

# NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING

27 OCTOBER 2009

1.50 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  
Mrs P Tally

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr L Jones, Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
Mr T Wright, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Technical Development)  
Ms A Conley, Director of Human Resources  
Mr T McGonigal, Director of Finance & Performance Management  
Mrs U McCambridge, Corporate Communications Officer  
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary  
Mrs H Robinson, DHSSPS

As everyone was in attendance, the Chairman proposed that the Meeting be convened at 1.50 pm. Members agreed.

### 1 Apologies

There were no apologies.

### 2 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 September 2009, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Pollock, seconded by Mr Harper.

Arising out of the Minutes:

### Recruitment Procedures

Members noted a report on Recruitment Procedures which had been prepared in light of concerns raised by Members on the question of the use of Assessment Centres, the details of the contract for providing them and the timescales associated with the recruitment process.

Mrs Tally thanked the Chief Fire Officer for the comprehensive report and explained that she had initially raised concerns in relation to the timeframes for progressing appointments and the need for Assessment Centres. With respect to the issue of value for money, she suggested that NIFRS examine the prudence of the Assessment Centre process for all bands of non-uniformed staff.

Mr Bradley referred to a report prepared by Deloitte which had been previously presented to the Service Support Committee on the matter and stated that there were advantages to using Assessment Centres, there were also disadvantages. He acknowledged that Assessment Development Centres were an excellent and valuable tool for promotion but concurred with Mrs Tally as to the appropriateness of using Assessment Centres for all vacancies.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the use of the Assessment Centre arrangement for initial entry into the Service and for promotion was Board policy. He further explained the purpose of the Assessment Centre in the recruitment process and stressed that NIFRS was committed to the use of Assessment Centres as a skills test system. He pointed out that the calibre of person which NIFRS has been able to recruit to the Organisation has been exceptional.

During further discussion on the matter, the Chief Fire Officer and Director of Human Resources answered Members' questions on various aspects of NIFRS Recruitment and Selection Procedures.

In response to a query from the Chair, the Chief Fire Officer explained that a Business Case was currently being developed in respect of the Contract for the provision of Assessment Centres.

Mrs Tally sought clarification as to whether the Business Case would be presented to the relevant Standing Committee. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that this would be the case.

### **NIFRS Guidance on Offers and the Acceptance of Gifts, Hospitality, Awards, Prizes and Sponsorship**

At the Board Meeting on 22 September 2009, the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that NIFRS Guidance on Offers and the Acceptance of Gifts, Hospitality, Awards, Prizes and Sponsorship had been reviewed in light of revised Guidance on Acceptance and Provision of Gifts and Hospitality received from DFP.

Members noted the revised Guidance on Offers and the Acceptance of Gifts, Hospitality, Awards, Prizes and Sponsorship.

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

**Resolved:**                    **“to approve NIFRS Guidance on Offers and the Acceptance of Gifts, Hospitality, Awards, Prizes and Sponsorship”.**

### **Statutory Annual Accounts – ‘Band Minima’**

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that a report on the issue of NIFRS commencing new entrants on band minima of the relevant scale would be presented to the Service Support Committee.

Mr Bradley referred to the Equality Pay Briefing from the Equality Commission on Starting Pay and suggested that the paper be circulated to all Members for information.

### **Review of Action Plan**

The Chair sought an update on progress with respect to the Business Case for the provision of Job Evaluations.

The Director of Human Resources outlined the current position.

The Chair pointed out the need to progress the matter.

### **O’Brien Pension Issue**

The Chair reminded the Meeting that the Panel Members had undertaken to consider the development of a comprehensive policy relating to travel and clarification of the issue of ‘on’ or ‘off’ duty.

Mr Bradley explained that the Panel had considered the matter in detail and had concluded that it would be very difficult to construct an all-embracing Policy to cover every eventuality and which would allow some flexibility. He further explained that the Panel had concluded that NIFRS -

- contact other Fire & Rescue Authorities to ascertain if they have a Policy, or if they have prepared any relevant explanatory document for their own staff;
- make the same enquiries at NJC level;
- carry out an internal review of the work practices that may have relevance to this matter; and
- report the findings to the Service Support Committee.

The Chair reiterated that the Panel had agreed it was not feasible to develop a policy but had asked that the above points be addressed.

### **3 Remuneration Committee Meeting – 22 September 2009**

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 22 September 2009.

#### 4 **Remuneration Committee Meeting – 27 October 2009**

The Chair gave Members a verbal report pertaining to the Items of Business discussed at the Remuneration Committee Meeting held that morning. In particular he referred to the legal advice received in relation to the issue of repayment and explained that the Committee had agreed to await the outcome of the Job Evaluations commissioned by the Department before making a decision on the way forward.

#### 5 **Review of Committee Structure and Membership**

Members noted that Standing Order 3 requires the Board to review the Committee structure and membership at each October Board Meeting.

The Chair referred Members to the Paper on Committee Membership the purpose of which was for the Board to consider:

- (a) whether any changes in the Committee structure are desirable at this time;
- (b) changes in Committee membership resulting from the temporary reduction in Board Members from 12 to 8 (including Chair and Chief Fire Officer).

He advised Members that he had received no suggestions regarding the matter.

Mr Bradley suggested that, in light of the Review, the present Committee Structure remain in place and that the Board reconsider the matter once the outcome of the Review is known.

The Chair assured Members that although Standing Orders stated October for the review of Committee Structure and Membership the matter could be reviewed at any stage.

Referring to Committee membership, the Chair reminded Members that there were a number of vacancies on the Committees and sought nominations for the vacant role of Chair of the Equality & Diversity Forum.

Mr Campbell proposed Mr Bradley as Chair of the Forum. Mrs Gilliland seconded the proposal. There were no other nominations.

It was accordingly –

**Resolved:**                   **“that Mr P Bradley be elected as Chair of the Equality & Diversity Forum”.**

The Chair sought nominations for the vacant role of Vice-Chair of the Service Delivery Committee.

Mrs Tally proposed Mr Pollock as Vice-Chair of the Service Delivery Committee. Mrs Gilliland seconded the proposal. There were no other nominations.

It was accordingly –

**Resolved:**               **“that Mr R Pollock be elected as Vice-Chair of the Service Delivery Committee”.**

The Chair sought nominations for the vacant role of Vice-Chair of the Service Support Committee.

Mrs Gilliland proposed Mr Campbell as Vice-Chair of the Service Support Committee. Mr Pollock seconded the proposal. There were no other nominations.

It was accordingly –

**Resolved:**               **“that Mr J Campbell be elected as Vice-Chair of the Service Support Committee”.**

The Chair sought nominations for the vacant role of Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee.

Mr Campbell proposed Mrs Tally as Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee. Mr Pollock seconded the proposal. There were no other nominations.

It was accordingly –

**Resolved:**               **“that Mrs P Tally be elected as Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee”.**

## **6       National Joint Council Matters**

### **Report on Meetings**

The Chair informed Members that he had attended a meeting of the National Joint Council on 16 October 2009. He explained that it was the first meeting for the newly appointed Chair, Councillor B Coleman of London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority and gave Members an overview of Councillor Coleman’s strong views regarding the constitution of the NJC. He also gave Members a brief outline of the Business discussed at the meeting.

Members noted that a meeting of the National Employers was scheduled to take place in November with a full NJC meeting scheduled for December.

### **NIFRS Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2008/09**

The Chair informed the Meeting that the NIFRS Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2008/09 had been published.

## 7 **Chair's Business**

The Chair gave Members a synopsis of his activities since the last Meeting of the Board and highlighted in particular the official Opening of Armagh Community Fire Station and expressed his appreciation to all those involved in the organising of the event.

## 8 **Chief Fire Officer's Report**

The Chief Fire Officer circulated the NIFRS Board Monthly News Brief, October 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 September 2009.

In response to a question from Mr Bradley, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave Members a brief of the incident at Eglinton, Londonderry, and reported positively on the multi-agency working at the incident. The Chair advised Members that he had asked the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer to give Members a presentation regarding the incident at a future Meeting.

### **Management Accounts**

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave the Meeting an overview of the Management Accounts for the period ending 30 September 2009. He informed Members that following a request from the DHSSPS in September NIFRS had reviewed its budgets to ascertain if any funding could be surrendered to assist with the financial pressure facing the Department in respect of the ongoing Swine Flu pandemic. He explained to Members in-year easements had been identified and £1 million of funding had been surrendered to the Department.

Whilst not disputing that the funding should have been surrendered, Mr Campbell expressed concern the Board had not had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for surrendering the funding and the relevant approval sought.

Mr Bradley concurred with Mr Campbell and pointed out that NIFRS budget was the responsibility of the Board. He acknowledged that the timeframe was a contributor in the matter and also acknowledged the work of the Director of Finance & Performance Management in monitoring and managing the budgets.

The Chief Fire Officer noted the Members' comments and stated that, in future, a Special Meeting would be convened if necessary in order to address urgent matters.

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At this point,  
Mrs Tally left the Meeting  
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## **Cross Border Road Safety Initiative – Presentation**

Members were reminded that one of the actions in this year's NIFRS Annual Business Plan was to "establish a Cross Border Road Safety Steering Group to oversee implementation of a 3-year joint collaboration initiative".

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that NIFRS, in collaboration with a number of partners, had been successful in a bid for European funding to deliver the cross border project.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave Members a presentation on the Cross Border Road Safety Initiative, "Driving Change", the first initiative of its type in Europe. This public sector collaboration project will be delivered over a 3-year period with allocated European funding of £1.257 million. He gave Members an overview of the successful bid and the plans for the project.

### **9 Relevant Correspondence**

There was no relevant correspondence.

### **10 Sealing of Documents**

Members approved the undernoted documents for Sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

A Malcolmson – License on Warehouse, Castle Hill, Rathfriland;

J J McAdam & Sons – Maintenance of Grounds (1.10.09 – 30.09.11) – with the option to extend for year 3;

Landscaping Centre Limited - Maintenance of Grounds (1.10.09 – 30.09.11) – with the option to extend for year 3;

George McCarroll – Lease of Unit 5 Wallace Studios, 27 Wallace Avenue, Lisburn;

Sigma Security Devices Limited – Provision and installation of a Method of Entry Training Rig to NIFRS;

Hunter Apparel – Supply and delivery of Uniforms.

### **11 Meetings of the Board and its Committees**

Members noted a list of Meetings of the Board and its Committees for the month of November. The Chair explained to Members that, in order to facilitate a joint meeting with the Boards of PSNI and the Prison Service regarding the new Training College, it may be necessary to change the time of the November Board Meeting. He stated that he would confirm any change in time with Members as soon as possible.

Members also noted that the Service Delivery Committee Meeting had been rescheduled and would now be held on 17 November 2009 at 11.30 am.

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THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS  
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED  
AT 4.00 PM

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ADOPTED: \_\_\_\_\_ CHAIRMAN AT MEETING OF  
BOARD

\_\_\_\_\_ CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF  
EXECUTIVE

DATE: 24 November 2009