

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

24 NOVEMBER 2009

2.00 PM

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

APOLOGIES: Mrs P Tally

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr L Jones, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Mr P Craig, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community 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
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Ms C McGuire, DHSSPS

1 Apologies

Apologies were noted.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 October 2009, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Campbell, seconded by Mrs Gilliland .

Arising out of the Minutes:

Statutory Annual Accounts – ‘Band Minima’

In response to a query from the Chair, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that copies of the Equal Pay Briefing from the Equality Commission had been forwarded to all Members.

Review of Action Plan

The Director of Human Resources informed Members that the Business Case for the provision of Job Evaluations was progressing. She stated that a solution would be in place in a matter of months.

Review of Committee Structure and Membership – Equality & Diversity Forum

Mr Bradley informed Members that a Meeting of the Equality & Diversity Forum was planned for mid December.

Chief Fire Officer's Report

The Chair reminded the Meeting that a presentation relating to the incident at Eglinton, Londonderry, would be given to Members at a future date.

3 Remuneration Committee Meeting

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 27 October 2009.

4 Audit Committee Meeting

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 4 November 2009.

The Chair of the Committee, Mr Campbell, stated that the Committee had considered a full Agenda and the Meeting had been satisfactory. He highlighted that, in accordance with National Audit Standards, at the commencement of the Meeting Members were asked to declare any potential conflict of interest with any of the Business Items on the Agenda.

Members noted that a number of Reports considered by the Audit Committee had been forwarded to other Committees for information. Mr Campbell stated that, should any Member wish to raise any queries in relation to these Reports, they could raise same with him or the relevant Officer.

5 Service Support Committee Meeting

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Service Support Committee Meeting held on 12 November 2009.

Mr Campbell, Vice-Chair of the Service Support Committee, reported on a positive Meeting.

6 Service Delivery Committee Meeting

The draft Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting were circulated at the Meeting for the information of Members.

Referring to the introduction of the new Fire Safety Legislation, Mr Bradley expressed concern that businesses could be vulnerable to “a n others” and enquired as to whether there was any licensing agreement in respect of “a n others” carrying out risk assessments. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that there was no agreement in place. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Craig explained that NIFRS was working closely with DHSSPS on a communication strategy which would advise the local community of the impact and what businesses must do to ensure they comply with the Legislation. This included leaflets, etc, and web material. He pointed out that if businesses were currently compliant, they would be compliant when the Legislation was enacted.

During further discussion, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Craig strongly emphasised that support and assistance would be available to the community.

7 National Joint Council Matters

Report on Meetings

The Chair informed the Meeting that the 6 Lead Members had met on 23 November 2009 and gave Members a brief account of the business discussed which related to the 2010 pay rise.

Members noted that a full NJC meeting was scheduled to take place on 15 December 2009. The Chair also advised that meetings with the Association of Principal Fire Officers and the Retained Firefighters’ Union would be held in the near future.

8 Chair’s Business

Death of John McGrath, Supplies, Logistics & PPE Research & Development Manager, NIFRS HQ

It was with deep regret that the Board recorded the death of Mr John McGrath, Supplies, Logistics & PPE Research & Development Manager. The Chair acknowledged the high regard in which John was held and paid tribute to John’s commitment and service to NIFRS and also to the UK Fire & Rescue Service.

Provision of Banking Services

The Chief Fire Officer explained to Members that in April 2009, NIFRS Internal Audit Team performed a Banking & Cash Audit and recommended that NIFRS seek clarification from DHSSPS on the way forward for banking services.

NIFRS subsequently contacted DHSSPS, however, NIFRS was unable to utilise their wider tendering arrangements and consequently commenced a Banking Tender process in respect of the Provision of Banking Services.

Members noted that, as a result of the tendering process, NIFRS have now awarded a 3-year contract for the Provision of Banking Services to Bank of Ireland.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that, as part of the transition/implementation of the Banking Services from Northern Bank to Bank of Ireland, NIFRS needs to complete Banking Mandates to open the relevant bank accounts.

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

Resolved: **“to approve the completion of the Banking Mandates to open the relevant accounts with Bank of Ireland”.**

Chair’s Activities

The Chair reported on his activities since the last Meeting of the Board. He highlighted that he and the Chief Fire Officer had met with the NI Quality Assessors on 20 November 2009. The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members of NIFRS’s EFQM submission in respect of the Northern Ireland Quality Awards “Steps to Excellence” programme and explained that a Panel of Assessors had visited NIFRS from 18-20 November to undertake the judging of NIFRS’s submission. He advised Members that NIFRS would be informed of the outcome on 10 December 2009.

At this point,
the Chief Fire Officer and the Officers
left the Meeting

Legal Advice on Repayment

The Chair informed Members that, as requested, he had written to DHSSPS in relation to the legal advice which NIFRS had received in respect of the issue of repayment. He informed Members that the Department had responded indicating that they would not seek to interfere on the legal advice received nor how NIFRS interpreted that advice.

The Chair reminded Members that the Remuneration Committee had agreed to await the outcome of the Job Evaluations commissioned by the Department before making a decision on the way forward. He advised Members that the Department had confirmed that the independent Job Evaluations of senior posts would be carried out retrospectively.

Referring to the Review, the Chair explained to Members that the Department was awaiting the DID Report into its Review of NIFRS. He stated that the Report will make recommendations about the future organisational structure of NIFRS, including the roles and responsibilities of senior Director posts. The independent evaluation of senior posts will follow the Review.

With regard to the future organisational structure, the Chair stated that any recommendations pertaining to the Board were a matter for the Department while those pertaining to the internal NIFRS structure would be a matter for the Board and the Chief Fire Officer. He stated that he had received assurances that the Report will be presented to the Board to consider.

The Chair further explained that the recommendations contained within the Report had been verbally reported within the Department.

Grievance Appeal

The Chair explained that there was a Grievance Appeal to be heard by the Board, therefore, a Panel needed to be established to consider the Appeal.

The Board, on the motion of Mrs Gilliland, seconded by Mr Campbell, agreed that the Panel should consist of the Chair, Mrs Tally, Mr Harper and Mr Pollock.

Notice of Intention to Retire

The Chair circulated a letter from the Chief Fire Officer giving notice of his intention to retire from NIFRS in March 2010.

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

Resolved: **“to give permission, in accordance with The Firefighters’ Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007, Article 13(2)(a), for the Chief Fire Officer to retire and to approve the commencement of the recruitment process to appoint a new Chief Fire Officer”.**

Discussion took place with regard to aspects of the recruitment process. The Chair explained that a Special Meeting would be convened to appoint the Panel, etc.

At this point,
the Chief Fire Officer and the Officers
rejoined the Meeting

The Chair advised the Officers of 3 items which Members had dealt with in their absence –

- Letter from DHSSPS confirming that the Board should deal with the legal advice received relating to repayment as it feels appropriate;
- Job Evaluations of senior posts – Job Evaluations will be conducted retrospectively;

- DID Report – at a first glance this will make recommendations on the future organisational structure including the roles and responsibilities of senior Director posts.

The Chair clarified that, while recommendations relating to the structure of the Board were a matter for the Minister and the Department, recommendations relating to the internal structure of NIFRS were for the Board to consider.

9 Chief Fire Officer's Report

The Chief Fire Officer circulated the NIFRS Board Monthly News Brief, November 2009, for the information of Members.

Operational Activities

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave Members a brief outline of operational activities and incidents of note for the month of October 2009.

Management Accounts

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave the Meeting a detailed overview of the financial position for the period ending 31 October 2009.

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

10 Relevant Correspondence

Members noted that the following relevant correspondence had been previously discussed in the Meeting –

Letter from the Chief Fire Officer – Notice of Intention to Retire.

11 Sealing of Documents

Members approved the undernoted documents for Sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Robert James Bingham and Christine Ella Bingham – Licence Agreement – Lands at 1 Hill Street, Lurgan (adjacent to 170 Hill Street, Lurgan).

12 Meetings of the Board and its Committees

Members noted there were no Meetings of the Board and its Committees scheduled for the month of December but that Meetings would be convened in response to any urgent matters.

A list of proposed Meeting dates for 2010 was circulated for the information of Members and it was noted that the next regular Meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on 26 January 2010. Dates for Committee Meetings will be agreed with Committee Chairs.

The Chair reminded Members that a Special Meeting would be convened in December.

Referring to the Chief Fire Officer's letter, Mr Harper, on behalf of Members, expressed disappointment at the Chief Fire Officer's decision. He paid tribute to the Chief Fire Officer's excellent service and extended best wishes for the future.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 3.15 PM
