

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

26 AUGUST 2014

1.30 PM

PRESENT: Dr J McKee, Chairman presiding
Mr C Kerr, Interim Chief Fire Officer
Cllr D Barbour
Cllr M Carr
Mr A Hanna
Mr M Kerr
Mr C Mack
Ald Mrs G Rice
Mr G Smyth

APOLOGIES: Mr J Barbour
Mrs S Grant

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Wallace, Interim Chief Executive
Mr D Ashford, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Protection)
Mr J Allen, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operational Support)
Mrs L Cuddy, Director of Planning, Performance & Governance
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Finance
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources
Mrs C McNally, Head of Corporate Communications
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Mr J Millar, DHSSPS Observer

Item 1: Apologies

Apologies were noted.

Item 2: Declaration of Interests

The Chairman 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.

Item 3: Minutes – 24 June 2014

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 June 2014, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to a minor amendment, on the motion of Mr Mack, seconded by Mr Hanna.

Arising from the Minutes:

Pension Issues
Unpaid Absence

Members noted the updated Briefing Note relating to Unpaid Absence Pension Contributions which had been reviewed upon receipt of legal advice

The Director of Finance referred Members to the legal advice received and provided an overview of the recommendations.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Smyth, seconded by Mr Kerr, unanimously –

Resolved: “agreed that the member and all future members are required to pay both the employee and employer contributions”.

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

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 18 June 2014

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 18 June 2014, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record and the recommendations contained therein adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mr Mack, seconded by Mr D Barbour.

Arising from the Minutes:

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2013/14

It was noted that NIFRS Statement of Accounts 2013/14 were not qualified and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman gave approval to sign the Annual Report & Statement of Accounts.

Members were informed that the Annual Report & Accounts and Letter of Representation were signed on 2 July 2014 and NIFRS Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2013/14 laid before the Assembly on 4 July 2014.

Members noted the updated Report to Those Charged with Governance incorporating Management responses.

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

Resolved: “to approve the Report to Those Charged with Governance”.

Service Delivery Committee – Minutes – 12 June 2014

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Service Delivery Committee held on 12 June 2014, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record and the recommendations contained therein adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mr Kerr, seconded by Mr Carr.

Members received updates in respect of:

- Fire Safety Week - launched in Dublin on 6 October 2014;
- End of Life Vehicles – contract has been awarded;
- Media Contract – Business Case being reviewed and updated.

Item 5: Chairman's Business

The Chairman, on behalf of the Board, extended congratulations to Area Commander T Ferguson, Western Area Command, who had been appointed Deputy Chief Fire Officer for Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service effective from 1 October 2014. He commended Area Commander Ferguson for his work and dedication to the Service.

September Board Meeting

The Chairman noted that he will not be in attendance at the September Board Meeting and expressed his thanks to Mr Hanna, Vice-Chairman, who will chair the Meeting in his absence.

Official Opening – Omagh Community Fire Station & District Headquarters

The Chairman encouraged Members' attendance at the Official Opening of Omagh Community Fire Station & District Headquarters on 17 September 2014.

NJC Matters

The Chairman updated Members on the current position in regard to Pension matters.

Operational Service Delivery

The Chairman expressed his appreciation to the Interim Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Ashford and Allen for their leadership at the frontline during recent months.

Item 6: Chief Executive's Business Directors' Updates

Director of Operations

Members noted the Report from the Director of Operations.

Director of Operational Support

Members noted the Report from the Director of Operational Support.

In response to a query from the Chairman and Mr Smyth, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Allen updated Members on the current position with respect to Asset Tracking within Transport & Engineering Services.

Members asked that the compliance rate target be reviewed.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Allen answered Members' questions in relation to the information presented.

Director of Community Protection

Members noted the Report from the Director of Community Protection.

Referring to the Shirley Towers Fatal Accident Investigation Working Group and his engagement with the British Standards Institute, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford highlighted that a positive response had been received from the Institute and the British Standard applicable to mounting brackets for cables is to be changed so that in future cables will have to be supported by metal clips to meet the appropriate Standard.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford answered Members' questions regarding various aspects of the information presented.

Director of Finance

Members noted the Report from the Director of Finance.

The Director of Finance summarised the current position in respect of NIFRS revenue performance for the 4 months ended 31 July 2014. Referring to overtime expenditure and the target to reduce same by 50%, the Director of Finance accepted that there had been slippage. However, she acknowledged that the coping mechanisms did not 'go live' until May and highlighted that the Interim Chief Fire Officer and his staff were considering this matter.

The Director of Finance updated Members in respect of capital performance for the 4 months ended 31 July 2014 noting an underspend of £69k. She explained that the Corporate Management Team were proposing to declare an easement of approximately £450k capital funding in the October Monitoring Round.

Director of HR

Members noted the Report from the Director of Human Resources.

In response to concerns raised by the Chairman regarding absenteeism, the Director of Human Resources updated Members on actions to address Attendance Management and the current position with respect to the Business Case for Occupational Health.

Mr Hanna referred to the Interim Chief Executive and Chief Fire Officer roles and suggested the need to commence the process of considering the senior management structure. It was agreed that the Chairman would raise same with the Director of Human Resources to start the process.

Director of Planning, Performance & Governance

Members noted the Report from the Director of Planning, Performance & Governance.

The Chairman expressed his appreciation to the Head of Corporate Communications and her staff for all their work.

The Interim Chief Executive and Director of Planning, Performance & Governance answered Members' questions regarding various aspects of the information presented.

Item 7: Standing Items

Desertcreat Project

The Chairman noted that a brief discussion regarding the Desertcreat project had taken place during the Workshop immediately prior to the Board Meeting.

The Chairman also noted that the Board is committed to the provision of the best possible training facilities for NIFRS personnel and that the Interim Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford would continue to represent the Service on the Programme Board.

In response to a query from Mr Hanna regarding a contingency plan given the location of the One-Stop-Shop at Boucher, the Director of Planning, Performance & Governance updated Members on the project. The Director of Human Resources explained that the Area Commander (Training & Organisational Development) was actively considering longer-term solutions for FRSTC.

Item 8: Strategic Standalone Items

Budget 2014/15

Members noted the Briefing Paper relating to the 2014/15 Revenue Budget.

The Director of Finance provided an overview of the paper noting that NIFRS indicative budget was £73.389 m. She referred to the budget reductions requested by the Minister of Finance and explained that the Corporate Management Team is now looking at where and how further efficiencies could be made across all elements of Service activity and were looking at ways of doing things differently to fit within a reduced budget. The Director of Finance pointed out that NIFRS have yet to receive formal notification from DHSPPS of its original Revenue Resource Allocation or of the budgetary cuts which would be required if the 2.1% or/and 2.3% budget reductions were to become effective.

The Interim Chief Executive commented on the budget cuts requested by the Minister and highlighted the financial impact of such budgetary reductions especially in such a short timeframe. He explained that these additional cuts would require NIFRS to make some difficult decisions. He further explained that the Corporate Management Team would be considering proposals for presentation to the Board at its Meeting in September. He assured Members that the Corporate Management Team remains committed to 3 guiding principles for managing this year's budget:

- There will be no adverse impact on public safety associated with frontline service delivery;
- Firefighters' safety will not be compromised; and
- There will be no compulsory redundancies.

During discussion, Members raised concerns regarding the lack of clarity regarding NIFRS revenue budget. The Officers answered Members' questions regarding budgetary matters.

Members noted that the Board will continue to be updated as the 2014/15 budgetary position becomes clearer and options are developed to meet any additional cuts.

Banking Mandates

Members noted a Briefing Paper relating to a review of Signatories on NIFRS' 4 main Bank Accounts.

The Director of Finance gave Members an overview of the Briefing Paper and the proposals contained within the document.

Following discussion, the Board, on the motion of Mrs Rice, seconded by Mr Kerr, unanimously –

Resolved: “to delegate responsibility for the approval of general amendments to the 4 main Bank Accounts to the Accounting Officer with amendments to be reported to the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee as soon as practicable.

However, Board approval is required should an amendment involve a change to the Accounting Officer”.

Pension Status of Uniformed Temporary Promotions/Other Allowances

Members noted a Briefing Note relating to NIFRS discretion on whether Uniformed temporary promotions and other allowances are pensionable.

The Director of Finance referred Members to the Pension Amendments Order and explained that, in accordance with the Amendment Orders, it is at the discretion of the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service, as the employer, to determine whether payments for temporary promotion or other allowances such as single days acting-up and additional responsibility allowances and Continual Professional Development (CPD) are to be pensionable.

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

Resolved: “that –

- **Temporary promotions are not to be pensionable from 1 July 2014;**
- **Continual Professional Development is to continue to be pensionable from 1 July 2014 on an Additional Pension Benefit basis;**
- **Single day acting-up and Additional Responsibility Allowances remain non-pensionable in line with how they are currently treated;**
- **Temporary promotions undertaken prior to 1 July 2014 continue to be treated as pensionable pay in line with legislation;**
- **Payroll Section makes the appropriate payroll adjustments in September with regard to Continual Professional Development”.**

Review of Emergency Response Standards

Members noted a Briefing Paper on the Review of Emergency Response Standards which had been considered in detail by the Board at a Workshop immediately prior to the Board Meeting.

The Chairman commented positively on the presentation delivered during the Workshop and suggested that it would be useful for senior DHSSPS officials to receive the presentation.

The Interim Chief Fire Officer stated that the Review of Emergency Response Standards was the first in a suite of documents emanating from the IRMP. He explained the Review of Emergency Response Standards was an enabling document which will undergo consultation in the future. He assured Members that the Standards would be fully discussed prior to implementation.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Hanna, seconded by Mr Kerr, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve the Review of Emergency Response Standards”.

NIFRS Road Safety Strategy 2014-2019

Members noted the NIFRS Road Safety Strategy 2014-2019.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford provided an overview of the development of the Road Safety Strategy noting that the Strategy had undergone full public consultation.

The Interim Chief Fire Officer commended Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford and his colleagues on the development of the Strategy.

The Board, on the motion of Mrs Rice, seconded by Mr Mack, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve NIFRS Road Safety Strategy 2014-2019”.

Memorandum of Understanding with Leitrim Fire Service relating to Road Traffic Collisions on Leitrim Fermanagh Border

Members noted the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Leitrim Fire Service relating to Road Traffic Collisions on the Leitrim Fermanagh Border.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford outlined the purpose of the MoU explaining that it was a result of the Driving Change Project and is the first of a suite of cross border MoUs which will be drawn up in the coming months. He answered Members’ questions regarding the MoU.

The Board, on the motion of Mrs Rice, seconded by Mr Carr, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Leitrim Fire Service relating to Road Traffic Collisions on Leitrim Fermanagh Border”.

Business Case – End of Life Vehicles

Members noted the Executive Summary pertaining to the Business Case for End of Life Vehicles.

The Director of Finance outlined the development of the Business Case and answered Members’ questions on various aspects relating to the Business Case.

The Board, on the motion of Mrs Rice, seconded by Mr Mack, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve the Business Case for End of Life Vehicles”.

Outline Business Case - Replacement Command & Control Mobilising System

Members noted the Executive Summary in respect of the Outline Business Case for the Replacement Command & Control Mobilising System.

The Director of Finance reminded Members that, at its June Meeting, the Board had approved the release of the Outline Business Case to DHSSPS providing it was within budget of the SOC (£2.6m for Command & Control plus £650k for ICCS – Integrated Communications Control System). She explained that the Outline Business Case had been submitted to DHSSPS and had been subsequently submitted to DFP.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Allen provided an overview of the project and the preferred option.

The Director of Finance noted the assistance of DHSSPS in developing and progressing the Outline Business Case and expressed her appreciation to all concerned. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Allen supported the Director of Finance's comments.

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

Resolved: “to approve the Outline Business Case for the Replacement Command & Control Mobilising System”.

Item 9: Relevant Correspondence

There was no relevant correspondence.

Item 10: Sealing of Documents

There were no documents for sealing.

Item 11: Schedule of Future Meetings

Members noted a schedule of future Meetings.

In response to a request from the Director of Finance, it was agreed to convene a Special Meeting of the Resources Committee to consider the award of the Contracts for Cars and Vans.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 3.15 PM
