

# NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING

31 AUGUST 2012

2.00 PM

PRESENT: Dr J McKee, Chairman presiding  
Mr C Kerr, Interim Chief Fire Officer  
Cllr D Barbour  
Mr J Barbour  
Cllr M Carr  
Mrs S Grant  
Mr A Hanna  
Ald A Hatch  
Mr M Kerr  
Ald Mrs G Rice  
Mrs P Tally

APOLOGIES: Mr C Mack

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Wallace, Interim Chief Executive  
Mr D Ashford, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Safety Services)  
Mr T McGonigal, Director of Finance & Performance  
Management  
Mrs C McNally, Corporate Communications Manager  
Mrs I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary  
Ms G McMaster, DHSSPS

Prior to the commencement of Business, the Chairman welcomed Mr Wallace and Mr Kerr to their first Meeting of the Board as Interim Chief Executive and Interim Chief Fire Officer respectively.

The Chairman informed Members of the death of Retained Firefighter Robert Orr, Ballynahinch. The Meeting observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

### **Item 1: Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

### **Item 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.

### **Item 3: Minutes – 26 June 2012**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 June 2012, 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 J Barbour, seconded by Mr Carr.

Arising out of the Minutes:

### **Chief Fire Officer's Retirement**

The Chairman referred to the current arrangements for the provision of Principal Officer cover and sought an update on the review of Principal Officer cover for Gold Command assurance following the retirement of Chief Fire Officer Craig and the sickness absence of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Technical Services).

The Interim Chief Fire Officer explained that he, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford and the Area Commander (Operations) were sustaining Principal Officer cover and added that the arrangements for Gold Command remained unchanged. He answered Members' questions regarding these arrangements. He also advised Members of the national reinforcement arrangements in terms of Gold Command available to NIFRS from the National Co-Ordination Centre.

The Chairman referred to the flooding incidents on the evening of 27 June and the high volume of calls received by NIFRS and paid tribute to NIFRS personnel for their response during this extremely busy period. Members noted that NIFRS had rescued 31 people from flooding incidents.

In highlighting the volume of calls received within NIFRS Regional Control Centre at the height of the flooding, the Chairman noted that NIFRS resilience arrangements with Strathclyde FRS had been tested for the first time and had worked well.

The Chairman reminded Members of the major incidents attended by NIFRS during the summer period. He expressed his appreciation to all NIFRS personnel.

In response to questions from Members, the Corporate Communications Manager assured the Meeting that NIFRS was proactive in terms of media coverage and had also taken the opportunity to promote its contingency arrangements in these spare conditions.

During further discussion in relation to Principal Officer cover, Members acknowledged the work and commitment of the Principal Officers. The Interim Chief Executive expressed his appreciation of the work and support of the Corporate Management Team but stressed the importance of maintaining a work-life balance. He suggested the need to build-in capacity within the Corporate Management Team to enable Directors to address strategic issues.

Referring to the interim governance arrangements now in place within NIFRS, Mr Kerr expressed his concerns regarding the use of the terminology 'interim' when referring to the Chief Executive and the Chief Fire Officer. The Chairman explained that the matter of the sensitivities around the use of 'interim' had been raised with DHSSPS and a response was awaited.

### **Service Delivery & Performance Committee – Meeting – 25 June 2012**

Mr Hatch sought an update on progress with respect to the recommendation emanating from the Service Delivery & Performance Committee regarding a communication to staff seeking volunteers to move staff into specific Units to ease pressure points.

The Interim Chief Fire Officer updated Members explaining that the Head of HR was progressing this matter and also that contact had been made with the Equality Commission. He stated that a report would be presented to the next Meeting of the Service Delivery & Performance Committee. Members noted that the Interim Chief Fire Officer had discussed the matter with DHSSPS who were supportive of the proposal.

Members stressed the importance of moving this matter forward and addressing the pressure points with the Finance, Procurement and HR Units.

### **Senior Staff Updates**

Referring to the vacant post of Director of Human Resources, the Chairman reminded Members that the Assessment Centre for the post is to be re-run and that the Board had requested that the re-assessments be conducted by an external provider.

He explained that the Interim Chief Executive and Interim Chief Fire Officer had indicated that to pursue the re-running of the Assessment Centre externally would delay progressing the appointment by 2 months, whereas to undertake the re-assessments in-house with due diligence would take 3 weeks.

The Chairman reminded Members that whilst the Assessment Centre had been flawed due to an administrative error, the feedback on the process had been positive. Due to the timeframes, he suggested that Members revisit the Board's original decision and give approval to conduct the re-run of the assessments in-house.

During discussion, Members stressed the need for the in-house process to be robust, transparent and open. The Interim Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the process would be quality assured through CFOA.

**The Board, on the motion of Mrs Rice, seconded by Mr Kerr, unanimously agreed that the re-run of the Assessment Centre for the post of Director of Human Resources be conducted in-house.**

### **NIAO Report – NIFRS Action Plan**

The Chairman sought clarification as to whether a Project Team would be established to progress the Action Plan or if the Executive Team would take the Plan forward.

The Interim Chief Fire Officer stated that the matter had been discussed with DHSSPS and explained that DHSSPS were content for the Executive Team to move the Action Plan forward.

### **Draft NIFRS Good & Harmonious Working Policy, including Revised Joint Declaration of Protection**

The Chairman referred to the issue of policies in general and explained to Members that he had asked the Interim Chief Executive to conduct, as a priority, a full review of NIFRS policies to ensure their currency and to ensure NIFRS was compliant.

## **NIFRS Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2011/12**

Members noted that, at the request of the Northern Ireland Audit Office and in agreement with DHSSPS, the laying of NIFRS Annual Report & Statement of Accounts has been delayed until September 2012.

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

#### **Audit & Risk Management Committee – Minutes – 19 June 2012**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit & Risk Management Committee held on 19 June 2012, 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 Mrs Grant, seconded by Mr D Barbour.

#### **Audit & Risk Management Committee – Minutes – 26 June 2012**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit & Risk Management Committee held on 26 June 2012, 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 Mrs Grant, seconded by Mr D Barbour.

#### **Service Delivery & Performance Committee – Minutes – 25 June 2012**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Service Delivery & Performance Committee held on 25 June 2012, 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 J Barbour, seconded by Mr Hatch.

#### **Remuneration Committee – Minutes – 2 July 2012**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 2 July 2012, 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 Hanna, seconded by Mrs Tally.

#### **Human Resources Committee – Minutes – 2 July 2012**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Human Resources Committee held on 2 July 2012, 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 J Barbour, seconded by Mrs Grant.

### **Change in the Order of Business**

It was agreed that Item 5 – Chairman's Business – be deferred to the end of the Meeting.

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

Members noted the Report on Chief Fire Officer's Business for the months of June and July 2012.

The Chairman explained to Members that this Item would change going forward – Directors would present a report on the salient issues within their Directorates with the Chief Fire Officer's Report changing to Chief Executive's Business and incorporating an Operational report.

### **Operational Performance**

The Interim Chief Fire Officer gave Members an overview of the Operational Performance for June/July 2012. He noted that the major flooding incidents and major fires had already been reported to the Meeting.

Referring to the fire at Limavady Fire Station, the Interim Chief Fire Officer gave Members an overview of the incident and gave an update on the current position. He advised Members that there has been some damage to the Lecture Room in the Fire Station, however, the appliances have not been damaged and the Station remains operational.

### **Prevention Performance**

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford gave the Meeting a synopsis of the information presented in relation to prevention, protection, ICT, Health & Safety, Occupational Health, World Police & Fire Games and Desertcreat. He highlighted in particular progress with respect to a Media Services Tender and work with the Director of RQIA to examine the possibility of taking a joint approach to improving Fire Safety in supported living units and agree an appropriate Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in relation to enforcement in premises overseen by RQIA. He answered Members' questions on various aspects relating to the information presented.

Members noted that NIFRS had been awarded the RoSPA 'Gold' Award for Occupational Health & Safety.

During discussion in relation to WPF 2013, Members expressed concern regarding the lack of clarity in terms of the expectations in relation to NIFRS support and the potential costs to the Organisation. The Chairman stressed the need to identify and quantify NIFRS needs in terms of the Games and the potential costs, including costs associated with secondments and overtime in particular. Members requested information on the potential costs to NIFRS, including costs for staff secondments and planned overtime.

Members noted the information presented with respect to Human Resources Performance.

The Interim Chief Fire Officer commended the work of a number of colleagues in relation to the recruitment and assessment schedule, particularly with respect to uniformed promotions and the development of Selection Implementation Plans for Support Staff. He referred to the clerical errors which had occurred during the summer period and expressed his disappointment that this had happened. Members noted that line management had taken timely action to address the issues. He stated that the issue underpinned the need to move forward with the appointment of a Director of Human Resources and the restructuring of the Directorate.

### **Financial Performance**

Members noted the Management Accounts for the period 1 April to 31 July 2012. The Director of Finance & Performance Management provided an analysis of the projects which had been identified within the Revenue Budget Risk Register with red/amber risk ratings which included PBI Gold, WPFPG and the Desertcreat Project.

In response to questions from Members, the Interim Chief Fire Officer updated the Meeting on the current position with respect to the Business Case for PBI Gold assuring Members that DHSSPS queries were being actively pursued.

During discussion in relation to PBI Gold, Members, whilst suggesting the need to highlight to DHSSPS that this project is critical for Firefighter safety and needs addressed, pointed out that the Corporate Management Team need to have the capability to focus on their key areas. Mrs Grant referred back to Mr Hatch's earlier comments regarding pressure points within specific Units and reiterated the need for this to be addressed.

Detailed consideration of the Management Accounts was deferred to the Finance Committee.

### **Contracts Awarded**

Members noted a list of Contracts awarded in the month of June 2012.

### **Item 7: Directors' Updates**

Updates were provided by Directors under Item 6 – Chief Fire Officer's Business.

### **Item 8: Standing Items**

#### **NIAO Report – NIFRS Action Plan**

Members noted that an update on progress will be provided at the September Meeting.

The Chairman referred to the authorising of his expenses which is currently undertaken by the Chairman of the Audit & Risk Management Committee, Mrs Rice, and explained that the Director of Finance & Performance Management had indicated the potential for conflict with these arrangements and had suggested that another Member, possibly the Vice-Chairman, authorise the expenses.

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

**Resolved:** “that the Vice-Chairman, Mr A Hanna, authorise the Chairman’s expenses with immediate effect”.

### **Item 9: Standalone Strategic Items**

#### **Economic Appraisal – NIFRS Occupational Health Scheme**

Members noted the Economic Appraisal for NIFRS Occupational Health Scheme, along with DHSSPS comments.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford gave Members an overview of the Appraisal and answered Members’ questions.

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

**Resolved:** “to approve the Economic Appraisal for NIFRS Occupational Health Scheme”.

#### **Outstanding Payments – Ardmore Advertising**

Members were informed that, due to lack of timely submission of invoices by Ardmore Advertising within the Contract period, NIFRS have received a request for outstanding payments totaling £26,500.00 in respect of outdoor and radio advertising.

Members noted that NIFRS legal advice indicates that payment of the outstanding fees should be made.

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

**Resolved:** “to approve the outstanding payments, totaling £26,500.00 to Ardmore Advertising”.

#### **Measured Term Contract**

Members noted the Economic Appraisal for NIFRS Estates Maintenance & Minor Works Measured Term Contract.

The Director of Finance & Performance Management gave Members an overview of the Appraisal and answered Members’ questions.

During discussion, Mrs Rice outlined her concerns with regard to effective monitoring of contracts. Members requested that all Contracts are subject to robust project management.

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

**Resolved:** “to approve the Economic Appraisal for NIFRS Estates Maintenance & Minor Works Measured Term Contract”.

**Item 10: Relevant Correspondence**

There was no relevant correspondence.

**Item 11: Sealing of Documents**

Members noted the undernoted documents for sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with:

Supply Plus Limited – Parts for AS Fire Ladders;  
Clan Tools & Plant Limited – Parts for Lukas RTC Kits;  
Donnelly Motorstore Limited – Parts for Vauxhall Vehicles; and  
McGurk Chartered Architects – Lease of Premises at Kilcronagh Business Park,  
Cookstown.

**Item 12: Schedule of Future Meetings**

Members noted a schedule of future Meetings. It was noted that the September Board Meeting was scheduled to take place on 25 September.

**Item 5: Chairman’s Business (including National Joint Council Matters)**

The Chairman, due to the disclosure of sensitive, confidential and personal information relating to staff, directed that the Chairman’s Business would be discussed in Closed Session.

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At this point,  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford, the Director of Finance & Performance  
Management, Corporate Communications Manager and Ms McMaster  
left the Meeting

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During the Closed Session, the Board, on the motion of Mrs Grant, seconded by Mrs Rice –

**Agreed: “that the Interim Chief Executive would review and consider a number of long-standing staff grievances”.**

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THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS  
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED  
AT 5.50 PM

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