

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

23 MAY 2017

1.30 PM

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

APOLOGIES: Mr J Barbour

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Rafferty, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
(Operations)
Mr A Walmsley, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
(Community Protection)
Mr M Graham, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
(Operational Support)
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Finance
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources
Mr S Fitzsimons, Interim Head of Facilities & Assets
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Mr J Millar, DoH Observer

Item 1: Apologies

Apologies were noted.

Item 2: Declaration of Interests

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: Minutes – 11 April 2017

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 11 April 2017, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to an amendment, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Mr Henning.

The Chairperson noted that any matters arising from the Minutes would be picked up through the Meeting.

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

Service Delivery Committee – Minutes – 4 May 2017

The Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 4 May 2017 were noted.

Mr Martin, Member of the Service Delivery Committee, noted the recommendations emanating from the Meeting.

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

Service Delivery – Recommendation

- **Approval of the progression of negotiations for the implementation of the draft Pilot Weekend Crewing Levels Framework for RDS.**

The Chairperson thanked Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Rafferty and Area Commander Gallagher for the Information Session, held immediately prior to the Board Meeting, relating to the Retained Duty System. She noted that it had been agreed that, when deemed appropriate by the Service Delivery Committee, the Board would receive an update on RDS matters.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 5 May 2017

The Minutes of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee Meeting held on 5 May 2017 were noted.

Mr Smyth, Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, noted the recommendations presented by the Committee for adoption. He drew attention to the Internal Audit Reports and the outcomes of same. Mr Smyth referred to the Audit of Estates Procurement and Contract Management and General Procurement for which limited assurance had been provided with 3 x Priority 1 and one Priority 2 findings had been identified. He explained that the key issue related to the delivery of Estates services by the Service Provider. He informed Members that the Committee had received assurances from Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham that the matter was being robustly managed/monitored.

With respect to the Audit of Pensions, Mr Smyth noted that Internal Audit had provided unacceptable assurance and explained that this was due to the manual system being used currently. Mr Smyth commended staff within the Finance Directorate for all their work. He also noted that, going forward, NIFRS will be splitting the Accounts into 2 separate Accounts and welcomed same.

Referring to the Audit of Governance, Mr Smyth noted that, whilst Internal Audit had provided limited assurance, they had recognised the progress achieved by NIFRS to develop and strengthen the governance arrangements. He stated that he was hopeful that the Business Improvement Plan will address a significant number of issues this year and was also hopeful that compliance will be achieved by year-end.

Mr Smyth informed Members that the Committee had also considered the draft Accounting Officer Governance Statement. He explained that the Comptroller & Auditor General in 2015/16 had expressed concern regarding the number of outstanding recommendations. He further explained that, whilst it had been noted that progress has been achieved in 2016/17, the Comptroller & Auditor General had concerns regarding Internal Audit outcomes and is minded to report on these concerns.

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

Audit, Risk & Governance - Recommendations

- **Acceptance of the Audits of Estates Procurement and Contract Management and General Procurement; Verification of Compliance with Controls Assurance Standards; Pensions; and Governance;**
- **Approval of the Year End Follow-Up on Outstanding Internal Audit Recommendations;**
- **Approval of the revised Internal Audit Charter subject to amendment;**
- **Approval of the Internal Audit Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20 incorporating the Internal Audit Plan 2017/18;**
- **Approval of the Quarter 4 Progress Update on the Corporate Business Plan (April 2016 to March 2017) along with the Balanced Scorecard;**
- **Approval of the Controls Assurance Questionnaire Outcomes 2016/17;**
- **Approval of the NAO Audit Committee Self-Assessment Checklists – NIFRS 2015/16 and 2016/17.**

The Director of HR referred to the recommendation relating to the structure within Estates and updated Members on the current position.

Remuneration Committee – Minutes – 11 April 2017

The Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 11 April 2017 were noted.

The Chairperson brought forward the Committee's recommendation as contained within the Minutes.

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

Remuneration Committee - Recommendation

- **Approval of the amended Pay Remit for Support Staff for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 and 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.**

Item 5: Chairperson's Business

Sunday Life Spirit of Northern Ireland Awards

The Chairperson informed Members that Crew Commander Terry Canning, Omagh Fire Station, had been shortlisted for a Spirit of Northern Ireland Award. Terry had come to the aid of a fellow runner at the Boston Marathon whom he actually carried across the finish line.

The Chairperson commended Crew Commander Canning for his actions and extended best wishes for the Awards.

Station to Station Cycle

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, congratulated Noel McKee and his colleagues on the completion of the Station2Station challenge which seen NIFRS team up with 2 local charities, Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke and MindWise. The Chairperson congratulated the Officers who had also taken part in the challenge.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer gave Members an overview of a new initiative, 'Healthy Body, Healthy Mind'- a partnership approach to raise awareness of the importance of keeping both your mental and physical health in good shape. He outlined the purpose of the challenge which included visiting all 67 NIFRS Fire Stations and delivering talks from NIFRS, NI Chest Heart & Stroke and MindWise at local schools and also some of NIFRS Fire Stations.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer commended Noel McKee and the team on a tremendous job. He also commended members of the Corporate Management Team for getting involved and showing their support. He reiterated the purpose of the initiative was to raise awareness within children and young people. He stated that it was also important to recognise and say "well done" to those involved with the initiative.

Manchester

The Chairperson referred to the recent atrocity in Manchester and paid tribute to the valour of the members of the emergency services who came to the aid of those affected. The Chairperson stated that everyone's thoughts are with the families who have been bereaved and with those affected by the atrocity.

Pension Board

Members noted a Briefing Paper presented to the Chairperson at a recent meeting requested by the Pension Board.

The Chairperson noted the make-up of the Pension Board and its Terms of Reference. She explained that it had been anticipated a further meeting may be required but that this had not been necessary as the Director of Finance was progressing matters.

The Chairperson informed Members that she had agreed to meet with the Fire Brigades' Union who had also requested a meeting regarding pension matters.

The Director of Finance highlighted that the pensions matter is included on NIFRS Corporate Risk Register. She acknowledged that NIFRS employees have been very patient and noted that they have been kept apprised.

The Director of Finance outlined the role of the Pensions Board explaining that the Pension Board's responsibilities are to assist the Scheme Manager, ie, NIFRS Board, in providing overall assurance and governance of the Pension Schemes' administration. She stated that pension provisions were a complicated matter and emphasised that governance is key. She stressed the importance of the Pension Board's Briefing Paper being presented to the Board. She advised Members that the plan is to bring more regular updates to the Resources Committee and escalate to the Board as appropriate.

The Director of Finance referred to the issues highlighted within the Briefing Paper and updated Members on the current position with regard to these issues. She also provided an overview of work undertaken within Finance to date including the manual collation of pensions information for GAD. The Director of Finance noted, in particular, the current position with respect to the issue of Annual Benefit Statements and explained that NIFRS is unable to produce these currently and that the Pension Regulator has been advised of this. She also noted the current position with regard to the outsourcing of the Pension function to BSO.

Referring to the outstanding work to be undertaken within the Pension Section, the Director of Finance explained that NIFRS has re-established a Pensions Office.

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

Item 6: Standalone Strategic Items

Finance Report

A Briefing Paper updating Members on the draft unaudited Revenue and Capital financial positions as at 31 March 2017 was noted.

The Director of Finance noted the various deadlines for submission of the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts and updated Members on the current position. She noted that the draft unaudited Year-End Financial Monitoring Return had been submitted to DoH and highlighted that NIFRS 2016/17 breakeven position has been achieved with a 0.01% underspend of the agreed Revenue Resource Limited (RRL).

With regard to the audit of accounts, the Director of Finance advised members that she was not aware of any audit issues to date.

Members noted the draft unaudited Capital financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2017. The Director of Finance highlighted that the 2016/17 breakeven position has been achieved with less than a 1% underspend of the agreed final Capital Resource Limit (CRL).

Members congratulated the Director of Finance on the breakeven positions especially given the difficult budget.

Referring to the 2017/18 budget, the Director of Finance outlined the current position explaining that as yet NIFRS has not received confirmation of its budget. She further noted that the Corporate Management Team are scenario planning and that a Cross-Service Working Group has been working closely with DoH regarding the budget. She stressed that NIFRS continues to strongly advocate for a reasonable settlement based on its needs for the coming year.

During discussion relating to the information presented, the Director of Finance answered Members' questions and provided clarification.

Cyber Security Update

The Director of Finance referred to the recent global cyber security issues, updated Members on NIFRS cyber security noting actions taken by NIFRS to mitigate any risks. She further noted that NIFRS cyber security had not been breached to date.

Wholetime Recruitment

A Briefing Paper updating Members on the progress of the Wholetime Recruitment exercise was noted.

The Director of HR gave an overview of the information presented noting that the initial interview stage was underway along with a synopsis of the candidate numbers and composition at each stage of the process. He also updated Members on the current position with respect to issues/concerns raised and Unfair Treatment complaints.

The Chairperson expressed her appreciation to the Director of HR for his briefing.

Provision of Specialist Operational Training

The Director of HR informed Members that the Business Case for Specialist Operational Training is with the Department of Finance (DoF) awaiting approval. It was noted that a number of points were raised by DoF on 28 April and NIFRS submitted responses on 12 May.

The Director of HR explained that to enable NIFRS to progress safety critical training approval is being sought for NIFRS to develop individual Business Cases for priority courses while NIFRS waits for Departmental approval.

Mr Irvine stressed the importance of ensuring expenditure on individual Business Cases did not exceed the expenditure limit of the overarching Business Case.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously recommended approval for NIFRS to develop individual Business Cases for priority safety critical training courses.

Business Cases

Provision of Stationery Items

Members noted the Executive Summary for Stationery Items.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously resolved to approve the Business Case for Stationery Items.

Provision of Structural Fire Gloves

The Executive Summary for the provision of Structural Fire Gloves was noted.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Enright, unanimously resolved to approve the Business Case for the provision of Structural Fire Gloves.

Mr Smyth referred to the discussion at a recent Meeting regarding a “shopping basket” for common items across other FRSs and sought an update.

The Director of Finance outlined the current position explaining that NIFRS is gathering the information for DoH and that the matter will be brought through the Resources Committee.

Item 7: Relevant Correspondence

There was no relevant correspondence.

Item 8: Documents for Sealing

Members noted the undernoted document for sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Belfast International Airport Limited – Renewal Lease.

Item 9: Schedule of Future Meetings

Members noted a schedule of future Meetings.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 2.45 PM
