

# NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING

23 MARCH 2010

2.00 PM

PRESENT: Mr W F Gillespie, Chair presiding  
Mr L Jones, Acting Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive  
Mr P Bradley  
Mr J Campbell  
Mrs B Gilliland  
Mr K Harper  
Mr R Pollock  
Mrs P Tally

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Craig, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Development)  
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  
Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer C Kerr  
Area Commander E Doyle  
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary  
Mr D Jordon, DHSSPS  
Mrs H Robinson, DHSSPS  
Dr A McCormick, DHSSPS

Prior the commencement of Business, the Chair welcomed Dr A McCormick, DHSSPS, to the Meeting.

### 1 **Apologies**

There were no apologies

### 2 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 February 2010, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Bradley, seconded by Mrs Gilliland.

Arising out of the Minutes:

### **Tender for the Provision of Job Evaluations**

The Chair sought clarification on the current position of the Tender for the provision of Job Evaluations. The Director of Human Resources informed Members that the Tender had been advertised, with a closing date of 30 March 2010.

The Director of Human Resources outlined the process once the Tendering period closes. She explained that the contract would be renewable after one year.

The Director of Human Resources would report progress to the April Board Meeting.

### **Grievance Hearing**

It was noted that 2 Grievance Hearings would be held on 30 March 2010, the first one to be heard at 10.45 am, the second at 2.00 pm.

### **Vacant Post of Chief Fire & Rescue Officer**

The Chair had sent a letter to the Minister highlighting the urgency of appointing a new Chief Fire & Rescue Officer. In response, it was noted that the new Chief Fire & Rescue Officer post would not be approved until the new Board was in place.

Dr McCormick stated that the Department had full confidence in the Acting Chief Fire Officer and Senior Management Team.

### **Retirement of Director of Human Resources**

As the Director of Human Resources is retiring at the end of April, there was a need to proceed with preparing the documentation for advertising the post. It was noted that the DID Report had an impact on the filling of the post.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer read an extract from the DID Report and stated that, in his view, it would be difficult to proceed without considering the Report. Members noted NIFRS's options, as follows:

- Hold off on new Job Description in context of the DID Report;
- Fill the post on a temporary basis; or
- Appoint a secondee from the Department.

The Chair stated that the DID Report recommended a strategic review of Human Resources and noted that this would not be conducted before the Director of Human Resources retires. He suggested that the Department arrange for a temporary person to be seconded to conduct the review. Dr McCormick stated that the Department was actively and carefully looking at this.

The Director of Human Resources stated that in the long-term the post would need to be advertised, unless an external person from the Department was seconded. She explained the commitment with the Equality Commission and stated that the Code of Procedures for Recruitment & Selection was mandatory and any post must be filled in accordance with the Code.

The Director of Human Resources stated that there was a facility for acting-up in the shorter-term. She stated that if the existing HR Senior Team were willing to undertake additional duties in the interim, they would be entitled to an honorarium. She stated that the Senior Team were capable and would be able to keep the HR function running. She stated that this option would require further engagement with the Acting Chief Fire Officer.

The Director of Human Resources explained that there were 5 members of the Senior Team and that within each of the specialisms the 5 officers would be prepared to undertake additional duties.

Mrs Tally stated that for the Strategic Review, it would be difficult to embed a seconded person from the Department. She felt that there was a need to look at in-house personnel to run the Directorate, whilst an external person to look at the Strategic Review.

Full and lengthy discussion took place on the various options and the timeframe for filling the post. The Chair stated that it would be months before a permanent Director of Human Resources would be in place and that a temporary arrangement was required, either a secondee or a temporary Human Resources Manager. He asked the Acting Chief Fire Officer to progress the options and implications and to report back to the Board with his proposal.

It was agreed that the Board's preference would be to second an external person from the Department, which would close down the timeframe. If this option was not feasible then the post would be advertised on a temporary basis.

The Chair stated that when the DID Team were in attendance later in the Meeting, the issue of the Director of Human Resources post would be raised along with other issues.

At this point, the Chairman confirmed that the Members' Term of Office would expire on 30 June. An advert would be placed seeking new Members. He stated that he would also retire on that date.

Dr McCormick paid tribute from the Minister and the Department to the Chair and expressed appreciation and gratitude for the work that the Chair had carried out in his 7 years as Chair, and said that he was a most distinguished Chair. He stated that the next process would be to fill the Chair's post, who will support the Chief Fire Officer. He stated that NIFRS had strong commitment from the Department and would work with NIFRS to support them and ensure Corporate Governance.

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At this point,  
Dr McCormick left the Meeting  
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### **Establishment Levels**

The Chair referred to staffing levels and it was noted that the Acting Chief Fire Officer was working on the figures.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer stated that he was currently preparing a paper on the Establishment figures which he would present to the Service Delivery Committee on 29 March and to the Board in April. This would then be forwarded to the Department.

### **3 Service Support Committee Meeting**

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Service Support Committee Meeting held on 26 January 2010.

### **4 Audit Committee Meeting**

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 18 February 2010.

It was noted that the Annual Financial Accounts would be presented to the Audit Committee on 14 June 2010 and then presented to the Board for approval on 22 June 2010.

### **5 Remuneration Committee Meeting - 23 February 2010**

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 23 February 2010.

### **6 Remuneration Committee Meeting - 4 March 2010**

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 4 March 2010.

Arising out of the Minutes:

### **Job Evaluations**

#### **Amendment to Report submitted 12 May 2009**

It was noted that the amended effective date for the Corporate Services Manager had been approved by the Department.

## **Deloitte Report**

It was noted that the letter to the Department made no recommendation for any increase in salaries at this time.

## **Update on Director Job Evaluations**

It was noted that a reply to the former Chief Fire Officer's letter of 28 January had been received from the Department on 10 March as a result of which the Acting Chief Fire Officer was seeking further clarification.

## **7 National Joint Council Matters**

### **Report on Meetings**

The Chair gave Members a brief outline of the Meetings that he attended on 16 March - Protocol Meeting, Full Employers' Side, Middle Management, Main NJC and Employers' Side Brigade Managers. The issues that had been discussed were Pension Scheme, Pay Claim, Paternity/Maternity/Adoption Claims, Survey to retain NJC for Brigade Managers.

It was noted that the next meeting would be held in Edinburgh on 15 June where it was hoped that the pay claim issue would be resolved for this year.

## **8 Chair's Business**

The Chair referred to the recent leaks in the Sunday World and expressed his concern and regret at this situation and condemned the conduct of those involved. He had discussed this with the Permanent Secretary and it was noted that NIFRS's processes were in order. Members also expressed their concern and regret at the situation. Members noted the concerns of those personnel who had been affected by the allegations.

It was noted that anyone with a concern had the right to refer to the Code of Conduct, the Whistleblowing Policy, and Freedom of Information.

Following discussion, Mr Harper proposed a show of hands to indicate support to the Acting Chief Fire Officer and the Senior Management Team and to record their condemnation of the malicious leaks to the media. Everyone present indicated accordingly.

## **NIFRS Band Concert**

The Chair reminded Members of the NIFRS Band Concert to be held on 15 April 2010 at the Fire & Rescue Service Training Centre, and encouraged full support.

### **Governance in NIFRS Procurement**

The Chair referred to the recent Governance issues highlighted in the Northern Ireland Water Independent Review Report. It was noted that NIFRS Procurement Policy was very sound.

It was noted that the Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs, Director of Finance & Performance Management and Head of Internal Audit would give a presentation to the April Board Meeting to reassure the Board on these issues.

### **Service Delivery Quorum**

The Chair appealed for all Members to maintain the usual high attendance at Board and Committee Meetings for the remainder of the Term of Office.

### **Alleged Incident - Cadets - Share Centre**

The Chair referred to the alleged incident and it was noted that the PSNI were dealing with same.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Craig stated that he had acted in accordance with the Child Protection Policy. He stated that he had prepared the Press Release for the media and read the statement to Members, along with the joint statement with the PSNI.

## **9 Chief Fire Officer's Report**

### **Operational Activities**

The Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations) gave Members a brief account of operational activities and incidents of note for the month of February.

### **Management Accounts**

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave the Meeting a detailed overview of the revenue and capital positions for the period ending 28 February 2010.

The Director of Finance & Performance Management explained that figures were very tight but that he hoped to have a break even by the end of March.

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

## **10 Operational Training Activities End of Year Summary Presentation**

The Acting Chief Fire Officer gave the background to Operational Training Activities - End of Year Summary. He stated that the presentation provides some context on the money spent for training and made reference to training for drivers.

Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer Kerr then delivered his presentation.

#### 11 **Relevant Correspondence**

There was no relevant correspondence.

#### 12 **Sealing of Documents**

Members approved the undernoted documents for Sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Volkswagen Group UK Limited (on behalf of Skoda) - for the provision of 15 cars;

Low Carbon Solutions - Mini CHP System at Crescent Link Area Headquarters.

It was agreed that the sealing of South Ulster Housing Association Limited - sale of land at 1 Hill Street, Lurgan, should be deferred to the next Board Meeting.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Pollock, seconded by Mr Haper, unanimously –

**Resolved:**                   **“to defer the sealing of South Ulster Housing Association Limited - sale of land at 1 Hill Street, Lurgan, to the next Board Meeting”.**

#### 13 **Meetings of the Board and its Committees**

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

It was noted that the June Board Meeting would be held on 22 June 2010.

#### **News Brief**

News Brief for March 2010 was circulated to Members.

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At this point,  
Mr Campbell left the Meeting

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At this point,  
Mr P McStravick and Ms P Wilson from Design & Innovation Division entered the Meeting

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## 14 DID Report

It was noted that a date would be arranged to discuss the DID Report.

In relation to the DID Report, there were some recommendations for the Board's consideration and that they had a duty to look at these recommendations.

The Chair stated that he had requested the Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs to extract initial comments on the Report. The Acting Chief Fire Officer explained that the Principal Officers and Directors had met initially but would meet further to consider fully.

Mrs Robinson set out some of the context from the Department's point of view and referred to the Action Plan, how to implement the recommendations alongside varying timeframes, new structures for the Board and explained primary legislation.

Mr McStravick thanked all staff concerned for their help and full co-operation and that stakeholders were very open and candid with their views. Mr McStravick gave an overview of the Review, the findings and recommendations and the Terms of Reference.

Mr McStravick stated that the Review looked at NIFRS performance, which was very positive, strategic issues/challenges facing NIFRS, NIFRS Board, Corporate Governance, Culture and Equality and Diversity.

Mr McStravick referred to the Strategic Review of the Human Resources function, ICT issues, current Senior structure issues, NIFRS current and proposed structure.

Other issues highlighted was the need to introduce Programme Management methodology/structure, Business Cases, Partnership Working, Trade Union Sides (TUS), Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Adviser.

The scope for efficiencies was also highlighted.

Ms Wilson answered Members' queries on Risk and Audit Committee models and Programme Management Board.

Clarification was given on Executive and non-Executive Members and what their roles would be.

Mr McStravick gave clarification on the roles of Chief Fire Officer - day to day issues - and the Chair - for taking forward strategic matters.

Ms Wilson explained the Corporate Governance Framework and it was noted that the Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs had staff working on same.

Mr McStravick and Ms Wilson acknowledged the difficulties in relation to funding and resources.

Mr McStravick and Ms Wilson answered further queries of Members/Officers.

The Chair stated that the Report would be shared and that he would be seeking comments. He thanked Mr McStravick and Ms Wilson for their attendance.

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THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS  
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED  
AT 5.30 PM

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