

# NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING

22 SEPTEMBER 2015

2.30 PM

PRESENT: Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding  
Mr D Ashford, Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer  
Mr J Barbour  
Mr A Hanna  
Mr R Irvine  
Mr K Henning  
Mr P Martin  
Mr G Smyth

APOLOGIES: Mr C Enright

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Graham, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operational Support)  
Mr G Thompson, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations)  
Mr A Walmsley, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Protection)  
Mrs L Cuddy, Director of Planning, Performance & Governance  
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Finance  
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources  
Ms Pauline Wylie, Head of Corporate Communications  
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary  
Mr J Millar, DHSSPS Observer

### Item 1: Welcome

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to her first full Board Meeting. In particular, she welcomed new Members Robert Irvine and Peter Martin. She informed the meeting that Cadogan Enright had to leave after the Peer Review session that morning.

### Item 2: Apologies

Apologies were noted.

### Item 3: 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. Noted by the Chair.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer referred to Item 5 relating to Remuneration Committee Minutes and advised the Meeting of a potential conflict for members of the Corporate Management Team. Noted and agreed by the Chairperson who confirmed that the Corporate Management Team would be asked to withdraw when that item was being discussed.

#### **Item 4: Minutes of Meeting – 30 June 2015**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 June 2015, having been circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the proposal of Mr Hanna, seconded by Mr Smyth.

Arising from the Minutes:

#### **Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2014/15**

The Director of Finance informed Members that the Statement of Accounts had been signed off by the Auditor & Comptroller General and the Annual Report & Statement Accounts laid in accordance with the timetable.

#### **HSC BSO Proposed Service Provision to NIFRS for Pensions Administration**

The Director of Finance noted that the SLA with BSO for service provision to NIFRS for Pensions administration had now been signed. She updated the Meeting on progress to date.

Mr Hanna referred to his role as a Non-Executive Member of BSO and explained that, given the level of work between BSO and NIFRS was increasing, he had written to the Deputy Secretary, DHSSPS, to advise of these circumstances as he served on both Boards. He informed the meeting that the Deputy Secretary had indicated that she was content for him to continue to serve on both Boards and that the situation should be kept under review.

The Chairperson acknowledged that Mr Hanna had raised the matter with DHSSPS and that she had been copied in to his communication to Mrs Thompson the Deputy Secretary. The Chairperson advised that she, in her role, would be mindful of this and if she considered that there was a potential or perceived conflict of interest for Mr Hanna she would discuss this with him. Mr Hanna confirmed that he would continue to withdraw from meetings when deemed appropriate to do so.

#### **CHANGE IN THE ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chairperson sought Members' approval to adjust the Agenda schedule and explained that it was necessary for the Director of Finance to leave the meeting early in order to meet another pressing work commitment. She proposed that the Finance matters under Item 6 – Strategic Standalone Items – be taken next.

**Members agreed to this.**

## **Item 6: Strategic Standalone Items Finance Report**

The Finance Directorate Report was noted. The Director of Finance referred to the revenue budget risks which had previously identified, in particular, with respect to the overspend due to an increase in employer pension contribution rates. She explained that this issue had been taken forward separately with DHSSPS and informed Members that on 2 September 2015 NIFRS received a revised revenue budget allocation of £72.543m, an increase of £2.769m, to fund the increase in employer pension contribution rates. The Director of Finance highlighted that DHSSPS has advised that this additional funding is ring-fenced to cover the additional employer pension contributions in 2015/16. She noted that discussions regarding future years were ongoing.

The Director of Finance noted the financial position as at 31 August 2015 was reporting an overspend of £88k. In response to a question from the Chairperson she assured the Members that the Corporate Management Team closely monitors the financial position. She advised Members that overtime expenditure continues to be a concern. She informed Members that coping strategies were in place with others to be implemented. She stated that the matter is being managed and that she would give regular reports at future meetings. The Chairperson and Members noted this report and advised that it would be essential for the Board to be regularly appraised on these matters.

Members were informed that the current contract extension for banking services is due to expire on 31 January 2016. The Director of Finance explained that NIFRS has been involved in a collaborative procurement process for banking services with all HSC Bodies, led by CPD and BSO PaLS. She informed Members that Bank of Ireland has been awarded the new contract which is for a 5-year period commencing on 1 February 2016 with a provision for 3 x 12 month optional extension periods.

During discussion and, in response to a number of questions from the Chairperson, the Officers appraised Members with regard to cost of sickness absence, job evaluation outcomes and reallocation of funding. With respect to sickness absence, the Director of HR explained that these figures are recorded as 'shifts lost' and that further work would be required to attribute cost to these figures. He referred to the Director's reports and explained that his report includes a snapshot of figures. He stated that he would provide a full update in the future.

The Chairperson acknowledged that Directors' reports are normally presented to the Board Meeting but explained that these had not been circulated on this occasion due to the full Agenda. She further informed that she was currently, with the Director of Planning Performance & Governance, reviewing the format and content of the reports. She was keen to ensure that the Board had sufficient time to consider matters of strategy at the meetings and thus this would require a review of a number of matters relating to Board business practices. She advised she would liaise with Committee Chairs to seek their views on this matter.

The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance confirmed that, in future, it is considered that Directors' reports should be presented to the relevant Committee. The Chairperson advised she would seek the views of the Committee Chairs on this suggestion.

## **NIFRS Savings Plan 2015/16 Update**

Members noted a Briefing Paper providing an update on NIFRS Savings Plan 2015/16 as at September 2015.

The Director of Finance noted that NIFRS savings plan had been published in May 2015 in which a projected financial pressure of approximately £450k had been identified. She stated that the implementation of savings measures is being monitored by the Corporate Management Team and explained that at present it is projected that NIFRS will break even. She highlighted, however, that there were risks as some of the measures will take a period of time to implement.

Members acknowledged that 80% of NIFRS budget relates to staff costs and during discussion the Officers provided clarification regarding NIFRS headcount/ establishment figures. The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer concurred with Members' comments regarding the need to clarify NIFRS establishment. He explained that NIFRS official establishment figure remained the same. However, he explained that NIFRS establishment figures will change in light of Resource to Risk reviews, such as the manning of Aerial appliances.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer highlighted the impact of a reducing budget on the Service and its ability to meet its statutory duties. Members shared their concerns on the impact of a reducing budget.

Referring to the establishment figures, the Director of HR informed Members that DHSSPS has given NIFRS approval to exercise flexibility within the staffing groups. He outlined work ongoing regarding a new operating model for NIFRS.

## **WAN Business Case**

Members noted the Executive Summary for the WAN Business Case. The Director of Finance outlined the purpose of this key project for NIFRS highlighting that the current solution falls significantly short of Service requirements in a number of aspects. She updated Members on the current position explaining that, in order to keep the process moving, NIFRS had informally submitted this Business Case to DHSSPS and was currently working through DHSSPS queries.

The Director of Finance responded to Members' questions regarding the proposed service provider, associated projects and costs.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer stressed the need for this investment in ICT.

The Board, after discussion and on the proposal of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously –

**Resolved: “to approve the WAN Business Case”.**

## **CHANGE IN THE ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Members agreed to defer Item 5 – Remuneration Committee Minutes – to the end of the meeting.

## **Item 6: Strategic Standalone Items**

### **Committee Membership**

Members noted that, to reflect the recent changes in Board membership, it was necessary to approve the appointment of Members to the undernoted Committees:

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

A proposal for Committee membership was circulated for the consideration of Members. The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance explained that unfortunately, due to the difficulty of the Board being 3 Members down, it had been necessary to assign Members to at least 2 Committees.

The Chairperson informed Members that she had raised the matter of casual vacancies with DHSSPS officials. She explained that consideration was being given as to whether a Business Case would be required to take this forward.

She noted that the Committees would be meeting week commencing 19 October 2015. She advised that it was her intention to meet with Committee Chairs before Committees started up again. The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer confirmed that he would meet Committee Chairs also.

During discussion, the Director of Planning, Performance & Governance responded to a number of Members' questions. She acknowledged there could be pressure on current Members of the Board due to the fact that the Board was working with 3 Members down on its full quota and the number of requirements for a quorum for each meeting. The Chairperson thanked Members for their commitment to the work of the NIFRS Board.

The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance sought Members' approval for the proposed membership suggesting that the membership could be reviewed at a later date, either at a future Board Meeting or at separate meetings.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Martin, unanimously –

**Resolved: “that the membership and Chairs/Vice-Chairs of the Committees should be as follows:**

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

**Mr G Smyth (Chairman);  
Mr J Barbour (Vice-Chairman);  
Mr K Henning;  
Mr C Enright; and  
Mr R Irvine;**

### **Resources Committee**

**Mr K Henning (Chairman);  
Mr G Smyth (Vice-Chairman);  
Mr C Enright; and  
Mr P Martin;**

### **Service Delivery Committee**

**Mr J Barbour (Chairman);  
Mr K Henning (Vice-Chairman);  
Mr A Hanna;  
Mr R Irvine; and  
Mr P Martin;**

### **Remuneration Committee**

**Ms C McKinney (Chairman);  
Mr A Hanna (Vice-Chairman); and  
Mr P Martin.**

## **Transformation Agenda**

Members noted an outline of the proposed Transformation Programme for NIFRS. The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer stated the need for NIFRS to look at this matter holistically in order to agree a way forward. He provided an overview of the information presented and explained briefly the rationale for the establishment of a Transformation Programme Board. He stated that the paper was an initial document for the consideration of Members prior to a fuller discussion and workshop on 24 November. The workshop would precede the scheduled Board Meeting. The venue for the day would be the RADAR Centre.

The Director of HR explained that the Transformation Agenda had been developed in line with a Balanced Scorecard approach. He stated that the programme demonstrated the volume of work to be undertaken and stressed the need to clarify a clear focus for the organisation, ie, identifying an operating model was key as everything else flows from this. He explained the importance of a Programme Board approach and the benefits of establishing a Programme Support Office.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer referred to the Business Improvement Plan developed to address outstanding audit recommendations and explained that it is planned to capture these key projects within Transformation Programme workstreams.

During a full discussion, the Chairperson and Members acknowledged the scale of work to be undertaken. The Chairperson stressed the importance of clarifying the scrutiny and support role of the Board in progressing the Transformation Programme as it was her view that they had a very important part to play going forward and one that would demand their full participation in their non-executive roles and would also be considerably more than titular.

The Chairperson noted the proposed Programme was an initial outline and acknowledged that the Corporate Management Team had commenced the journey. She asked the Corporate Management Team to note Members' comments and their wish to support the Corporate Management Team going forward.

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

**Resolved: “to agree the proposed Transformation Programme for NIFRS in principle, with a fuller proposal to be presented at a workshop on 24 November 2015”.**

### **2015/16 Business Plan and Quarter 1 Progress Report**

Members noted NIFRS Business Plan 2015/16, as approved by DHSSPS, and the Quarter 1 Business Planning and Balanced Scorecard Update (April-June 2015).

The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance provided an overview of the documentation explaining that a Balanced Scorecard approach had been used in the development of the Business Plan. With respect to the Quarter 1 update, she noted a positive direction of travel and assured Members that the Corporate Management Team will monitor progress to ensure this is maintained.

Mr Smyth referred to previous Board discussions regarding the issue of resources and particularly concerns with respect to resources within the Planning, Performance & Governance Directorate. He sought an update on progress.

The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance updated Members on the current position with regard to Directorate structure reviews noting that it is planned to present the outcome of the Planning, Performance & Governance structural review in November.

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

**Resolved: “to approve the Quarter 1 (April-June 2015) Business Planning and Balanced Scorecard Update”.**

### **Desertcreat**

The NICSC Programme Board's Business Case Update Report to the NI Executive was noted.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer updated Members on the current position. He explained that the revisit to the Business Case was to ascertain the viability of the project. He further explained that should the project be assessed as viable there would be challenges going forward.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer emphasised that the report was an update on the Business Case and drew Members' attention to the options being taken forward within the Business Case and also the constraints therein. He informed Members of NIFRS' concerns with regard to these options, particularly Option 6 and noted that these had been raised at the Programme Board.

During discussion, Mr Barbour outlined his concerns with regard to Option 6. The Officers highlighted the constraints were currently with the current FRSTC site and explained that, although there were concerns, proceeding with Option 6 would provide NIFRS with a good Training Centre.

There was a wide-ranging discussion on the paper.

Mr Barbour noted that Desertcreat was a medium to longer-term solution and expressed concern regarding the current facilities for delivering critical safety training.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Graham accepted there were risks currently but assured Members measures were in place to mitigate those risks. He also advised Members that the OBC for an Interim Training Solution was awaiting DHSSPS approval.

The Chairperson sought assurances with regard to this training risk. The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer stated that the current training facilities were adequate but not sustainable. He confirmed that this risk was included on NIFRS Risk Register.

#### **Item 7: Relevant Correspondence**

There was no relevant correspondence.

#### **Item 8: Sealing of Documents**

Members noted the undernoted documents for sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with -

Clan Tools & Plant Limited – Supply and Delivery of Parts for Clan Lukas RTC;  
Draeger Safety (UK) Limited – BA Bottle Hand Controller; and  
Podium4Sport – Service and Maintenance of NIFRS Fitness Equipment.

#### **Additional Item of Business**

Members agreed, on the proposal of the Chairperson, to take an additional item of business relating to the disposal of Omagh Fire Station.

#### **Disposal of Omagh Fire Station**

A Briefing Note pertaining to the sale of Omagh Fire Station, Mountjoy Road, Omagh, was circulated for the consideration of Members.

The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance summarised the background to the disposal of the Omagh Fire Station and noted that NIFRS has adhered to Government and Departmental guidelines issued by DFP Central Advisory Unit for the Disposal of Public Sector Property in NI. She recommended the approval of the sale of surplus land for the sum of £170,000.

The Board, on the proposal of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously –

**Resolved: “to approve the sale of surplus land and buildings at Omagh for the sum of £170,000 to Omagh Pharmacy Limited”.**

### **Item 9: Schedule of Future Meetings**

Members were informed that the November Board Meeting would be held at the RADAR Centre in Belfast.

The Chairperson noted that the Director of Planning, Performance & Governance was currently developing a training programme for Members.

The Chairperson referred to the ongoing Area Commander Inspections and encouraged Members’ attendance at these Station inspections.

The Chairperson noted that the new Members, Messrs Enright, Irvine and Martin had recently attended the Essential Skills for Board Members Course. Members reported positively on their attendance.

The Chairperson encouraged Members’ attendance at the following upcoming events:

- Central Fire Station Open Day – Saturday, 26 September 2015 from 12.00 noon to 4.00 pm;
- Launch of Fire Safety Week – Monday, 5 October 2015 at 12.30 pm in the RADAR Centre.

The Chairperson thanked the Corporate Management Team for their attendance and all their work.

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At this point,  
all the Directorate, with the exception of the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer  
and the Board Administrative Officer left the Meeting

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### **Item 5: Reports from Board Committees, including Adoption of Committee Minutes**

#### **Remuneration Committee – Minutes – 25 August 2015**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 25 August 2015, 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 Ms McKinney.

Arising from the Minutes:

### **Job Evaluations – Support Directors**

The Chairperson informed the Board that the report on the Job Evaluations for Support Directors had been considered by the Remuneration Committee. She informed colleagues that the Committee had approved the Job Evaluations in principle, with the caveat that further requested information be made available to the Board before a fully informed decision was made by all Members.

The Chairperson invited comments from Members.

A wide-ranging discussion followed in which the Chairperson suggested that briefings might be organised for Members, in particular, new Members. She suggested Members should forward any matters which required further clarification or discussion to the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer. The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer agreed to facilitate this suggestion. Mr Hanna suggested that consideration might also be given to Members receiving a presentation at a future Board Meeting from the author of the Job Evaluation Report. Members concurred with this suggestion. The Chairperson advised Members that it would be vital to have clarity on the further information being sought on this matter from the author of the report. She advised Members to liaise with the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer to discuss same.

**Members agreed to revisit this matter at a future Board Meeting when all requested information has been received, discussed and then facilitate a Board decision.**

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THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS  
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED  
AT 4.15 PM

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