

# NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING

27 SEPTEMBER 2011

1.30 PM

PRESENT: Dr J McKee, Chair presiding  
Mr P Craig, Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive  
Mr J Barbour  
Cllr M Carr  
Mrs S Grant  
Mr A Hanna  
Ald A Hatch  
Ald Mrs G Rice  
Mrs P Tally

APOLOGIES: Cllr D Barbour  
Mr M Kerr  
Mr C Mack

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr C Kerr, Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
Mr T McGonigal, Director of Finance & Performance  
Management  
Dr D Michail, Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs  
Mrs C McNally, Corporate Communications Manager  
Mrs A Davidson, Head of HR  
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary  
Mrs H Robinson, DHSSPS  
Ms G McMaster, DHSSPS

### 1 Apologies

Apologies were noted.

### 2 Declaration of Interests

The Chair 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 conflicts of interest.

### 3 Minutes – 23 August 2011

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 August 2011, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Carr, seconded by Mr J Barbour.

Arising out of the Minutes:

### **Assessment & Development Centre Update**

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that he was scheduled to meet with the Fire Brigades' Union representative for the individuals concerned that Thursday, after which he would be arranging a meeting with the third party.

### **WPFG 2013**

The Chief Fire Officer gave a presentation to brief Members on the World Police & Fire Games 2013 to be hosted in Belfast on 1-10 August 2013.

He outlined the background to the establishment of the World Police & Fire Games and stated that today the Games are a spectacular international sporting event, offering Police Officers, Firefighters, Customs and Prison Officers from around the world an opportunity to showcase their athletic excellence in over 65 sporting events.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the 2011 New York Games which had attracted 17,000 competitors and 40,000 visitors from over 67 countries and generated \$60million. He gave Members an overview of the Games including the impact of Hurricane Irene. He highlighted the overall performance of Team NI at the Games, noting in particular the success of NIFRS Team which had claimed 5 Gold medals, 2 Silver and 1 Bronze.

The Chairman paid tribute to a member of Headquarters staff for his contribution and excellent work during the New York Games and who had presented an excellent profile of the Service.

With respect to Belfast 2013, the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that it was anticipated 14,000 athletes will attend the Games potentially generating £30million in revenue for NI plc. Belfast will host 68 sports during the Games in 35 sporting venues bringing with it an opportunity to improve inter-agency co-operation and to create a legacy for sport, the Services, the young people and NI plc; putting Northern Ireland on the map as able to run and deliver a major sporting event over 2 weeks.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that 90% of the sports will be hosted within the greater Belfast area and 3,500 volunteers would be required to assist. He gave an outline of NIFRS involvement in supporting the delivery of the Games emphasising that there was no NIFRS financial contribution to the Games. He added, however, there would be a need for NIFRS to second staff to support the Games.

He gave a brief overview of the issues to be addressed such as accommodation; infrastructure and transport; numbers of volunteers; the changing security situation particularly the external perception of NI which needed to be managed.

The Chief Fire Officer stated that hosting the Games was an opportunity to enhance our country, our emergency services and our community, delivering success and sense of achievement for NIFRS, its staff and NI plc.

Members noted that further information was provided on the WPFG website at [www.2013wpfg.com](http://www.2013wpfg.com).

In response to a question from Mrs Tally regarding input from other Agencies such as the Health Service in planning for the Games, the Chief Fire Officer explained that a company - 2013 WPFGB Limited – had been established. He explained the make-up of the Company and the role it would fulfill in taking the Games forward.

During further discussion, Members noted the issues to be addressed in terms of the Games particularly with respect to accommodation and stressed the need for assistance to be sought from local Councils and for matters to be addressed at an early stage. Mr Hatch explained that a representative from NILGA would be able to assist and advise the Board.

The Chief Fire Officer pointed out that the Board of the Company had been established to address such issues and that the role of NIFRS will be to facilitate the work of the 2013 WPFGB Board.

Members acknowledged the role of the 2013 WPFGB Board but reiterated the need for NIFRS input with regard to such issues given the potential impact on the respective Services involved in the Games. Mrs Tally indicated that it would be beneficial for Members to be aware of the make-up of the 2013 WPFGB Board, etc.

The Chairman suggested that it would be useful for the NIFRS Board to receive an early presentation from the 2013 WPFGB Board and for Members to have an early opportunity to voice their concerns regarding the issues facing Belfast and NI as a whole in hosting the 2013 Games.

It was agreed that the Chief Fire Officer would extend an invitation to 2013 WPFGB Limited to give a presentation at a future Board Meeting.

#### **4 Reports from Board Committees, including adoption of Committee Minutes**

##### **Audit & Risk Management Committee Minutes – 12 September 2011**

The Minutes of the Audit & Risk Management Committee Meeting held on 12 September 2011 were circulated at the Meeting.

Mrs Rice, Chairman of the Committee, gave Members a detailed overview of the Business discussed which had included receipt of a number of Internal Audit Reports and the revised draft NIFRS Fraud Policy Statement and Fraud Response Plan.

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave Members a brief background to the revised documentation and also an explanation of the amendments suggested by the NI Audit Office.

Following consideration, the Minutes of the Audit & Risk Management Committee Meeting held on 12 September 2011 were taken as read and signed as a true record and the recommendations contained therein adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mrs Grant, seconded by Mr Hatch.

Mr Hatch referred to Minutes being circulated during the Meeting and suggested that it would assist Members if these Minutes were circulated prior to the commencement of the Meeting.

The Chairman supported Mr Hatch's comments.

### **Service Delivery & Performance Committee Minutes – 19 September 2011**

The Minutes of the Service Delivery & Performance Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2011 were circulated at the Meeting.

Mr Hatch, Chairman of the Committee, reported on the Business discussed at the Meeting highlighting that the key Item of Business was the draft NIFRS Integrated Risk Management Plan 2012-2015 and advised the Meeting that the Committee had recommended approval of the Plan.

The Chairman of the Board stated that the Meeting had been a positive one and congratulated the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer on the work completed.

Following consideration, the Minutes of the Service Delivery & Performance Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2011 were taken as read and signed as a true record and the recommendations contained therein adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mr Hanna, seconded by Mrs Rice.

### **Remuneration Committee Minutes – 25 January 2011**

Members noted the Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 25 January 2011.

### **Minutes – 19 September 2011**

The Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2011 were circulated at the Meeting.

The Chief Fire Officer referred Members to Item 4 of the Minutes – Additional Responsibility Allowance Payments – and explained that approval had been given to proceed with ARA payments to 23 members of staff and not 41 as reported at the Meeting.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided clarification on a number of points raised by Members regarding the matter of the payment of ARA.

Mr J Barbour pointed out that the Additional Responsibility Allowance was a nationally agreed payment under NJC Scheme of Conditions of Service and informed the Meeting of the Representative Body's frustration with the ongoing delay with the payment of outstanding and current ARA entitlements.

The Chairman assured Members that the Remuneration Committee had considered the matter in detail as the Board attaches great importance in terms of scrutiny to the awarding of ARAs and honoraria.

Following consideration, the Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2011 were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to a minor amendment, and the recommendations contained therein adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mr Hanna, seconded by Mr Hatch.

### **Human Resources Committee Minutes – 21 September 2011**

The Minutes of the Human Resources Committee Meeting held on 21 September 2011 were circulated at the Meeting.

Mr Hanna, Chairman of the Human Resources Committee, gave Members a brief overview of the Business discussed.

Mr Hanna acknowledged Members' comments regarding the circulation of Minutes at the Board Meeting but pointed out the difficulties of servicing Committee Meetings the week prior to Board Meetings.

The Chief Fire Officer gave a synopsis of the position with respect to vacant senior posts and the strategic review of HR. He also provided further clarification to Members on the Executive Leadership Programme.

Following consideration, the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee Meeting held on 21 September 2011 were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to a minor amendment, and the recommendations contained therein adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mrs Rice, seconded by Mrs Grant.

Mrs Rice referred to the issue of circulation of Minutes at the Board Meeting and suggested the need to reconsider the schedule for Meetings.

The Chief Fire Officer stated that the level of Meetings was as a consequence of the summer period and explained that the Corporate Management Team were working to realign the schedule.

The Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs concurred with the Chief Fire Officer's comments and highlighted the work involved in preparing the Minutes within the very short timeframe in late summer.

## **5 Chairman's Business (including National Joint Council Matters)**

### **Report from Special Meeting**

The Chairman reported on the Special Meeting, held in closed session, on 9 September 2011.

## **Members' Training**

The Chairman informed Members that it was proposed to hold a combined Risk Management and Best Practice in Audit Committees training course at NIFRS Headquarters. Members noted that the training would be tailored to suit our needs and be significantly cheaper than other options. The proposed dates are either 19 or 20 January 2012. The Board Administrative Secretary to forward details of the training to Members and ascertain availability.

## **NIFRS Standing Committees - Priorities**

The Chairman also informed the Board that he had talked to the various Committee Chairs to agree specific priorities for each Committee for the months ahead.

## **Chairman's Quarterly Review: July to September 2011**

The Chairman's Quarterly Review for the period July to September 2011 was circulated for the information of Members.

## **6 Chief Fire Officer's Business**

Members noted the Chief Fire Officer's Report for the month of August 2011.

### **Operational Performance**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave Members an overview of NIFRS operational performance during August. He informed Members that the Operational Management Framework had been implemented in July and this was having an impact on operational performance. It was noted that a report on the implementation of the Operational Management Framework would be presented to the next Meeting of the Service Delivery & Performance Committee.

Mrs Rice requested that a traffic light report with respect to operational performance issues/risks to be prepared for Audit & Risk Management Committee to enable the Committee to monitor matters and ensure action is being taken.

### **Prevention Performance**

The Chief Fire Officer gave a brief account of prevention performance highlighting progress with respect to Media Services Tender and NIFRS contribution to NI Housing Executive Fire Safety Guide in houses of multiple occupancy.

### **HR Performance**

The Chief Fire Officer referred Members to discussions at the Human Resources Committee Meeting on 21 September 2011 with respect to the Wholetime recruitment campaign and vacant Senior Officer posts.

With respect to the Wholetime recruitment campaign, it was noted that 5,850 applications had been received and that there was a 13% female applicant rate.

Members also noted NIFRS Key Performance Indicators Summary for the period April to June 2011. The Chief Fire Officer gave a synopsis drawing Members' attention to the key areas where targets were not within 5% limit of being achieved. He answered Members' questions regarding aspects of the information presented.

In response to a question from Mrs Rice regarding Fire Safety Legislation and the possibility of a report to Members in terms of enforcement, the Chief Fire Officer explained that NIFRS is required to publish such information on its website. He suggested, however, that a Quarterly Report detailing any Enforcement Notices, etc, issued by NIFRS be presented to Service Delivery & Performance Committee.

Mr Hatch congratulated the Corporate Management Team on an excellent report.

### **Financial Performance**

Members noted a comparison of the original profiled revenue and capital positions against the actual expenditure incurred at the end of August 2011. The Management Accounts Report for the period ending 31 August 2011 was also noted.

The Director of Finance & Performance Management circulated a supplementary paper detailing NIFRS revenue position taking account of the £3m budgetary reduction in revenue recently advised by the Department. It was noted that this applies to the current financial year and for the 3 subsequent financial years 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15.

He gave Members a detailed account of the information presented particularly with respect to the indicative impact on the August reported position explaining that the indicative revised budgetary position would suggest an overspend of £277k. He pointed out, however, that given the level of vacant posts currently, this position should be manageable within the current year. He stated that the Corporate Management Team had a meeting scheduled later this week to further consider the budget position.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the reports at the Service Delivery & Performance Committee with regard to recruitment, etc, and in particular to the need to move forward with promotions in January in order to meet profiled expenditure with respect to training.

The Chairman referred to the underspend in the training budget which reflected NIFRS current establishment position and stated the need to monitor this position in the next financial year as NIFRS moves forward with its appointment and promotion process.

In response to comments from Members regarding the impact of the underspend in staffing costs, the Chief Fire Officer acknowledged that NIFRS was currently under establishment but emphasised that this was being addressed.

The Chairman referred to Members' previous comments and significant concerns regarding the continuing underspends and advised Members that he continually sought updates. He assured Members that the Corporate Management Team were working to address same.

Mr J Barbour stated that the organisation was aware that the budget had been indicative and the underspend had left NIFRS vulnerable. He stated that whilst the £3m reduction in the current year was manageable he had concerns regarding the impact on future years. He noted there was a lot of work required to plan for same and suggested the need to seek the rationale for the level of reduction. He also stressed the need for Members to have the paperwork relating to the recurrent reduction and its impact/risk to the Organisation in order to commence challenging this reduction for future years.

During a full and frank discussion regarding the matter, the Chief Fire Officer acknowledged Members' frustration and concerns particularly in relation to continuing underspend in staffing costs. He stressed that he, the Corporate Management Team and their staff were working extremely hard to address and progress matters.

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave Members an overview of the current Capital expenditure position. He noted that it was imperative that corporate aims and objectives are prioritised and that Business Cases are 'on the shelf ready to spend'. He explained that NIFRS would be submitting a paper to DHSSPS as part of the October monitoring round which will identify any known easements and make recommendations with regards to how easements could be reallocated to other priority projects.

### **Contracts Awarded – August 2011**

Members noted a list of Contracts awarded for the month of August 2011. The Officers answered Members' questions regarding the information presented.

### **7 Relevant Correspondence**

The following relevant correspondence was noted:

- (a) Letter from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland approving NIFRS Equality Scheme;
- (b) Letter of appreciation from 2<sup>nd</sup> Medical Brigade and 204 Field Hospital (Volunteers) for NIFRS support to Exercise Medical Challenge, 3-5 June 2011;
- (c) Letter of congratulations from the Minister for Health, Social Services & Public Safety, Edwin Poots MLA, following NIFRS success at WPF 2011;
- (d) Letter from Minister for Health, Social Services & Public Safety, Edwin Poots MLA, accepting NIFRS invitation to attend launch of Fire Safety Week;
- (e) Letter from Fire Brigades' Union – Trade Dispute: Pensions in the Fire Service;
- (f) Letter of appreciation from Consulate General of the United States of America following NIFRS attendance at 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony at Belfast City Hall.

## 8 Sealing of Documents

There were no documents for sealing.

## 9 Any Other Business

There was no other Business.

## 10 Schedule of Future Meetings

Members noted a Schedule of Meetings, etc, of the Board and its Committees for the month of October.

## Long Service and Good Conduct Ceremony

The Chief Fire Officer informed members that the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal Ceremony to be held on 1 October 2011 would be the first combined Ceremony for Operational and Support staff. He encouraged Members to attend.

## Launch of Fire Safety Week

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the launch of Fire Safety Week on 3 October 2011 would now commence at 12.00 noon.

## Finance Committee – 4 October 2011

The Chief Fire Officer explained that given the work currently being undertaken with respect to budgets, he felt that it would be prudent to postpone and reschedule the Finance Committee Meeting. **This was agreed.**

## October Board Meeting

The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the October Board Meeting will be held at Crescent Link, Londonderry. He asked Members to advise the Board Administrative Secretary if they wished to have a tour of the premises and also if they require transport.

## Special Committee Meetings

Members noted that it would be necessary to convene Special Meetings of the Human Resources Committee and Audit & Risk Management Committee during October.

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THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS  
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED  
AT 4.10 PM

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