

# NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING

30 SEPTEMBER 2014

1.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr A Hanna, Vice-Chairman presiding  
Mr C Kerr, Interim Chief Fire Officer  
Cllr D Barbour  
Mr J Barbour  
Mr M Kerr  
Mr C Mack  
Mr G Smyth

APOLOGIES: Cllr M Carr  
Mrs S Grant  
Dr J McKee  
Ald Mrs G Rice

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 L Cuddy, Director of Planning, Performance & Governance  
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Finance  
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources  
Mrs C McNally, Head of Corporate Communications  
Mr G Thompson, Area Commander (Northern Area Command)  
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary  
Mr J Millar, DHSSPS Observer

### Item 1: Apologies

Apologies were noted.

### Item 2: Declaration of Interests

The Vice-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 – 26 August 2014

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 June 2014, 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 Kerr, seconded by Mr Mack.

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

##### **Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 23 September 2014**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 23 September 2014 were circulated at the Meeting.

Mr J Barbour, Vice-Chairman of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, reported on the Business discussed.

Following consideration, the Minutes of the Audit, Risk & Governance Meeting, held on 23 September 2014, 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 D Barbour.

Arising from the Minutes:

##### **NAO Audit Committee Self-Assessment Checklist 2013/14**

At the request of DHSSPS, NIFRS Audit, Risk & Governance Committee is required to complete the NAO Audit Committee Self-Assessment Checklist 2013/14.

At the Meeting on 23 September 2014, a draft Self-Assessment Checklist was presented to the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee and comments sought.

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

**Resolved: “to approve the NAO Audit Committee Self-Assessment Checklist 2013/14”.**

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

Members noted that the Remuneration Committee had not been quorate and were informed that, as the Committee had not been quorate, there were no formal Minutes. However, brief notes of the discussions at the informal Meeting were circulated for the information of Members.

The Director of Finance explained that a key Item of Business to be considered by the Remuneration Committee had been Pay Remits. She informed Members that NIFRS is required to complete Pay Remit pro-formas and supporting Business Cases and submit to DHSSPS and DFP for approval. The following Pay Remits are now due for submission to DHSSPS and reflect the 1% pay award agreed by the National Joint Council –

- Uniformed Principal Officers & Directors;
- Control Room Personnel;
- Wholetime Firefighters; and
- Retained Firefighters.

Copies of the above Pay Remits were circulated for the consideration of Members.

Referring to the Pay Remits, the Director of Finance provided an overview of the documentation explaining that a key consideration within the Pay Remits is affordability. She further explained that currently the pay increases are affordable. She pointed out, however, that any further reductions in budget may have an impact. The Director of Finance noted that the NJC pay award was a UK-wide contractual obligation.

Mr J Barbour declared an interest in this matter. He drew attention to the frustration around delays in implementing the pay award and stressed the need to move forward with this matter.

Following discussion, the Board, on the motion of Mr D Barbour, seconded by Mr Kerr, unanimously –

**Resolved: “to approve the aforementioned Pay Remits”.**

### **Special Resources Committee – Minutes – 26 August 2014**

The Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Resources Committee held on 26 August 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 J Barbour, seconded by Mr D Barbour.

### **Resources Committee – Minutes – 25 September 2014**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Resources Committee held on 25 September 2014 were circulated at the Meeting.

Mr Mack, Vice-Chairman of the Resources Committee, reported on the Business discussed.

Following consideration, the Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting, held on 25 September 2014, 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.

### **Item 5: Chairman’s Business**

The Vice-Chairman commented positively on the Official Opening of Omagh Community Fire Station & District Headquarters and the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal Presentation Ceremony.

The Vice-Chairman acknowledged that this was the last Meeting of the present Board. He referred Members to an email from the Chairman in which Dr McKee extended his best wishes and warmest thanks to the Members for their contribution over the past 4 years to an organisation going through a difficult period of change, what the Board has endured and achieved is quite exceptional.

The Vice-Chairman extended his appreciation to the Board for their work over the past 4 years. He also extended his thanks to the Interim Chief Executive, Interim Chief Fire Officer and the Corporate Management Team for all their work. He highlighted that the Service has consistently delivered to the community of Northern Ireland.

Referring to the new Board, the Vice-Chairman, whilst noting that there were some new Members appointed to the Board, explained that there would be some continuity within the membership with re-appointments and extensions. He extended his best wishes to those Members leaving the Board and stated he welcomed the opportunity of continuing to work with those Members remaining.

Mr D Barbour, Mr Mack and Mr Kerr paid tribute to the Board and the Senior Management Team. They expressed their appreciation to the Chairman, Board colleagues, the Interim Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team for all their work and wished them well for the future.

The Interim Chief Executive reflected on the last 2 years and acknowledged that without the Board's support, challenge and resilience the Organisation would not have moved forward. He stated that the Members should take pride in being associated with NIFRS and expressed his thanks for their support and work.

The Interim Chief Fire Officer supported the Interim Chief Executive's comments.

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

There was no business to Report.

#### **Item 7: Standing Items**

##### **Desertcreat Project**

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford updated Members on the current position with respect to the Desertcreat Project explaining that a paper will be presented to the Programme Board and the Steering Group, and also the NIFRS Board, and this will outline the current situation and the proposed next steps.

During discussion, the Interim Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford answered Members' questions regarding aspects of the Project.

#### **Item 8: Strategic Standalone Items**

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

Members noted correspondence from DHSSPS, dated 4 September 2014, relating to the current expenditure allocations for 2014/15, along with NIFRS' response.

The Director of Finance referred to the correspondence from DHSSPS notifying NIFRS of a 2.5% reduction in revenue budget which equates to £1.8 m approximately. She noted that the draft saving proposals to meet the 2.5% in-year reduction had been considered in detail at a Board Workshop immediately prior to the Board Meeting.

The Director of Finance explained that the Corporate Management Team had considered all possible options for efficiencies in detail whilst remaining committed to the following guiding principles in managing this 2.5% in-year budget cut:

- 1 There will be no adverse impact on public safety associated with frontline service delivery;
- 2 Firefighter safety will not be compromised; and
- 3 We will protect jobs/livelihoods and avoid any compulsory redundancies.

The Director of Finance provided a synopsis of the key areas of proposed efficiencies. She explained that the Corporate Management Team believed there are a number of measures which could be enacted immediately and noted that the Interim Chief Fire Officer would provide an overview of these measures. She added that approval was being sought to commence work streams to progress these measures. The Director of Finance highlighted the need to be aware that should further in-year reductions be implemented, NIFRS would not be able to meet this without adverse impact on the Service.

Members noted that DHSSPS would be updated following the Meeting with NIFRS providing more detail regarding the options for efficiencies and their potential impact.

During discussion, the Members noted that an in-depth discussion regarding the savings proposals had taken place at the Workshop that morning and expressed their appreciation to the Director of Finance and her team for all their work and to the Corporate Management Team for their positive approach in addressing the in-year reductions.

Referring to the Briefing Note regarding the impact of budget reductions on operational service delivery also considered in detail at the Workshop, the Interim Chief Fire Officer summarised key considerations and recommendations explaining that the options were based on suitable and sufficient assessment of organisational and operational risk.

Following discussion, the Board on the motion of Mr Smyth, seconded by Mr J Barbour, unanimously –

**Resolved: “to approve the draft saving proposals to meet the 2.5% reduction in NIFRS RRL”.**

The Vice-Chairman referred to the Briefing Note pertaining to the impact of budget reductions on operational service delivery and sought Members’ approval. He noted that some of the proposals were subject to further negotiation and consultation.

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

**Resolved: “to approve in principle the draft budget reduction considerations and recommendations with regard to Operational service delivery.”**

**Members also agreed that those recommendations to be delivered over the longer-term be brought back to the Board for more detailed consideration.**

### **Fire Safety Week**

Members noted a Schedule for Fire Safety Week (6 to 10 October 2014) which would be launched on 6 October 2014 at Dublin Fire Brigade Training Centre.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford explained that the overall theme for Fire Safety Week was protecting those most at risk from fire and gave Members an overview of the themes for each day.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ashford expressed appreciation to Area and District staff for all their work in preparation for Fire Safety Week and also to the Head of Corporate Communications and her team for ensuring a media presence during Fire Safety Week in light of having no media contract in place.

### **Strategic Outline Case for Network Infrastructure**

Members noted the Executive Summary of the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for NIFRS Network Infrastructure.

The Director of Finance outlined the background to the development of the SOC and its purpose. She answered Members' questions relating to aspects of the project.

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

**Resolved: “to approve the Strategic Outline Case for NIFRS Network Infrastructure”.**

### **Item 9: Relevant Correspondence**

There was no relevant correspondence.

### **Item 10: Sealing of Documents**

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Shelbourne Motors Limited (Renault) – Supply and Delivery of 20 Civilian Specification Flexi-Duty Officers' Cars;  
Donnelly Group Fiat – Supply and Delivery of Small Vans;  
Renault UK Limited – Supply and Delivery of Crew Cab Vans; and  
Shelbourne Motors Limited (Renault) – Supply and Delivery of Large Mechanic Vans.

### **Item 11: Schedule of Future Meetings**

Members noted a schedule of future Meetings.

---

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS  
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED  
AT 3.00 PM

---