

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

28 SEPTEMBER 2010

11.30 AM

PRESENT: Mr A Coleman, Chair presiding
Mr P Craig, Acting Chief Fire Officer
Mr J Barbour
Mr N Birthistle
Miss F Graham
Mr A Hanna
Mr S Leach
Mrs E Mahood

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr T Wright, Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Mr C Kerr, Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Mr T McGonigal, Director of Finance & Performance Management
Mrs H Ellis, Senior Human Resources Manager
Mrs C McNally, Corporate Communications Manager
Mr E Doyle, Area Commander, Western Area Command
Mr D Ashford, Area Commander, Training & Development
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Mr D Jordan, DHSSPS

1 Apologies

There were no apologies.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 August 2010, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record.

Arising out of the Minutes:

Sealing of Documents Disposal of Land at Lurgan

The Chair reminded Members that the Board, at its Meeting on 18 August 2010, had agreed to defer further discussion on the matter of the Sealing of the Document pertaining to the transfer of land at Lurgan to South Ulster Housing Association, requesting further information on the matter.

The Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs referred to the queries raised by Members at the August Meeting and read extracts from a letter received from Land & Property Services which addressed 2 of the queries raised. He confirmed that there was no custom and practice with respect to the right of access and the adjoining owners had been kept informed throughout the entire process.

The Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs highlighted that the disposal of the land at Lurgan had been approved by 2 Ministers and added that there was nothing to preclude completion of the transfer to South Ulster Housing Association.

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

Resolved: **“to approve the Sealing of the Document relating to the transfer of land at Lurgan to South Ulster Housing Association”.**

The Chair referred to the next 2 Matters Arising out of the Minutes –

Pension – Former Acting Chief Fire Officer; and
Reports on Private Meetings;

and proposed that, given the subject matter, the Board, in accordance with NIFRS Standing Order No 29, go into Committee to consider these Items. Members agreed to this proposal.

**Draft Executive Budget 2010 Financial Planning – 2011/12 to 2014/15 –
Communication Update**

The Acting Chief Fire Officer gave Members an update on communication which had taken place across the Organisation with respect to the draft Executive Budget 2010 Financial Planning.

Members noted that the Corporate Communications Manager was working in conjunction with the Senior Management Team on the development of a communication strategy.

A brief discussion took place regarding communication within the Organisation during which the need to keep staff informed was acknowledged as well as the need to plan ahead.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer undertook to report back to the Board on the matter as appropriate.

3 Chairman's Business

Appointment of Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officers

The Chair referred to the mini recruitment exercise to fill the posts of Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer and asked the Officers concerned to leave the Meeting.

At this point,
Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer Kerr and Area Commanders Doyle and Ashford
left the Meeting

The Chair thanked the Panel Members and the Senior HR Manager for their participation in the Appointments Panel and informed the Meeting that they had recommended that Area Commander E Doyle be appointed to the post of Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Development) and Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer C Kerr be appointed to the post of Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Technical Development) and requested that the Board ratify this recommendation.

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

Resolved: **“to approve the appointment of Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer C Kerr to the post of Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Technical Development) and Area Commander E Doyle to the post of Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Development).”**

At this point,
Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer Kerr and Area Commanders Doyle and Ashford
rejoined the Meeting

The Chair, on behalf of the Members, congratulated Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer Kerr and Area Commander Doyle on their appointments.

Letter from Mrs A Foster MLA

The Chair informed Members of a detailed letter which had been received from Mrs A Foster MLA regarding the Enniskillen Memorial Montage. He explained that he had been advised of the letter received by the Acting Chief Fire Officer on 27 September 2010 late in the evening and added that the letter asked very specific questions and named individuals.

The Chair further explained that legal advice was being sought regarding the letter and that once received the matter would be brought to the Board expeditiously.

Referring to the reports on Private Meetings reported earlier in the Meeting, the Chair explained that he and the Acting Chief Fire Officer had given Mr & Mrs Gault an undertaking to ask the interim Board to consider the reinstatement of the Enniskillen Memorial Montage in the interim, until a final decision was reached on the matter.

Following discussion and careful consideration of the Enniskillen Memorial Montage issue, Members, in recognition that the only way forward in this most sensitive issue was through consensus and a locally acceptable solution, on the motion of Miss Graham, seconded by Mrs Mahood, unanimously –

Agreed: **“that the Acting Chief Fire Officer would engage and consult with the local Firefighters on the way forward and report back to the new NIFRS Board”.**

4 National Joint Council Matters

The Acting Chief Fire Officer briefed Members on the National Joint Council and explained that NIFRS had a representative on the Council.

He informed Members that a Meeting of the National Joint Council (NJC) was scheduled to take place on 30 September and explained that the NJC had indicated that it would be helpful if NIFRS was represented at the meeting and had suggested that, subject to Board approval, the Acting Chief Fire Officer represent NIFRS at that meeting.

The Chair acknowledged the interim status of the Board and given the timeframe for the meeting stated that the only way forward was for the Acting Chief Fire Officer to attend the meeting to represent NIFRS. He stated that when the new Chair and Board were in place they could decide on representation.

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

Resolved: **“to give approval, as an interim measure, for the Acting Chief Fire Officer to represent NIFRS at National Joint Council Meetings until a permanent solution is agreed by the new NIFRS Board.”**

5 Chief Fire Officer’s Report

Operational Activities

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave Members a synopsis of the operational activities and incidents of note for the month of August.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer referred to the Special Service Call on 3 August 2010 at Tunnel Brae, Castlerock, and commended the Corporate Communications Department for their assistance in relation to this tragic incident. He informed Members of his visit with one of the families who had welcomed the support and assistance of NIFRS during this sad time.

Crew Commander Gavin Miller receives Queen's Gallantry Medal

The Acting Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that Crew Commander Gavin Miller, from Limavady Fire Station, received the Queen's Gallantry Medal, one of the highest civil decorations awarded in the UK for exemplary acts of bravery.

He stated that NIFRS had nominated Crew Commander Miller for this highest accolade to recognise his outstanding bravery in rescuing his colleague Leading Firefighter Joe McCloskey from the fire at Gorteen House Hotel in Limavady on 1 November 2003. Despite the pain from the intense heat of the fire, Crew Commander Miller managed to reach his colleague and drag him to safety. Sadly Leading Firefighter McCloskey later died in hospital.

Members noted that Crew Commander Gavin Miller has been informed by the Palace that he will receive his Gallantry Medal on Tuesday, 9 November 2010.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer stated that this recognition was richly deserved and we as an organisation are incredibly proud of Crew Commander Miller.

Contracts Awarded for the Month of August 2010

Members noted a list of Contracts Awarded for the month of August 2010.

Management Accounts

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave Members a brief account of the revenue and capital positions for the period ending 31 August 2010.

6 Report from Interim Remuneration Committee Working Group

Members were reminded that at its August Meeting the Board had agreed to vary Standing Order 38 and establish an interim Remuneration Committee Working Group with delegated power to consider Additional Responsibility Allowances and Honoraria and report back to the Board.

The Chair referred to the Notes of the Meeting of the Working Group held on 24 August 2010 and in particular the Item relating to Job Evaluations. He pointed out that the Working Group had had specific terms of reference and this Item of Business would have to be submitted to the permanent Remuneration Committee of the new Board.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer gave Members a brief background to the purpose of establishing the Working Group and the procedures to be followed in order for a member of staff to be granted an Additional Responsibility Allowance (ARA). He informed the Meeting that the Working Group had recommended approval for Additional Responsibility payments to the list of personnel concerned.

The Members of the Working Group, Mrs Mahood and Mr Birthistle, stated that they had rigorously challenged the process and confirmed that they were satisfied that a robust system was in place and that it was fair and equitable.

Referring to the honorariums, the Acting Chief Fire Officer gave a brief overview of the Scheme and the background to the honorariums. He stated that both he and the Working Group Members were satisfied that the Support Staff in question should receive their honoraria for the work which they had undertaken.

Members noted the recommendations of the interim Remuneration Committee Working Group approving the payment of Additional Responsibility Allowances and Honorarium.

7 **Business Cases**

The Acting Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that due to a change in the procedure for approval of Business Cases introduced by DHSSPS in May 2010, endorsement was now also required by the Chair, in addition to the Director of Finance & Performance Management and the Chief Fire Officer.

He advised Members that, at its Meeting on 26 January 2010, the Service Support Committee considered a number of Business Cases which the NIFRS Board subsequently approved at its Meeting also held on 26 January 2010.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer explained that there were 3 Business Cases for presentation, all of which had been endorsed by the Senior Management Team in terms of affordability and also confirmed as a priority for NIFRS.

Fleet Business Case

Members noted the Finance Review of the Fleet Business Case and the Director of Finance & Performance Management gave a brief overview of the Review which considered the key financial aspects of the investment decision.

Officers answered Members' questions in relation to the information presented.

The Board, on the motion of Miss Graham, seconded by Mr Leach, unanimously –

Resolved: **“to give approval for the Chairman to endorse the Fleet Business Case”.**

Business Case for Ballycastle Fire Station

Members noted the Finance Review of the Business Case for Ballycastle Fire Station. The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave an overview of the Review and also outlined discussions at Senior Management Team level pertaining to the Review. He emphasised to Members that the Business Case for Ballycastle Fire Station had been developed in line with the regime directed by the Department.

In response to questions from Members, the Director of Finance & Performance Management and Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs advised Members that the Senior Management Team were cognisant of the economic situation but pointed out that there was also a need for NIFRS to move forward on projects given the poor condition of some of its estate.

Following discussion, the Board, on the motion of Mrs Mahood, seconded by Mr Birthistle, unanimously –

Resolved: **“to give approval for the Chairman to endorse the Business Case for Ballycastle Fire Station”.**

Joint Outline Business Case for the Desertcreat College Programme

The Acting Chief Fire Officer stated that Area Commander Ashford was in attendance to make a presentation to Members giving an overview of the project and what NIFRS was trying to achieve at Desertcreat.

Area Commander Ashford gave Members a presentation informing them of the vision for Desertcreat along with an overview of aspects relating to funding, design, proposed timetable, etc.

Members noted the Finance Review of the Desertcreat Business Case and the Director of Finance & Performance Management gave an explanation regarding the information presented.

The Chair explained that the Senior Management Team had considered the Business Case for the Joint College and that the Acting Chief Fire Officer and the Director of Finance & Performance Management had signed the respective pro forma and were now seeking approval for the Chair’s endorsement.

The Officers answered Members’ detailed questions on various aspects relating to the proposed project.

Following discussion, the Board, on the motion of Mr Hanna, seconded by Mr Leach, unanimously –

Resolved: **“to give approval for the Chairman to endorse the Joint Outline Business Case for the Desertcreat College Programme”.**

8 Review of Standing Orders

Members were reminded that at the Meeting on 18 August 2010, the Board had considered the Delivery & Innovation Division Review of NIFRS, along with the draft Project Initiation Document for implementing the recommendations emanating from the Review. Members had agreed that a Working Party be established to undertake a review of NIFRS Standing Orders.

Miss Graham explained that the review of NIFRS Standing Orders had been a sensitive piece of work which the Group hoped would be helpful to the new NIFRS Board.

Members noted a copy of NIFRS Standing Orders incorporating comments, together with a report from the Working Group.

The Chair thanked Miss Graham and Mr Leach for their work.

9 Relevant Correspondence

The following relevant correspondence was noted:

- (a) East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Annual Plan 2010-11.
- (b) Letter of appreciation from Rescue Organisation Ireland for NIFRS support and assistance at the World Rescue Challenge Ireland 2010 (3-5 September 2010).
- (c) Copy of The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 which come into operation on 15 November 2010.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer informed Members that NIFRS had completed a great deal of work in preparation for the implementation of the Regulations.

- (d) Letter of appreciation from Coleraine & District Road Safety Committee following NIFRS Road Rescue Team's participation at the Young Driver Challenge event held on 12 September 2010.
- (e) Email from Mr Steven Frank, Local Government, Fire & Assessment Directorate, Audit Commission, advising that the Audit Commission would be assessing NIFRS week commencing 8 November 2010.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer explained that he was working with the Senior Management Team and that the preparations for the Audit Commission assessment were underway.

Members expressed their concern regarding the timing of the assessment given the current transitional period of the interim Board.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer stated that he had expressed his concerns to DHSSPS and the Audit Commission regarding the timing of the assessment.

10 **Sealing of Documents**

Members approved the undernoted document for Sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

TBF Thompson (Garvagh) Limited – supply and delivery of Vehicle Filters.

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

The Chair stated that today's Meeting was the final Meeting of the interim NIFRS Board and thanked colleagues for all their work. He acknowledged the work achieved by the interim Board in a limited timeframe.

On behalf of the Members, the Chair expressed his appreciation to the Acting Chief Fire Officer and his fellow Directors for all their work and assistance during the period of the interim Board.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer extended his appreciation to the Chair and also thanked the Members for their contribution and work including the appointment of the Principal Officer team. He extended his best wishes for the future.

It was noted that the date of the next Meeting would be advised to the new NIFRS Board Members.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 4.00 PM
