

# NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING

25 FEBRUARY 2014

1.30 PM

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

APOLOGIES: Cllr D Barbour

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Wallace, Interim Chief Executive  
Mr D Ashford, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Protection)  
Mr J Allen, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operational Support)  
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Finance  
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources  
Mrs L Cuddy, Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs  
Mrs C McNally, Head of Corporate Communications  
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary  
Mrs C Murdock, Chief Executive's Department  
Mr J Millar, DHSSPS Observer  
Mr P McCartan, Independent Observer

At the commencement of the Meeting, the Chairman referred to the very sad loss of Firefighter Nial Hamilton who collapsed after attending an accidental car fire in Lurgan on Monday, 10 February 2014.

The Chairman paid tribute to the Interim Chief Fire Officer and the Corporate Management Team for all the support and assurance given to Firefighter Hamilton's family during this difficult time. At the request of Nial's family a full Fire Service Funeral was held in his honour and was testament to the high esteem Nial was obviously held in by his colleagues. It was a very sad but proud day for NIFRS and one that will remain with all of those who attended his funeral.

The Meeting observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

The Chairman introduced Mr Pat McCartan to the Meeting explaining that, as part of the Board Governance Self-Assessment exercise, Mr McCartan would be observing the Meeting and would subsequently provide independent third party feedback on both the Chairman's performance and an overview of working nature within the Boardroom.

### **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 apparent conflicts of interest.

### **Item 3: Minutes – 28 January 2014**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 January 2014, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Kerr, seconded by Mrs Grant.

Arising from the Minutes:

### **Interim Governance Arrangements**

The Chairman referred to discussion at the previous Meeting and noted the concerns raised by Members in relation to cover for the Accounting Officer role during the period between the end of the current arrangements and the commencement of the new fixed-term arrangements; the tenure of the current Board and succession planning for the Board.

With respect to the Accounting Officer role, the Chairman advised Members that DHSSPS had clarified that there was no issue as the Interim Chief Executive would be absent from the office for less than 6 weeks.

Referring to the tenure of the Board, the Chairman explained that DHSSPS had indicated that the planned 4-year period of the present Board was due to expire at the end of September 2014. With regard to the issue of succession planning for the Board, the Chairman stated that it was his understanding that DHSSPS would be writing to all Members concerning their tenure and seeking confirmation as to whether Members would wish to serve for a further term.

Mrs Rice welcomed the appointment of a new Member to the Board but highlighted there were 2 vacancies on the Board. She sought clarification as to the timeframe for the second appointment. The Chairman explained that his understanding was that the outstanding vacancy would not be filled until the appointment of the new Board, given the relatively short timeframe.

The Chairman noted the agreement reached at the January Board Meeting to extend the existing interim arrangements. He informed Members that formal approval had been received from DHSSPS to the extension of the current interim arrangements on the basis of the existing financial package. A copy of the correspondence from DHSSPS was circulated for the information of Members.

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

**Resolved: “to formally approve the extension of the existing interim arrangements for a further fixed period of 24 months”.**

The Chairman acknowledged that the current interim arrangements had been demonstrably successful and beneficial to the Service. He stressed, however, that it was essential the Board noted the need to consider in detail the substantive longer-term senior management arrangements in March/April 2015. He emphasised that a decision would have to be taken by June 2015 to ensure the appointment of a substantive Head of Service by April 2016.

Mrs Rice suggested the need for a Strategic Planning Day with consideration of the senior management structure forming part of the discussions.

The Chairman commented that there will be significant matters coming forward for Board consideration and stated that an ‘Away Day’, similar in format to the previous Away Day, would provide an effective forum to discuss issues informally.

The Interim Chief Executive explained that early in the new financial year a specific piece of work taking a back-to-basics approach to planning would be undertaken. He added that this would also include a review of NIFRS Mission, Vision and Values. He referred to the revised Board/Committee structure which had been agreed and explained that a Year Plan for the Board incorporating a meetings schedule, work programme and training programme would be developed. He stressed the importance of developing a complete package in order to build for the longer-term and ensure a consistent and business-like approach.

Mrs Rice acknowledged the significant work which has been achieved by the Board and the Corporate Management Team and that she would wish to maintain that momentum.

### **Directors’ Reports – Director of Operational Support**

Mr J Barbour referred to the provision of Equality & Diversity training and reiterated the need for robust training for all personnel. He enquired as to the timeframe for the delivery of enhanced Equality & Diversity training.

The Director of Human Resources updated the Meeting on the current position with regard to the rollout of the Junior Officer Equality, Dignity and Inclusion training programme. He explained that when appointed the HR Business Partners would be delivering different strands of the training across the Organisation and this included training for the Board.

The Interim Chief Executive remarked on NIFRS Equality & Diversity Strategy and suggested the need to revisit the Strategy as he felt it was too internally focused.

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

##### **Audit & Risk Management Committee – Minutes – 29 January 2014**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit & Risk Management Committee held on 29 January 2014, 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 Mack, seconded by Mr Carr.

Mrs Rice, Chairman of the Audit & Risk Management Committee, reported on the business discussed at the Meeting particularly in relation to the review of the Internal Audit function. She explained that the Committee had received a summary of the proposal for the provision of an Internal Audit Service by the BSO Head of Internal Audit Services. She noted that it is proposed that BSO undertake responsibility for NIFRS Internal Audit with effect from 1 April 2014.

Mrs Rice informed the Meeting that the Committee recommended approval of the proposal for the provision of an Internal Audit Service by BSO and welcomed the potential for access to a fully resourced Internal Audit function which will deliver against the Audit Plan. She advised Members that with respect to the role of Head of Internal Audit, the postholder had agreed to move into the Planning & Corporate Affairs Directorate.

Mrs Rice provided an overview of the other Business discussed including Internal Audit Reports pertaining to Procurement, Contracts & Insurance; Performance Management 2013/14; and Review of Attendance & Leave Policies within RCC; Head of Internal Audit and Accounting Officer Mid-Year Assurance Statements; Recommendations Database and Risk Register overview and NIAO Audit Strategy for the audit of NIFRS 2013-14 Financial Statements.

Mrs Rice thanked the Members of the Audit & Risk Management Committee for all their work and support. She reiterated her disappointment regarding the negative comments levelled at the Audit & Risk Management Committee in external reports, etc, especially given the large amount of positive work which the Committee had undertaken.

The Chairman also expressed his appreciation to Mrs Rice and her Committee colleagues.

##### **Remuneration Committee – Minutes – 28 January 2014**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 28 January 2014, 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 Hanna.

## **Remuneration Committee – Meeting – 25 February 2014**

The Chairman informed Members that a Meeting of the Remuneration Committee had been held prior to that day's Board Meeting. He explained that the key item of Business had been the Pay Remit for Principal Officers and Directors which is due for submission to DHSSPS.

### **Item 5: Chairman's Business Interim Governance Arrangements**

The Chairman welcomed the formal approval to extend the existing Interim Arrangements for a further 24 months ensuring a continued period of stability for the Organisation.

### **Board Governance Self-Assessment Tool**

The Chairman updated Members on the current position with respect to the completion of the Board Governance Self-Assessment Tool. Members noted that a draft Assessment would be presented for consideration at the next Board Meeting.

### **NIFRS Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

The Chairman referred to the NIFRS Board Self-Assessment Questionnaires which had recently been issued to Members. He encouraged colleagues to return these as soon as possible.

### **Date for Diary**

The Chairman informed Members that the NIFRS event at the Long Gallery, Stormont, would be held on 29 April 2014. He stated that the Event would be an opportunity to share with elected representatives the comprehensive nature of the variety of service delivery and emergency responses which NIFRS provides to the community of Northern Ireland.

Referring to the scheduled Board Meeting for April, the Chairman confirmed that the Meeting would be held on the afternoon of 29 April 2014, the venue and time to be confirmed.

### **Correspondence from PAC**

The Interim Chief Executive noted that correspondence had been received from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) regarding the outcome of a briefing to the Committee with respect to the Memorandum of Response relating to NIFRS appearance at PAC.

The Interim Chief Executive advised Members that the Committee had welcomed that 9 out of the Committee's 11 recommendations had been accepted, however, the Committee still had concerns with regard to Recommendation 9 and Recommendation 11. He read extracts from the correspondence outlining the Committee's concerns in respect of these Recommendations.

Referring to Recommendation 9 concerning the issue of sponsorship, the Interim Chief Executive explained that, whilst sponsorship is a matter which needed careful consideration, he felt it was an area which NIFRS should pursue. The Chairman further endorsed this view.

During discussion in relation to the broader issue of sponsorship, Members supported the need for NIFRS to pursue this matter whilst acknowledging the necessary ethical and business protocols and safeguarding confidence around the proper management of public funds.

The Interim Chief Executive informed the Meeting that PAC had requested a further update on the Memorandum of Response in one year, ie, by 12 February 2015. He stated that he was content with the Committee's position but pointed out that there was still work to be progressed.

The Chairman referred to the Organisational Improvement Committee and highlighted the significant work which had been achieved with regard to the recommendations emanating from the external reports.

## **Item 6: Chief Executive's Business Directors' Updates**

### **Director of Operations**

Members noted the Report from the Director of Operations. The Interim Chief Fire Officer gave an overview of the information presented:

- Operational Performance noted;
- Operational Assurance and Audit – update noted. The Interim Chief Fire Officer also updated Members with respect to the Assurance and Accountability Review of Area Commands, FRSTC and HQ Uniformed Directorates which had been undertaken in November/December. He explained that this Review would form part of the NIFRS Self-Assessment process for the LGA/CFOA Peer Review Assessment programmed for October 2014. The Interim Chief Fire Officer provided an overview of the Peer Review process. He also highlighted that an NIFRS Officer had been selected to participate in a further 2 reviews as part of the National Peer Review Team;
- Operational Issues of Note – the Interim Chief Fire Officer answered Members' questions regarding the information presented;
- Operational Risk Analysis – Members noted that the Operational Response Management Unit continues to profile risk across all 67 Station areas and a review of NIFRS approach to development and implementation of its IRMP is also being conducted. The Interim Chief Fire Officer noted that NIFRS response to the Summary Report of the Warwickshire Fatal Fire Investigation would be presented to the next Board Meeting. He assured Members that NIFRS can demonstrate compliance against each of the issues raised within the Report;

- Emergent Issues and Update on Control Measures – the Interim Chief Fire Officer outlined concerns regarding the impact of the number of substantive vacancies at Headquarters and the resultant increased number of Officers in temporary positions. He explained that the Principal Officers and he are reviewing current workloads, staffing structures, resource needs and work priorities to ensure effective and efficient service delivery which reflects both risk and resource issues; Incident of Note - the Interim Chief Fire Officer updated Members with respect to an incident on 3 February when an appliance from Central Fire Station had been involved in a collision with a private car en route to an emergency call.

The Interim Chief Fire Officer referred to the loss of a colleague, Firefighter Nial Hamilton, who collapsed after attending an accidental car fire in Lurgan on 10 February 2014.

Referring to Operational Assurance & Audit, the Interim Chief Fire Officer expressed his appreciation to the Audit & Risk Management Committee for their support during the development of the operational assurance management process which had also been an inclusive process with the Fire Brigades' Union.

The Chairman commented positively on Members' attendance at Station Assurance Audits and sought an update on the availability of a schedule for 2014 audits. The Interim Chief Fire Officer updated the Meeting on the current position.

Mrs Rice commended the Interim Chief Fire Officer on the work completed in developing and implementing the operational assurance management process.

Discussion took place in relation to the Emergency Response Standards and the Interim Chief Fire Officer answered Members' questions regarding various aspects relating to same.

Mr J Barbour referred to the failures to response and acknowledged that a problem relating to Retained availability had been identified. He sought clarification as to whether the implementation of the Retained Availability System would assist in resolving this issue.

The Interim Chief Fire Officer explained that there were a number of factors contributing to the issue such as the application of the 120 Hour Policy but highlighted that significant progress had been made. He explained that the Retained Availability System will assist NIFRS in the management of resources, etc. He reiterated his concerns regarding the lack of ability to move appliances and resources around the Province.

### **Director of Operational Support**

Members noted the Report from the Director of Operational Support. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Allen summarised the key points:

- Technical Research & Development – Assistant Chief Fire Officer Allen explained that, in line with the current IRMP, orders for additional operational equipment have been placed to support and improve service delivery to the public whilst providing for additional Firefighter safety - this equipment includes heavy rescue RTC equipment, additional Firefighter decontamination facilities for Area Commands and replacement rope rescue equipment known as Line Access Casualty Extrication System (LACES); Members were advised that as a result of a review of water rescue capability NIFRS has gone to procurement for an additional rescue boat to be based at Crescent Link;
- Stores – a full stock count was carried out in January; in line with the policy all accounts were under the 2% variance threshold - to improve variance further, Managerial Checks will now be carried out on each account; electronic requisitions have been introduced, allowing delivery times for remote areas to be significantly reduced; Assistant Chief Fire Officer Allen explained that a 'Dues Out' system has also been introduced to ensure that personnel do not have to reorder items that were initially out of stock;
- Transport & Engineering Services – update noted;
- Operational Training – update noted; Assistant Chief Fire Officer Allen noted that FRSTC was operating at maximum capacity and expressed his appreciation that staff had been released to assist; First Aid at Work contract has been awarded and training has commenced; Economic Appraisal for specialist, externally-delivered training (previously Fire Service College) has been approved by DFP.

### **Director of Community Protection**

Members noted the report from the Director of Community Protection. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford provided an overview of the salient points -

- Community Development – update noted; Members received an update on Fire Safety prosecutions; it was noted that work is ongoing with the Licensing Forum in relation to revisiting the MoU agreed with them and the delegation of powers as enacted last year.
- Emergency Response – updates noted including completion of work in relation to development of call signs and mobilisation procedures for flood-related assets, following the structured debrief after the tidal surge incidents; "Shirley Towers" project. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford informed Members of the establishment of a Specialist Rescue Development Group;
- Road Safety – update noted; Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford informed Members of a meeting with Belfast DPCSP and PSNI in relation to road safety, it is hoped to run a "Death Driving" awareness event in Belfast in March;
- Health & Safety - update noted; Health & Safety landscape in NIFRS is dominated by the untimely and tragic death of Firefighter Nial Hamilton following an incident in Lurgan. A fatal accident investigation has been initiated in line with the CFOA guidance and NIFRS internal protocol. This investigation team has fully engaged with PSNI, HSENI and the FBU, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford explained that it has been agreed by the Corporate Management Team that any recommendations/improvements emanating from the investigation will be dealt with separately; update pertaining to the Working Group charged with ensuring NIFRS compliance with the "Health, Safety & Welfare Framework for the Operational Environment" noted;

- GD92/ICT - updates on progress noted; rollout will now progress following completion of the initial pilot; Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford explained that arrangements are in place to allow Wide Area Messaging while GD92 Lot 2 is re-tendered.
- Retained Availability Project – update noted.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford answered Members' questions regarding aspects of the information presented.

### **Director of HR**

Members noted the Report from the Director of Human Resources. The Director of Human Resources summarised the key points of the information presented including:

- Recruitment & Selection – Support Staff update noted. The Director of Human Resources updated Members with respect to the recruitment of HR roles - Head of Human Resources Advisory Second stage assessment and interview will take place on 4 March 2014; 3 out of the 4 HR Business Partners have been appointed, the fourth post has been re-advertised;
- Attendance Management update – overall level of absence has been on a downward trend; actions relating to Attendance Management noted;
- Discipline/Grievance/Tribunal Cases – update noted;
- Policy Development update noted.

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

Members noted the Report from the Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs. The Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs, gave an overview of the information presented including:

- Capital Projects - update noted; Logistics Support Centre (One-Stop-Shop) progress noted; construction works progressing on the new Omagh Fire Station progressing; Operational Estate Asset Appraisal Survey is now underway with an expected completion date of early March 2014;
- Estates – update noted;
- Procurement - update noted; the Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs advised Members that NIFRS arrangements with CPD expire on 31 March 2014 and noted that NIFRS is working with PaLS to ensure there is a continuation of procurement services;
- Planning, KPIs – updated noted;
- Information Management – Project Group held its first meeting on 21 February 2014 – Project Manager still to be appointed;
- Press/Media Coverage – update noted.

With respect to the new Omagh Fire Station, it was noted that the Official Opening was being planned for September, date to be confirmed.

The Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs answered Members' questions regarding aspects of the information presented.

## **Change in Order of Business**

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

At its Meeting on 28 January 2014, the Board approved a revised Board/Committee Structure. Members are now requested to appoint the following Committees:

- Audit, Risk & Governance;
- Resources;
- Service Delivery;
- Remuneration.

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

**Resolved: “that the membership of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee should be as follows:**

**Mr A Hanna;  
Cllr D Barbour;  
Mr J Barbour;  
Cllr M Carr; and  
Mr M Kerr;**

**that the membership of the Resources Committee should be as follows:**

**Cllr M Carr;  
Mrs S Grant;  
Mr A Hanna; and  
Mr C Mack;**

**that the membership of the Service Delivery Committee should be as follows:**

**Cllr D Barbour;  
Mr J Barbour;  
Mrs S Grant;  
Mr M Kerr;  
Mr C Mack; and  
Mrs G Rice”.**

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At this point, the Meeting adjourned in order for each Committee to elect their  
Chairman and Vice-Chairman

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The Chairman noted that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each of the Committees were as follows:

***Audit, Risk & Governance Committee***

Chairman: Mr A Hanna, Vice-Chairman: Mr J Barbour

***Resources Committee***

Chairman: Cllr M Carr, Vice-Chairman: Mr C Mack

***Service Delivery Committee***

Chairman: Cllr D Barbour, Vice-Chairman: Mrs S Grant

With respect to the Remuneration Committee, the Chairman informed Members that the Remuneration Committee consisted of the Chairman of the Board, the Chairman of the Resources Committee, the Chairman of the Service Delivery Committee and one other Member of the Board.

The Board, on the motion of Mr J Barbour, seconded by Mr Hanna, unanimously agreed that Mrs Rice be elected to serve on the Remuneration Committee.

**Item 7: Budget**

The Report from the Director of Finance, Mrs Josephine Kelly, was noted. The Director of Finance gave Members a detailed overview of the information presented and noted that the year to date variance when comparing actual expenditure with budget for the 10 months ended 31 January 2014 shows an underspend of £255k compared with £653k reported at 31 December 2013. Members noted that a £100k easement had been declared by NIFRS to DHSSPS at the end of December. The Director of Finance assured Members that expenditure was being closely monitored and they would be made aware of any further potential easements.

Referring to the monitoring of expenditure, the Director of Finance informed Members that Finance Staff continue to have detailed discussions with budget holders as to the projected year end expenditure. She explained as at 31 January 2014, year-end underspend of £104k is projected. However, £116k relating to a “change in accounting treatment” of the accrual for an employment legal case will be submitted to DHSSPS in February 2014 resulting in a corresponding reduction in NIFRS budget and, therefore, a break-even revenue financial position at 31 March 2014 is projected.

With respect to the Capital Budget, the Director of Finance outlined the current position noting that the Management Accounts for the period ending 31 January 2014 were indicating a Service-wide underspend of £311k. She explained that a significant percentage of this underspend was attributable to slippage in the WRL and BA Pods projects, however, it is expected that all other Capital projects will remain on schedule.

The Director of Finance referred to the projected year end outturn for Capital expenditure and explained that, following detailed discussions with key staff, the year-end projected underspend had been revised to £618k. She provided a detailed breakdown of the projected underspend explaining that the majority of the projected underspend relates back to the original supplier for both the WRL and BA Pods Projects going into administration. Members noted that the projected underspend has been reported to DHSSPS.

The Director of Finance drew Members' attention to an extract from the NIFRS Loss Register highlighting the 2 losses which have received approval from DHSSPS in the 2013/14 financial year. She outlined the background purpose of presenting same explaining that the 2012/13 Controls Assurance Report had recommended that all losses should be formally reported to the Board and noting the delegated limits for approving such write-offs. She explained how approvals for any future losses would be processed.

The Officers answered Members' questions regarding aspects of the information presented, including training costs, MES ring fenced funding and the FRSHQ Fire Alarm project.

### **Draft Budget 2014/15**

Members noted details of the draft NIFRS Budget 2014/15.

The Director of Finance outlined the background to the drafting of the 2014/15 budget explaining that the process had commenced in October 2013 by requesting budget holders to identify cost pressures for the financial year. The initial budget was constructed on the basis that there would be no impact on front line delivery; the number of Stations and front-line appliances would be maintained; Firefighter safety would not be compromised; and there would be no compulsory redundancies. She stated that the Budget submissions indicated a revenue budget requirement of £77.138m in respect of 2014/15.

The Director of Finance highlighted that, in parallel with the drafting of the budget, NIFRS are developing a Five Year Efficiency Plan to cope with the ongoing financial pressures on all public sector budgets in this current environment of austerity.

Members were advised that in January 2014, DHSSPS had informed NIFRS that the 2014/15 revenue allocation would likely be £73.839m. As NIFRS are permitted to raise £350k in other income this would result in an annual budget of £74.189m for the 2014/15 financial year resulting in a projected deficit of £2.949m.

The Director of Finance pointed out that many of the pressures identified in the original budget requirement of £77.138m are inescapable due to statutory obligations. She explained that NIFRS have looked in detail at all the pressures identified, and has taken opportunities to reduce anticipated expenditure within statutory obligations. She provided a detailed overview of the analysis of the 2014/15 budgetary review of the initial projected budgetary requirement to achieve a balanced budget. She added that it must be noted that the further "savings" of £2.950m identified to achieve a projected balanced budget are in addition to the projected easements initially identified as part of the original budget submissions. The Director of Finance summarised a number of factors on which a balanced budgetary position 2014/15 was dependent.

The Chairman acknowledged the need for NIFRS to meet its budgetary requirements but stressed the need for cognisance to also be taken of its statutory obligations such as educating the public.

Referring to the opportunities taken to reduce anticipated expenditure, the Director of Finance explained that consideration had been given to the matter of overtime expenditure.

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At this point,  
the Interim Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs left the Meeting

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The Interim Chief Fire Officer circulated a Briefing Note pertaining to an Operational Efficiency Review linked to IRMP Objectives. He outlined the background to the Review noting that Objective 4 of NIFRS IRMP 2012-15 required NIFRS *“To ensure the effective and efficient use of operational resources by developing and implementing a service delivery model which reflects community risk, enhanced by effective performance management.”*

The Interim Chief Fire Officer explained that Phase 1 of the project to deliver Objective 4 had focused on the analysis of our existing use of resources to identify where they were not being managed as efficiently as possible with remedial action being possible in the short-term. He stated that it had identified a significant reliance on both Wholetime and Retained Duty System (RDS) overtime to sustain normal service delivery and that the current crewing model did not represent the most efficient use of available resources.

The Interim Chief Fire Officer highlighted the significant progress made to address operational safety and efficiency in consultation with the Fire Brigades’ Union. He pointed out, however, that the use of enhanced risk profiling and risk analysis tools, in addition to the assessment of flexible working practices in other Fire & Rescue Services, had identified additional opportunities to introduce more flexible working practices in NIFRS to reduce reliance on high levels of operational overtime. He provided a detailed explanation of the efficiency proposals contained within the Briefing Note.

Mr J Barbour commented on aspects of the proposals and agreed with the need to target the high levels of overtime within the Service. He indicated his broad support for the proposed efficiencies which he felt would not impact adversely on public safety.

The Chairman stated that key strategic issues had been identified and acknowledged the work to be undertaken to progress and implement the proposals but stressed the need for a cultural shift away from the reliance of overtime.

The Interim Chief Executive commended colleagues on the professional and pragmatic approach which had been taken in relation to addressing a difficult issue. He stated that a reasonable approach had been taken to the budget setting and emphasised that NIFRS was addressing the significant challenge as best as it can currently.

During detailed discussion in relation to the efficiency proposals, the Interim Chief Executive pointed out the need for NIFRS to have the flexibility to relocate resources to ensure efficient and effective service delivery.

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

**Resolved: “to approve the draft NIFRS Budget 2014/15”.**

Following further discussion in relation to the Operational Efficiency Review, the Board, on the motion of Mr Kerr, seconded by Mrs Rice, unanimously –

**Resolved: “to approve, in principle, the proposed efficiencies contained within the Operational Efficiency Review and the initiation of formal consultation with the Fire Brigades’ Union subject to any comments/points of clarification being raised by 7 March 2013”.**

**It was also agreed that should no returns be received, it will be assumed that the proposed efficiencies are formally approved.**

#### **Item 8: Standing Items Desertcreat Project**

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

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford informed Members that a security brief will be delivered at the next Board Meeting. He also informed Members that issues have been raised by NIFRS in relation to the lack of suitable engagement of the preferred bidder with the NIFRS team. He explained that this had been discussed at the Programme Board and the Interim Chief Executive will be writing to the Programme Director.

With respect to the peer review process aimed at quality assuring the NIFRS practical training facilities, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford noted that this has not been secured by the design team and highlighted that sign-off of the facilities cannot be completed until a suitable peer review has approved the suitability of the facilities. He stated this had been upgraded to a red risk on the Programme Risk Register.

Members noted that a review will be undertaken by the Corporate Management Team in relation to the resources required to meet the needs of the programme going forward.

Mrs Grant referred to the Programme Update which had been circulated and stated that she would welcome the circulation of the comprehensive Project Risk Register.

Discussion took place with respect to the delay in signing-off the Business Case for the Project and the impact of slippage of the project on available funding, etc.

**Item 9: Strategic Standalone Items  
Economic Appraisals**

This Item was deferred to the next Meeting.

**Item 10: Relevant Correspondence**

Members noted the following correspondence –

Letter from DHSSPS giving approval to the extension of the current interim arrangements – previously discussed in the Meeting.

**Item 11: Sealing of Documents**

Members noted the undernoted documents for sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

NDFA Training – First Person on Scene (Intermediate) and First Person on Scene (Intermediate) Refresher Programme;

Alexander Rankin & Son Limited – Supply and Installation of new Gas Condensing Boilers at Ballymena, Lisburn, Lurgan and Newry Fire Stations.

**Item 12: Schedule of Future Meetings**

Members noted a schedule of future Meetings.

The Chairman referred to Mr Wallace's upcoming period of leave and expressed his appreciation to the Interim Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team for their support, commitment and work over the last 18 months.

The Interim Chief Executive expressed his appreciation to his Corporate Management Team for all their support and commitment. He highlighted the significant progress achieved since the implementation of the interim arrangements 18 months ago and also the stability achieved within the Organisation. He commented he was pleased with the progress made to date but stressed the importance of moving forward with the Corporate Management Team and to continue to build on the open and transparent relationship between the Board, the Corporate Management Team and DHSSPS.

The Interim Chief Executive stated that NIFRS is an organisation we should all be proud to work for and reiterated the need to continue to work on taking the Organisation forward.

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THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS  
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED  
AT 4.55 PM

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

\_\_\_\_\_ INTERIM CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

DATE: 25 March 2014