

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

26 JANUARY 2016

2.10 PM

PRESENT: Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding
Mr D Ashford, Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
Mr J Barbour
Mr A Hanna
Mr K Henning
Mr R Irvine
Mr P Martin
Mr G Smyth

APOLOGIES: Mr C Enright

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Graham, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operational Support)
Mr G Thompson, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations)
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
Mrs E Magee, Head of HR Advisory
Mr M Denny, Local Government Group
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Mr J Millar, DHSSPS Observer

Prior to the commencement of business, the Chairperson thanked Mr Henning for organising, through the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, a presentation on the PSNI Transformational Change from Assistant Chief Constable S Martin which Members had received at an Information Session prior to the Board Meeting.

She noted that a Health & Safety training session for the Board had also taken place that morning.

The Chairperson acknowledged that the Meeting was behind schedule and reminded the Chairs of the Standing Committees that Committee Minutes had been presented for noting with Committee recommendations being presented for approval and it would not, therefore, be necessary to report the details of the Meetings. However, Chairs should point out any matters which they felt should be emphasised for all Members' information.

Item 1: Apologies

Apologies were noted.

Item 2: Declaration of Interests

The Chairperson 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 apparent conflicts of interest.

The Chairperson stressed the importance of maintaining a Register of Interests and ensuring its currency and for the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee to be aware of same. She referred Members to a recent publication by NIAO - Conflicts of Interest Good Practice Guide and commended the Guidance to Members.

With regard to Paragraph 21 of the Code of Accountability for Board Members, the Chairperson noted herself, Mr Irvine and Mr Martin had previously declared, as appropriate, conflicts of interest. She noted that Mr Enright would be required to formally declare or not any conflicts of interest at the next Board Meeting.

Item 3: Minutes – 24 November 2015

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 24 November 2015, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Henning.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

Reports from Board Committees, including Adoption of Committee Minutes

The Chairperson referred to a Member's comments from an earlier meeting regarding draft revised documents being presented with changes tracked to assist Members in their consideration of such documents. She re-affirmed her support of this and asked for assurances that this would be done from now on.

Item 4: Reports from Board Committees, including Adoption of Committee Minutes

The Chairperson explained that Committee Minutes would now be circulated for noting by the Board only, with the Committee's recommendations being presented for approval. The Chairperson noted that Minutes of Committees will now be presented to the relevant Committee for ratification.

Service Delivery Committee - Minutes – 16 December 2015

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Service Delivery Committee held on 16 December 2015 were noted.

Mr Barbour, Chairman of the Service Delivery Committee, proposed that the Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, be approved by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Henning.

Recommendations

- Approval of the introduction of a targeted approach for the provision of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) from 1 April 2016 – HFSCs to be only offered to People at Risk;
- Approval to commence a review of the current NIFRS People at Risk Strategy 2013-16 and NIFRS HFSC Policy;
- Approval of the proposed definition of a Person at Risk as contained within the Briefing Paper to enable commencement of public consultation;
- Approval of the revised protocol from 1 April 2016 of fitting a further smoke alarm if indicated by the HFSC in the bedroom of a person who due to poor mobility is deemed to be at risk.

Resources Committee – Minutes – 16 December 2015

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Resources Committee held on 16 December 2015 were noted.

Mr Henning, Chairman of the Resources Committee, gave a brief overview of the key business discussed by the Committee. He proposed that the Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, be approved by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Smyth.

Recommendations

- Approval of the draft NIFRS Communications Strategy 2015-2020;
- Approval for the development of shared service options for IT with BSO which will include a fully managed service;
- Approval of NIFRS Job Evaluation Policy & Procedure for Support Staff subject to any changes following consultation;
- Approval of revised NIFRS Equality and Inclusion Statement and Equal Opportunities Policy;
- Approval to confirm voluntary severance within Regional Control Centre for Employee 1 as set out in the Briefing Paper;
- Approval to make an exception to NIFRS Maternity Policy by not seeking repayment of contractual maternity pay should the individual concerned accept the formal offer of voluntary severance;
- Approval of revised NIFRS Corporate Procurement Strategy and Policy.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 17 December 2015

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 17 December 2015 were noted.

Mr Smyth, Chairman of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, gave a brief summary of the key points discussed at the Meeting and answered Members' questions.

The Chairperson sought an update on the current position with regard to the Working Group looking at the matter of Confidentiality across the organisation. Mr Smyth confirmed that he and the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer had had initial discussions and would be taking this forward on the return of the Director of Planning, Performance & Governance from Leave. The Chairperson stressed the need to progress this work and requested an update on progress from the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer at the March Meeting as in her view this was a priority action which was initially targeted from November 2015.

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

Recommendations

- Approval of the deferral of the Audit of Pensions to 2016/17 Internal Audit Plan;
- Acceptance of the Audit of Budgetary Control;
- Approval of NAO Audit Committee Self-Assessment Checklist - NIFRS 2014/15;
- Approval of the Controls Assurance Questionnaire Outcomes 2015/16 for Environmental Management, Food Hygiene, Governance and Risk Management;
- Approval of the revised Stocktaking Procedure, subject to a minor amendment; and the revised Post Evaluation Procedure;
- Approval of the revised suite of Information Governance Policies and that these Policies move onto a 3-year rolling review cycle or sooner if deemed necessary;
- Approval of the revised suite of Risk Management Policies and that these Policies move onto a 3-year rolling review cycle or sooner if deemed necessary.

Special Resources Committee – Minutes – 24 November 2015

The Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Resources Committee held on 24 November 2015 were noted, and the recommendation contained therein, as detailed below, was adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Hanna.

Recommendation

- Approval to confirm voluntary severance within the HR Directorate for Employees 1, 2 and 3, as set out in the Briefing Paper.

Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson referred to the Assembly Debate relating to NIFRS which had taken place on 18 January 2016 and enquired if there had been outwork from the debate.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer stated that it was business as usual and work continued as normal, however, the debate had resulted in an increase in Assembly Questions and Freedom of Information requests.

The Chairperson asked if the transcript of the debate was available. The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer advised that the transcript had been emailed to Members.

Manchester

The Chairperson referred to Mr Smyth's and the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer's recent fact-finding visit to Manchester Fire & Rescue Service.

Mr Smyth reported positively on the visit and gave a brief overview of the visit and his key observations.

Post Meeting Note: a copy of Mr Smyth's report is available on request from the Chairperson.

Personal Tribute

The Chairperson, on behalf of her family, thanked everyone for their condolences and support on the death of her mother on 19 January. She stated she was also enormously grateful to the Board Members, staff at NIFRS, the Fire Brigades' Union and the Corporate Management Team and, also DHSSPS, for their sympathy and support and for the great respect paid to her mother by such a strong NIFRS attendance at the funeral. She then advised Members that she was not taking a period of bereavement leave.

Item 5: Strategic Standalone Items Finance Report

Members noted a Briefing Paper providing an update on the financial position as at 31 December 2015.

The Director of Finance gave an overview of the current revenue financial position highlighting an overall underspend of £69k which indicated that actions taken following the previously reported overspends had been effective. She noted the key risks and assured Members that the Corporate Management Team is committed to achieving a revenue breakeven position by 31 March 2016.

The Director of Finance summarised the Capital financial position and the key risks. She stated that the Corporate Management Team will continue to closely monitor the financial position.

Members noted that the Director of Finance will provide a further update to the Resources Committee at its Meeting in February.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer circulated a Briefing Paper incorporating a draft follow-up letter relating to budget information requested by DHSSPS. He gave Members an explanation of the information presented and also explained that DHSSPS is aware that the information has not been approved by the Board.

The Director of Finance outlined the background to the budget information request and provided a synopsis of the information requested and NIFRS' response.

The Chairperson highlighted the confidentiality of the information presented and pointed out the need for Members to have an opportunity to scrutinise the Briefing Paper and to raise any queries.

Following discussion, it was agreed that Members should forward any comments to the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and Director of Finance by 2 February 2016. Should no comments be received document to be taken as approved.

Vehicle Insurance

The Director of Finance noted that previously NIFRS had undertaken its own procurement process for NIFRS vehicle insurance. She stated that there is a sector-wise procurement process for insurance and explained that discussions had been held with CPD regarding same. She further explained that approval is being sought for NIFRS to go forward with a joint collaborative approach to the procurement of vehicle insurance.

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

Resolved: “to approve a joint collaborative approach to the procurement of Vehicle Insurance for NIFRS.”

Business Cases

Management & Organisational Development Solutions

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for Management & Organisational Development Solutions.

The Director of HR outlined the purpose of the Business Case.

Learning Management System

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for Learning Management System was noted.

The Director of Finance gave a brief overview of the purpose of the Business Case. The Director of HR explained that the recording of training data is a key risk for FRSTC.

Computer Hardware

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for Computer Hardware.

The Director of Finance outlined the background and purpose of the Business Case. She explained that the Business Case forms part of the IT Action Plan presented to the Resources Committee. She further explained that the final costs still required to be clarified by the Procurement Department.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Barbour, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve the Business Cases for Management & Organisational Development Solutions; Learning Management System; and Computer Hardware.”

The Chairperson referred to the current SLA for Legal Services and enquired as to whether the SLA was new or had been in place for some time. The Director of Finance advised that the SLA with BCC was a long-standing arrangement.

Following discussion, the Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Irvine, requested a review of all shared services across NIFRS and that the NIFRS Board be involved in any such review.

Item 6: Routine Correspondence

There was no routine correspondence.

Item 7: Sealing of Documents

Members noted the undernoted documents for sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Donnelly Bros Belfast Limited – supply and delivery of Skoda parts;

Ludo McGurk SVE – replacement/refurbished, and parts, for Kussmaul electrical products;

Paterson (Safety Air Systems) Limited – BA Cylinder testing;

John Dennis Coachbuilders Limited – Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations Inspections and follow-on work on Aerial Platforms;

John Dennis Coachbuilders Limited – VEMA Aerial Appliance parts; and

Bureau Veritas UK Limited – Hazardous Materials Scientific Support & Maintenance of Skills Programme.

Item 8: Schedule of Future Meetings

Members noted a schedule of future meetings and events.

The Chairperson asked Members to hold 23 February in their diaries for Induction briefings and a Special Board Meeting. She noted that the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer was working with the Director of Planning, Performance & Governance on the training and induction programme for Members. She would take an update on progress on this at the March Meeting.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted that, on 23 February, members of the Corporate Management Team would be delivering briefings on their areas of management. The Chairperson stressed the importance of Members, and especially new Members, receiving such briefings.

Items 9 and 10 were taken in Closed Session

Item 9: Desertcreat Project

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer informed Members of a proposal for civil action against Perkins & Will. He advised that legal action is the prudent way forward and also explained that the action will be taken by the Programme Board and that PSNI will underwrite the costs.

Following discussion, the Board endorsed the proposal.

At this point, all the Officers, with the exception of the
Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and the Board Administrative Secretary,
left the Meeting

Item 10: Job Evaluations – Support Directors

At this point, the Head of HR and Mr M Denny
joined the Meeting

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Denny and the Head of HR to the Meeting. She outlined how this item would be taken forward explaining that Mr Denny would be asked to present his report and provide clarification as appropriate. She noted that the Evaluation report had been re-circulated to Members.

The Chairperson invited Mr Denny to present his report.

Mr Denny made his introductions and gave a detailed explanation of the process and other considerations in conducting the Job Evaluation exercise and compiling the Report. He noted that the LGA's recommendations remained as per the report.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Denny and invited comments from Members.

A full discussion followed during which Mr Denny answered Members' questions and provided clarification regarding aspects of the Job Evaluation Report.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Denny and the Head of HR for their attendance.

At this point, the Head of HR and Mr M Denny
left the Meeting and the Meeting adjourned for 5 minutes

The Chairperson sought clarity on the further information requested by Members.

During a wide-ranging discussion, Members revisited the information previously sought but it was unanimously agreed that, at this point, there were still outstanding elements to be addressed. Members then clarified the information they sought and stressed that this was required before they could make a fully informed decision. It was further agreed by all Members that this information be considered by the Remuneration Committee when collated.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 4.40 PM

ADOPTED: _____ CHAIRPERSON AT MEETING
OF BOARD

_____ INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DATE: 22 March 2016