

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

27 APRIL 2010

2.00 PM

PRESENT: Mr W F Gillespie, Chair presiding
Mr L Jones, Acting Chief Fire Officer
Mr P Bradley
Mr J Campbell
Mrs B Gilliland
Mr R Pollock
Mrs P Tally

APOLOGIES: Mr K Harper

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr T Wright, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Technical 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
Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer E Doyle
Area Commander C Kerr
Miss A Maguire, Personal Secretary/Secretarial Services Supervisor
Ms C McGuire, DHSSPS

Prior the commencement of Business, the Chair informed Members of the death of the 2 Firefighters from Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service who were killed on duty on 6 April 2010. It was noted that the funeral of Firefighter Alan Bannon was held today and the funeral of Firefighter James Shearer would be held later in the week.

The Chair asked all to stand for a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer stated that he had received a letter from Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service Chief Fire Officer Bonney thanking NIFRS for their condolences.

1 Apologies

Apologies were noted.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 March 2010, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Campbell, seconded by Mrs Tally.

Arising out of the Minutes:

Tender for the Provision of Job Evaluations

The Director of Human Resources confirmed that Tenders would be evaluated on 29 April 2010 and that Members would be advised of the successful Tenderer.

Grievance Hearings

It was noted that the 2 Grievance Hearings heard on 30 March 2010 had been upheld. Members were informed that a third similar appeal had been received and it was proposed to hear the appeal following the Board Meeting.

The Chair asked Members to agree the same Panel of Mr Gillespie, Mrs Tally and Mr Pollock. Members unanimously agreed.

Temporary Head of Human Resources

Members noted that following the Service Support Committee on 15 April, 2 options had been discussed - to advertise the vacancy of Temporary Head of Human Resources in the event of a suitable secondee not being recommended by DHSSPS.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer informed Members that he had spoken to the DHSSPS who advised that a secondee would be proposed shortly following the Director of Human Resource's retirement. He stated that an advertisement was also being progressed for a temporary Head of Human Resources, if the secondee did not take up the position.

Establishment Levels

The Acting Chief Fire Officer informed Members that following the Service Delivery Committee Meeting on 29 March 2010, the proposed Establishment Levels had been agreed, following minor amendments.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer circulated the up-to-date establishment levels for Members' consideration and ratification before onward transmission to the DHSSPS.

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

Resolved: **“to approve the Establishment Levels for onward transmission to the DHSSPS”.**

3 Service Support Committee Meeting

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Service Support Committee Meeting held on 15 April 2010.

4 **Service Delivery Committee Meetings - 23 and 29 March 2010**

Members noted the Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 23 March 2010.

Members noted the draft Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 29 March 2010.

Arising out of the Minutes:

New Fire Safety Legislation

Members were informed that at the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 29 March 2010, it had been recommended that a letter be sent to NILGA to devolve functions in relation to Council Licensed Premises to local Councils.

A copy of the draft letter had been previously circulated to Members for their consideration.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the date by which NILGA must inform NIFRS of the Council's intentions, should be changed to 9 June 2010 instead of 14 May 2010.

The Board unanimously –

Resolved: **“to approve that the letter be forwarded to NILGA asking them to agree to devolved functions in relation to Council Licensed Premises to local Councils”.**

RTC Risk Assessment Update

The Acting Chief Fire Officer gave a brief overview of the presentation given at the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 29 March 2010 in relation to the proposed new NIFRS Emergency Response Standards for Road Traffic Collisions.

These Standards are:

- An 11 Minute Initial Attendance Time to set risk areas (Target 75% of occasions)
- A maximum 21 Minute Attendance Time to all RTCs (Target 90%)
- Mobilise an appliance with enhanced rescue capability to all RTCs
- Mobilise a minimum of 11 Firefighters to all RTCs where persons are reported trapped.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer asked the Board to approve the above proposed Standards.

The Board unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve the proposed new NIFRS Emergency Response Standards for Road Traffic Collisions”.

5 National Joint Council Matters

Report on Meetings

The Chair informed Members that there have been no NJC Meetings since the last Board Meeting.

The date of the next NJC Meeting would be 15 June 2010 in Edinburgh.

Members were informed that the Acting Chief Fire Officer is now a National Advisor to the NJC.

6 Chair’s Business

The Chair informed Members of a social event to be held on 19 June 2010. Invitations would be sent to Members and their partners, Principal Officers and Directors and their partners in due course.

Board Members’ Self-Assessment

The Chair reminded Members to complete and return their Self-Assessment Forms by 14 May 2010. If they have any queries, they should contact the Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs or Miss Maguire.

7 Membership of Committees

The Chair proposed that, to ensure a quorum and continuity of the Service Delivery and Service Support Committees, the remaining Members of the Board be Members of both the Service Support Committee and Service Delivery Committee, and that Standing Orders be amended to reflect the change.

The Board, on the motion of Mrs Gilliland, seconded by Mrs Tally, unanimously –

Resolved: “to approve that the remaining Members of the Board be Members of both the Service Support Committee and Service Delivery Committee, and that Standing Orders be amended to reflect the change”.

8 Chief Fire Officer's Report

Operational Activities

The Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations) gave Members a brief account of operational activities and incidents of note for the month of March.

The Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations) informed Members of correspondence received from the PSNI commending NIFRS for their actions at a fatal Road Traffic Collision in Irvinestown. He stated that he wrote on behalf of the Acting Chief Fire Officer to the crews involved commending them for their actions.

The Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations) gave Members a brief account of the operational activities from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010. It was noted that there was an overall reduction in the number of calls, mobilisations and actual number of major fires, special service calls and RTCs attended, but that there was an increase in the number of fatalities and casualties at special service calls (non-RTC).

It was noted that the Search & Rescue Team were heavily involved in special service calls.

The Chief Fire Officer and Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations) answered Members' questions on the information presented.

Sole Suppliers

Members noted and approved the list of NIFRS Sole Suppliers. The Officers answered Members' questions on the information presented.

Management Accounts

Members noted the interim report for the period ending 3 March 2010. The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave a detailed account of the information presented and answered Members' queries.

9 2010-2011 Budget Allocation Paper

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave a detailed account of the information presented and answered Members' queries. He stated that the efficiencies were an interim measure and that he would continue to review the budgets through the course of the year and make bids for additional funds. It was noted that for the revenue budget, £80.6m had been allocated.

Members expressed concern at the implications of cutting back on training, staff costs and maintenance costs. The Acting Chief Fire Officer acknowledged the implications and the need to prioritise efficiencies was discussed.

Mr Bradley asked if a synopsis of the efficiencies and the consequences could be forwarded to Members. The Acting Chief Fire Officer agreed to this.

Following a query on the staffing levels and the filling of posts, the Director of Finance & Performance Management stated that naturally there was a delay in the filling of posts and that there was some slippage. He stated that agency positions would be looked at critically to see if there were essential posts to be filled.

Members noted that for the capital budget £7.8m had been allocated.

It was noted that £1.9m efficiencies had to be achieved.

The Chief Fire Officer agreed to keep Members informed of the budget allocation through the monthly Management Accounts.

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

Resolved: “to approve the 2010/11 Budget Allocation”.

Change in Order of Business

It was agreed that Item 11 - Draft Corporate Plan 2010-2015 and Annual Business Plan 2010-2011 - be taken as the next Item of Business.

11 Draft Corporate Plan 2010-2015 and Annual Business Plan 2010-2011

Members noted that the Service Support Committee Meeting held on 15 April 2010, recommended approval of the draft Corporate Plan 2010-2015 and Annual Business Plan 2010-2011. Members noted that some minor amendments had been made to the Corporate Plan since the Service Support Committee.

Following a query from Mr Bradley in relation to a framework for Northern Ireland and whether it would affect targets, the Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs stated that a draft paper on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2010-2015 had been presented to the Service Support Committee in April and that he and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Craig had recently met with the DHSSPS in relation to the KPIs. Some minor changes and additions had been discussed and the Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs agreed to present the proposed changes to the May Board Meeting for ratification and following this submission to DHSSPS and the Minister.

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

Resolved: “to approve the Draft Corporate Plan 2010-2015 and Annual Business Plan 2010-2011”.

10 **Governance in NIFRS Procurement in Light of Northern Ireland Water Independent Review Report of 25 February 2010**

The Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs gave a presentation in relation to Governance in NIFRS Procurement in light of the Northern Ireland Water Independent Review Report of 25 February 2010.

Members noted assurance of NIFRS Procurement and Internal Audit controls.

Members noted the recommendations designed to provide further assurance in which the Acting Chief Fire Officer would bring to the Board:

- A list of all tenders exceeding £100,000 in value;
- A list of all tenders advertised in the European Journal; and
- On an annual basis a list of all NIFRS Sole Suppliers.

Following a query from Mrs Tally on Sole Suppliers and Single Tender Actions, the Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright stated that Single Tender Actions were kept to an absolute minimum and were primarily the result of organisations holding source codes in, for example, IT contracts or were the result of national procurement outcomes, for example, New Dimension.

Mr Campbell queried if a Contract Sub-Committee, represented by a Board Member, should be set up. The Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs stated that as he had highlighted in his presentation NIFRS Internal Audit Unit conducts a contract audit each year which gives Members and the Audit Committee assurance and indicated that a Sub-Committee could potentially severely inhibit the running of day-to-day business.

The Chair proposed that in addition to the recommendations already agreed previously, a list of contracts scheduled for each particular month be presented to the Board for noting. The Acting Chief Fire Officer agreed to this.

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

Resolved: **“to approve the recommendations listed above and for the submission of monthly lists of contracts to the Board”.**

12 **Relevant Correspondence**

Pension Case

Members noted that a letter had been received from a retired Firefighter’s Solicitor requesting the Board to reconsider the decision in relation to the computation of benefits payable to the Firefighter under the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme.

The Chair requested that a Panel be set up of Mr Bradley as Chair, Mrs Gilliland and Mr Campbell. Members unanimously agreed.

Mr Bradley would liaise with the Director of Finance & Performance Management and Pension Manager.

Grievance Appeals

The Chair informed Members that 2 Grievance Appeals had been heard, which had been upheld, subject to DHSSPS approval to implement the outcomes. It was noted that correspondence had been received from the DHSSPS stating that approval had not been granted.

13 Sealing of Documents

Members approved the undernoted documents for Sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Marsh Limited - Insurance and Insurance Brokerage (1 April 2010-31 March 2011); and

Pentagon Solutions - Provision of Autocad Facilities Training and Software.

14 Meetings of the Board and its Committees

Members noted a list of Meetings, etc, of the Board and its Committees for the month of May.

It was noted that the Audit Committee Meeting scheduled for 6 May would be rescheduled due to Members' unavailability. The Acting Chief Fire Officer and Mr Campbell would liaise in relation to re-arranging a suitable date.

It was noted that a date for the Service Support Committee and Service Delivery Committee Meetings would be arranged before the end of June.

It was noted that the LIFE Scheme Graduation Ceremony at Westland would be held on Friday, 30 April 2010.

It was noted that the Firefighters' Graduation Ceremony would be held on Friday, 14 May 2010 at 12.15 pm.

At this point,
the Acting Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Doyle, Area Commander Kerr, Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs, Director of Finance & Performance Management and Corporate Communications Officer left the Meeting

Notice of Retirement

The Chair drew Members' attention to 3 letters which he had received. The first letter was in relation to the Acting Chief Fire Officer's intention to retire on 27 July 2010. A letter from Assistant Chief Fire Officer Wright asked if alternative arrangements are to be considered for the Acting Chief Fire Officer post, now that it was known that there would be considerable delay in making the permanent appointment. The letter from Assistant Chief Fire Officer Craig requested information on what action, in terms of rotation of the Chief Fire Officer post, was being considered to ensure equitability to all those likely to apply when the position is advertised.

Following discussion, Members unanimously agreed that the Acting Chief Fire Officer should remain in post until 27 July 2010.

Discussion took place on the options for filling the vacancy when the Acting Chief Fire Officer retires. The Chair stated that he had sought advice from the Deputy Secretary, who had recommended that a mini competition for acting-up be arranged between the 2 substantive Assistant Chief Fire Officers.

Full discussion took place on criteria, including equivalence, for the acting-up arrangements and the format of the competition. It was noted that an independent technical advisor would be invited to advise the Interview Panel which would provide a level of assurance.

Discussion also took place on rotating the Acting Chief Fire Officer position between the 2 substantive Assistant Chief Fire Officers.

Following discussion, Members unanimously agreed that a Panel be set up, to include the Chair, Mrs Tally and Mr Harper, and that the Director of Human Resources would present the Chair with the mini competition papers by the end of the week.

The Chair stated that he would liaise with the Fire Brigades' Union regarding the Board's decision and to secure their co-operation.

The outcome of the competition would be reported to the Board Meeting in May.

The Chair stated that this Panel and the Panel set up to consider the Pension case have the power to substitute. He asked Members to approve the power to substitute if there is difficulty in agreeing dates. Members unanimously agreed.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 4.30 PM
