.

Appliance Room Doors at Newry and Cadogan

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the replacement of 12 sets of Appliance Room Doors at Newry and Cadogan was noted.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham gave an overview of the project and advised Members of an amendment to the Summary.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Enright, unanimously approved the Business Case for the replacement of 12 sets of Appliance Room Doors at Newry and Cadogan.

Specialist Operational Training

Members noted the Executive Summary pertaining to the Business Case for the provision of Specialist Operational Training.

The Director of HR outlined the purpose of the project and the rationale for the 3-year spend.

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

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Martin, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for the provision of Specialist Operational Training.

Fire Alarms

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for Fire Alarm upgrades.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham informed Members of an emergent issue regarding the suitability of fire alarms and explained that this project would address the fire alarm protection provision in the most at risk Stations. He noted that the Director of Finance had identified this budget pressure.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously approved the Business Case for Fire Alarm upgrades.

Item 7: Relevant Correspondence

There was no routine correspondence.

The Chairperson explained to Members that the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer would be taking forward the matter of an invitation to the Minister to visit NIFRS.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer informed Members that the Minister had received an invitation to visit Cushendall and that this may include a visit to the Fire Station.

Item 8: Documents for Sealing

Members noted the undernoted documents for sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Emergency One (UK) Limited – Supply and delivery of up to an estimated quantity of 16 Water Tender Type 'B' Appliances;

IJK Timber T/A Irvin & Sellers – Oriented Strandboard (OSB) Type 2;

Volvo Car UK Limited – Supply and delivery of 21 civilian specification Flexi Duty Officer Cars; and

River Ridge Recycling – Novation of Contract.

Item 9: Schedule of Future Meetings

Members noted a schedule of future Meetings.

Come & Try Days

The Chairperson noted that a further 'Come & Try' Day was being held at Eastern Area Headquarters that Saturday. She further noted that the first session had been very successful.

Christmas 'At Home'

The Chairperson informed Members that she and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer would be co-hosting a Christmas 'At Home' on 16 December 2016. She explained that it would be an informal event to show the value and respect held for all who work in the Organisation.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 3.20 PM
