

# NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING

30 JULY 2013

1.30 PM

PRESENT: Dr J McKee, Chairman presiding  
Mr C Kerr, Interim Chief Fire Officer  
Mr J Barbour  
Cllr D Barbour  
Cllr M Carr  
Mr A Hanna  
Ald A Hatch  
Mr M Kerr  
Mr C Mack

APOLOGIES: Mrs S Grant  
Ald Mrs G Rice  
Mrs P Tally

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Wallace, Interim Chief Executive  
Mr D Ashford, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Safety Services)  
Mr B McClintock, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Support Services)  
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources  
Mrs L Cuddy, Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs  
Mr J Pentland, Interim Director of Finance & Performance  
Management  
Mrs U McCambridge, Corporate Communications Manager  
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary  
Mr D Jordan, DHSSPS

Prior to the commencement of Business, the Chairman welcomed Mrs Liz Cuddy, the Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs, to the Meeting.

### **Item 1: Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

### **Item 2: Declaration of Interests**

The Chairman 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 – 25 June 2013**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 June 2013, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to amendment, on the motion of Mr Mack, seconded by Mr Kerr.

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

##### **Audit & Risk Management Committee Minutes – 14 June 2013**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit & Risk Management Committee held on 14 June 2013, 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 D Barbour, seconded by Mr J Barbour.

Arising out of the Minutes:

##### **Summary of the 2012/13 Controls Assurance Outcomes and Board Specific Recommendations**

Members noted a Summary of the 2012/13 Controls Assurance Outcomes and Board Specific Recommendations which had been circulated at the request of the Audit & Risk Management Committee at its Meeting on 14 June 2013.

The Interim Chief Executive highlighted work which was progressing with regard to the recommendations and recommended that those strategic-related recommendations be considered by the Corporate Management Team initially then brought to the Board or relevant Board Committee.

The Chairman referred to the recommendation relating to the assessment of the performance of the Board's Committees and explained that an assessment would be conducted before the end of the financial year. He also noted that he had discussed a review of the terms of reference and roles and responsibilities for the Audit & Risk Management Committee with the Interim Chief Executive.

##### **Audit & Risk Management Committee Minutes – 1 July 2013**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit & Risk Management Committee held on 1 July 2013, 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 D Barbour.

Mr J Barbour, Member of the Audit & Risk Management Committee, gave an overview of the Business discussed at the Meeting as follows:

- Internal Audit Reports relating to FOI/Data Protection; Contracts; Payments; Bank & Cash; Payroll; Pensions; Budgetary Control; and Corporate Communications approved.

It was noted that the Committee had requested that NIFRS Records Management Policy be presented to the Board for approval and this was an Item for discussion at today's Meeting.

- Year-End Recommendations Database – Head of Internal Audit provided a detailed overview of the Summary providing a year-end update of the Recommendations Database and highlighted the impact of emergent issues on progress with respect to projects/recommendations.

It was noted that the Committee have requested a summary of Priority 1 recommendations and the action to address these recommendations be presented to the next Meeting of the Committee.

The Committee have also requested that all Directors be in attendance to update the Committee verbally on progress against actions.

- Business Risk Register and Validation of Risk Register approved.

Mr J Barbour drew Members' attention to the discussions in relation to the Committee having access to an Accountant and conscious of the level of scrutiny undertaken by the Audit & Risk Management Committee, emphasised the need for this matter to be pursued and also specific Audit & Risk Management training for Members.

The Chairman referred to the Minutes of the Audit & Risk Management Committee Meeting of 14 June 2013 and the comments regarding the Chief Fire Officer being a Member of the Committee. He also referred to comments at the Public Accounts Committee hearing regarding his membership of the Board's Sub-Committees and suggested that it may be necessary to review the Board's Committee structure, etc.

The Interim Chief Fire Officer expressed his concern in relation to his membership of the Audit & Risk Management Committee and stressed the need for the matter to be addressed.

In response to an update from Mr Hatch in relation to procurement, the Chairman informed Members that NIFRS had signed the Local Operating Agreement (LOA) and that it was now with CPD. Mr Hatch expressed the view that Board Members should be entitled to have a copy of any agreement entered into by NIFRS. The Interim Chief Executive welcomed the signing of the LOA as an interim arrangement until March 2014 pending amendment of the Legislation. He advised Members that work had been undertaken to identify priorities in order to provide a clear focus for progressing procurement.

The Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs noted that the LOA was a vehicle for NIFRS to procure and explained that work was ongoing with respect to the internal interfaces between Procurement, clients, Business Cases, etc, as well as external interfaces.

Mr Hatch asked that a copy of the Local Operating Agreement be circulated to Members for information.

Mr Hanna, as a Member of BSO, declared a potential conflict of interest in relation to the issue of Legislative changes to BSO's activities.

The Interim Chief Executive outlined concerns in relation to procurement areas where progress needed to be attained more quickly, eg, DHSSPS approval for Specialist Training. He explained that there may be instances where NIFRS will not be able to await DHSSPS approval in order to mitigate risk.

The Chairman stressed the need for any procurement items progressed without the required approvals to be flagged up to the Board.

Mr Hanna concurred adding that in such circumstances the matter should be recorded in NIFRS Risk Register with the appropriate people being advised as soon as possible.

### **Finance Committee Minutes – 25 June 2013**

The Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee held on 25 June 2013, 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 Kerr, seconded by Mr Carr.

### **Finance Committee Meeting – 30 July 2013**

Members noted that a Meeting of the Finance Committee had been held that morning.

Mr Kerr, Chairman of the Finance Committee, gave Members an overview of the Business discussed highlighting in particular that the Committee had considered the first quarter's Management Accounts noting the Revenue and Capital positions. He informed Members that, with respect to NIFRS budget allocation, the position remains the same and noted that discussions were ongoing with DHSSPS in relation to the accounting of Ill-Health Pensions. Mr Kerr explained that the Finance Directorate would continue to monitor and adjust the profiling of budgets in line with anticipated timing of expenditure.

In response to a query from Mr Hatch regarding Business Cases for Generators and Gas Conversions, the Interim Director of Finance & Performance Management explained that DHSSPS had confirmed that running costs were not to be included in the Business Cases, therefore, DHSSPS approval was no longer required in respect of same.

### **Service Delivery & Performance Committee Minutes – 27 June 2013**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Service Delivery & Performance Committee held on 27 June 2013, 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 Hatch, seconded by Mr D Barbour.

Mr Hatch, Chairman of the Service Delivery & Performance Committee, reported on the Business discussed at the Meeting:

- IRMP Update - the Interim Chief Fire Officer circulated the Operational Risk Management Plan for 2013 and gave a detailed overview of the Plan. The Committee was informed that in respect of the IRMP's 4 objectives, the projects listed in the Plan have been achieved, and that lead-in times for the emanating actions would be in-year.
- Updates received with respect to Fire Safety; Operational Support; Health & Safety; Training & Organisational Development; and ICT.
- The Committee also received a number of Reports, ie, NIFRS Performance Report April 2012-March 2013; Benchmarking Performance Report Family Group 4, 4th Quarter April 2012-March 2013; and Summary of Informal and Formal Operational Service Delivery Complaints for the period April 2012 to March 2013.

Mr Hatch referred to the discussion at the Service Delivery & Performance Committee Meeting with respect to comments made which criticise NIFRS for not modernising and commended Mr J Barbour's proposal that 'good news' stories and NIFRS achievements be presented to the Health Committee and to MLAs. He supported the need for the Board to be proactive in highlighting the good work achieved by the Organisation and also the Board over the last 2 years. He suggested that WPF 2013 presented an opportunity for Members to network and engage with other Agencies.

During further discussion in relation to internal and external communications, Mr Hanna stated that whilst NIFRS external communication and PR is excellent, the Board needed to see action with respect to Mr Barbour's proposal and suggested the need for an engagement plan to be developed. Mr J Barbour commented on the criticism being levied at the Organisation and stressed the need for the Board to engage politically and to be more proactive in highlighting NIFRS' achievements.

The Chairman explained to Members that NIFRS had received a news release from Mr J Dallat MLA that the family of the late Joe McCloskey will be lobbying for support for an independent inquiry at the official opening of WPF. Members noted NIFRS statement in respect of the matter.

### **Remuneration Committee Minutes – 10 July 2013**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 10 July 2013, 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 Kerr, seconded by Mr Hatch.

The Chairman provided a synopsis of the Business discussed at the Meeting which had included Pay Remits for Administrative Staff, Directors (Non-Uniformed) and Principal Officers & Directors (Uniformed); Job Evaluations; and Acting-Up/Honoraria Policy.

**Item 5: Chief Executive's Business - Directors' Updates**  
***Director of Finance & Performance Management***

Members noted the Director of Finance & Performance Management's Report. The Interim Director of Finance & Performance Management drew Members' attention to the updated budget position. He informed Members that the position regarding the 2013/14 revenue budget allocation had not changed from that reported at the June Board Meeting. The DHSSPS have notified NIFRS that the revenue expenditure allocation for 2013/14 will be £76.494m – equating to the original opening 2012/13 allocation.

The Director of Finance & Performance Management noted that the annual anticipated budget requirement has increased during June by £246k due to NIFRS Occupational Health informing Finance of an additional 4 Ill Health Retirements over and above those budgeted at the start of the year. He referred to previous and ongoing discussions with DHSSPS to come to a resolution with regards to the shortfall and also with respect to the accounting for Ill Health pensions and gave Members an overview of those discussions.

The Chairman noted that the Finance Report had been considered in detail at the Finance Committee Meeting that morning.

***Director of Human Resources***

Members noted the Report from the Director of Human Resources. The Director of Human Resources gave Members a brief overview of the information presented which included an update on Recruitment & Selection; Discipline and Grievance Cases; Tribunal and Ombudsman Cases; HR Policy Development; and the review of the HR Directorate.

Referring to Attendance Management, the Director of Human Resources gave Members a detailed report as to the current position and actions to date.

The Director of Human Resources answered Members' questions on various aspects of the information presented.

Mr J Barbour expressed concern in relation to timeframes for Grievances and explained that he felt there was a need to review the Policy. The Director of Human Resources noted Mr Barbour's comments and outlined work to address same.

***Director of Operations***

Members noted the Report from the Director of Operations. The Interim Chief Fire Officer summarised the key points –

- Operational Assurance and Audit – noted that a programme of District Audits to quality assure and validate the Area Audit process has commenced;
- Operational Risk Analysis – Operational Risk Management Strategy update;
- Emergent Issues – impact of public disorder on service delivery and update on control measures noted;

- Key achievements – reported a positive response from LGA Fire Peer Review Team; Ethical Decision-Making Model for Operational staff; Headquarters Team Building Days facilitated by Operational staff.

The Chairman reported positively on his visit to the Command Room immediately prior to G8 and also with respect to the collaborative work which NIFRS had undertaken with other Agencies. He expressed his appreciation to the Interim Chief Fire Officer and his team, working through the Interim Chief Executive, for all their work.

### ***Director of Operational Support***

Members noted the Report from the Director of Operational Support. Assistant Chief Fire Officer McClintock provided a summary of the salient points –

- Uniform Stores – PBI Gold Structural Fire Kit delivered;
- Transport & Engineering Services – Asset Tracking – reported positively on progress attained;
- Regional Control Centre – Members noted positive report with regard to RCC performance on 11 July.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer McClintock referred to the matter of Specialist Operational Training and advised Members of the current position explaining that progress was now tied-up with the new CoPE arrangements. He further explained that it may be necessary to consider other options to take this training forward.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer McClintock answered Members' questions in relation to the Regional Control Centre during which he acknowledged their expertise in respect of call challenging. He also referred to the Corporate Performance Indicators used to measure mobilising performance within RCC and explained that a review of the assessment criteria was underway in order to set more realistic targets. Mr Hatch suggested the need to retain the current target and added that it was aspirational for other Services.

### ***Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs***

Members noted the Report from the Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs. The Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs gave an overview of the Report which included updates in respect of Capital Projects and Estates; Procurement; Planning; Assembly Questions, etc; and Media Enquiries.

The Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs informed Members that she was currently considering the structure within the Directorate and also highlighted work which needed to be taken forward in terms of NIFRS Records Management.

The Interim Chief Executive referred to the Board's agreement that there is a need for a Fire & Rescue Advisor for NI and informed Members that DHSSPS have formally agreed with the Scottish Government an arrangement whereby they will be able to avail of Mr Torrie's services on an "as and when required" basis up to a maximum of 18 days per annum to provide professional, independent advice to DHSSPS and the Minister on fire and rescue matters.

The Interim Chief Executive welcomed this arrangement as a significant step forward and stated that he felt that it would develop into a positive relationship. He noted that Mr Torrie had met with the Corporate Management Team and gave Members an overview of the Meeting.

**Director of Safety Services**

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford presented the Director of Safety Services' Report. He drew Members' attention to the Directorate's top risks and outlined the current position with respect to the Business Case for the Occupational Health Scheme and the GD92 Tender Evaluation exercise. He also gave an overview of Health & Safety matters and Performance Information.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford informed Members that the interim partial realignment of Operational Directorates has led to the Safety Services Directorate becoming the 'Community Protection' Directorate and now incorporates Emergency Response.

Referring to Community Protection matters and in particular the Board's granting of powers under Article 13 of The Fire and Rescue Services Order (Northern Ireland) 2006 to local Councils, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford advised Members that Down District Council had signed the Memorandum of Understanding in respect of same.

**The Board formally agreed to the granting of powers under Article 13 of The Fire and Rescue Services Order (Northern Ireland) 2006 to Down District Council.**

The Chairman referred to NIFRS' statutory responsibility under the 2006 Order to inform and educate the public and noted the work which had been undertaken by Operational personnel with respect to prevention and protection.

In response to a question from Mr Hatch, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford outlined the protocol in relation to Home FS Checks and the fitting of smoke alarms. Whilst acknowledging the work of Wholetime and Retained personnel in delivering community safety initiatives, he highlighted that as part of the Prevention & Protection Strategy consideration will be given to other options for delivery of community safety, eg, volunteers, Community Safety advocates.

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THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 3.35 PM  
AND RECONVENED AT 3.45 PM

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**Item 6: Standing Items**

**Desertcreat Project**

Members noted a Briefing Note providing an update on the Desertcreat Project.

## **WPFG 2013**

Members noted a Briefing Note providing an update on WPFG matters. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford gave the Meeting a brief outline of upcoming events including arrangements for the Opening Ceremony and Memorial Service.

Members noted that a Sports Schedule was available on WPFG website and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford encouraged Members' attendance.

### **Item 7: Strategic Standalone Items**

#### **Review of Audit & Risk Management Committee**

Members noted a Briefing Note pertaining to a Review of the Audit & Risk Management Committee.

The Interim Chief Executive summarised the background to the Briefing Note and also noted that he had been tasked with undertaking an extensive review of NIFRS Internal Audit function. He explained that whilst the paper focused on a proposed review of the Audit & Risk Management Committee inevitably it will have implications for the Board and its Committee structure.

The Interim Chief Executive gave an overview of the recommendations and asked the Board to consider the need for a review of the wider Committee structure explaining the need for a balance to be achieved whilst maintaining good corporate governance.

The Chairman commented on the level of scrutiny and challenge which the Organisation faces currently and acknowledged that this will continue. He also noted the pressure and intense scrutiny which the Internal Audit and the Audit & Risk Management Committee were experiencing. Members noted that the Chairman had discussed the recommendations contained within the Briefing Note with Mrs Rice and Mrs Grant, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Audit & Risk Management Committee, who have indicated a preference for a comprehensive review of the Committees and their roles and responsibilities.

During discussion, Members recognised the need to review the Committee structure in light of the pressure the Audit & Risk Management Committee feels and also the Francis Report findings to ensure robust governance arrangements. Mr J Barbour supported the need for a holistic review but expressed concern in relation to timeframes for progressing same. He reiterated concerns with respect to capacity issues with respect to the Internal Audit and the Audit & Risk Management Committee and suggested that these be reviewed initially and the Board then consider the implications for the Board and its Committee structure.

The Interim Chief Executive assured Members that the review of the Internal Audit function will continue to be progressed and stressed the need for NIFRS to have specific robust governance arrangements appropriate to the Organisation.

The Chairman referred to the issue relating to the lack of an Accountant on the Board and explained that the matter had been raised with DHSSPS. He hoped that the matter would be addressed when progressing the appointment of 2 new Members to the Board.

The Interim Chief Executive reminded Members that the Board has the autonomy to co-opt a Member and undertook to clarify the process with DHSSPS.

**Following further discussion, the Board, on the motion of Mr J Barbour, seconded by Mr Carr, unanimously agreed that a comprehensive review of all Board Committee structures and functions be undertaken.**

### **NIFRS Records Management Policy**

Members noted NIFRS Records Management Policy.

The Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs outlined the background to the revised Policy. She explained that the review and revision of the Policy was the start of a substantial piece of work to be conducted with respect to Records Management within NIFRS and may need to be refined in the future.

The Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs answered Members' queries on various aspects relating to the Policy.

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

**Resolved: “to approve NIFRS Records Management Policy”.**

### **NIFRS Freedom of Information Policy**

Members noted NIFRS Freedom of Information Policy. The Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs noted that the Policy had been reviewed to ensure that it reflected current legislative requirements.

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

**Resolved: “to approve NIFRS Freedom of Information Policy”.**

### **Item 8: Relevant Correspondence**

There was no relevant correspondence.

**Item 9: Sealing of Documents**

Members noted the undernoted documents for sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with:

Computacenter (UK) Limited – Provision of a Retained Availability System and Associated Services;  
Donnelly Bros Land Rover – 4x4 Off-Road Vehicles;  
Everything Everywhere Limited and Hutchison 3G UK Limited – Right of Way Agreement for Slieve Croob.

**Item 11: Schedule of Future Meetings**

Members noted a schedule of future Meetings.

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At this point,  
all the Officers, with the exception of the  
Board Administrative Secretary, left the Meeting

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**Item 10: Chairman's Business  
Review of Interim Arrangements**

This Item was discussed in Closed Session.

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THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS  
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED  
AT 5.00 PM

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