

# NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING

24 NOVEMBER 2015

1.30 PM

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

APOLOGY: 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 P Wylie, Head of Corporate Communications  
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary  
Mr J Millar, DHSSPS Observer

The Chairperson thanked the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and the Corporate Management Team for that morning's Workshop on the Financial Savings Scenario Planning 16/17 and Transformation Agenda which had been useful.

Referring to the Agenda for the Meeting, the Chairperson noted that Items 3 and 4 would be considered in closed session and the Board would be considering an additional item of business relating to a Review of the Pension Function.

### **Item 1: Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

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

The Chairperson 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.

Mr Hanna declared a potential conflict of interest with regard to the additional item of business concerning a Review of the Pension Function. This was noted by the Chairperson who advised that Mr Hanna would make a final decision on whether to absent himself should he consider that this was a conflict when the Agenda item came through for discussion.

The Chairperson noted that, in accordance with Paragraph 21 of the Code of Accountability for Board Members, all new Board Members, including herself as the new Chairperson, must formally declare any business interests, position of authority in a charity or voluntary body in the field of health and social care, and any connection with a voluntary or other body contracting for NIFRS' services, and also any Directorships and other significant interests held.

The Chairperson and Mr Martin declared they had no conflicts of interest. Mr Irvine declared that he is a non-executive Member of the Western Local Commissioning Group. He informed the meeting that his membership had been due to finish in November 2015 but had been extended to 2016.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, congratulated Mr Barbour on his appointment to the Expert Advisory Panel on Transformational Change, along with Mr Steven McGurk and Sir Ken Knight. Mr Barbour thanked the Chairperson for her good wishes and gave Members a brief overview of the remit of the Advisory Panel.

The Chairperson also congratulated Mr Martin and his wife on the birth of their son.

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At this point, all the Officers, with the exception of the  
Board Administrative Secretary,  
left the Meeting  
as Items 3 and 4 were now to be taken in Closed Session

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### **Item 3: Minutes of Special Meeting – 22 September 2015**

The Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 22 September 2015 were approved as a true record, subject to a minor amendment, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Barbour.

The Chairperson noted that, at a Board Member discussion session on 23 October, the Board had reflected on the CFRO recruitment process and had agreed a number of actions which the Chairperson would take forward on their behalf. She also noted that a further session to continue that discussion was scheduled to take place on 8 December 2015.

***Post Meeting Note:*** Further discussion session is now rescheduled to 21 January 2016 at Eastern Command Headquarters from 11.00 am to 3.00 pm. Emails to advise on this had been sent to Board Members on 23 December with follow-up documentation sent out by the Board Administrative Secretary on 4 January 2016.

The Chairperson also advised that all email communications will now from December 1<sup>st</sup> be going through each Member's NIFRS email address and if there are any problems in accessing these, the Board Administrative Secretary is very happy to assist. This new practice is to ensure uniformity on the use of email addresses for Board business.

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At this point,  
the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer rejoined the Meeting  
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#### **Item 4: Job Evaluations – Support Directors**

Following a full discussion, it was agreed that Members receive a presentation from the author of the Job Evaluation Report at its next Meeting and the matter would be discussed on 26 January.

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At this point,  
the Officers rejoined the Meeting  
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#### **Item 5: Minutes – 22 September 2015**

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 22 September 2015, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Irvine.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

#### **Committee Membership**

The Chairperson acknowledged the pressure on Members due to the Board being 3 down in its complement and stated that, as NIFRS was remaining within DHSSPS, she would raise the matter once again with the officials. She recognised that Members were, in general, on 2 Committees, which was very demanding as well as perhaps not best governance. She informed the Members she would come back to them on this matter after she had spoken with the officials.

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

The Director of Finance referred to the Service Level Agreement with BSO for service provision to NIFRS for Pensions Administration and explained that, due to last week's announcement that NIFRS will be staying with Health, the Business Case had been revised from a period of 2 years to 5 years. It was noted by the Chairperson that this matter would be discussed later on the Agenda.

#### **WAN Business Case**

The Director of Finance also updated Members on the current position with respect to the WAN Business Case.

## **Transformation Agenda**

The Chairperson noted that the Board had received a useful high level presentation on NIFRS Change Programme at that morning's Workshop. She thanked the Corporate Management Team for this and looked forward to receiving a more detailed presentation which would facilitate Member involvement and participation. She advised that this would be a priority for the Board Members in their Non Executive role.

## **Board Minutes – 23 October 2015**

The Minutes of the Special Board Meeting held on 23 October 2015, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Hanna, seconded by Mr Barbour.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer referred to the concerns raised by Members at the Special Meeting regarding Desertcreat. He informed Members that these concerns had been outlined in correspondence to the Programme Board and also formally raised at the Steering Group meeting. He noted that work on OBC2 would get underway when OBC 1 is approved.

## **Item 6: Reports from Board Committees, including Adoption of Committee Minutes**

### **Service Delivery Committee - Minutes - 20 October 2015**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Service Delivery Committee held on 20 October 2015, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, and the recommendations, as detailed below, adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Henning.

### ***Recommendations***

- Approval of the recommendations as detailed in the Briefing Paper relating to NIFRS Automated Fire Alarm Protocol;
- Approval of the revised NIFRS Health & Safety Policy Statement & Guide subject to minor amendments.

Mr Barbour, Chairman of the Service Delivery Committee, provided a synopsis of the key areas of business discussed at the Meeting.

The Chairperson advised that in her view the Minutes of Committees should come through for noting and it was therefore not necessary to report through the details of those meetings again. She would however seek clarification on this governance point.

It was noted that the Committee had also recommended approval of NIFRS Resource to Risk Review and that NIFRS proceeds to full implementation of Jump Crewing of Aerial Appliances. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Thompson, having sought approval from the Chairperson and Members, informed the Board of correspondence received from the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) regarding this matter. The correspondence was noted for the Minutes.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Thompson explained that, with respect to the Resource to Risk Review, the Union welcomed the enhancement of operational service delivery at the 4 Stations identified, was opposed to moving Variable Crewed Stations to Day Crewed Stations and, with regard to the review of the 2-2-4 Wholetime Shift system, the Union was willing to enter into discussions.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Thompson, with the approval of the Chairperson, read extracts from the correspondence outlining the FBU's concerns with regard to the Jump Crewing of Aerial Appliances. He stated that the issues raised were no different than those raised during the consultation exercise. He noted that further analysis had been conducted and that this did not have any impact on the information presented to the Service Delivery Committee. The Board noted this.

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

**Resolved: “to approve NIFRS Resource to Risk Review and that NIFRS proceed to full implementation of Jump Crewing of Aerial Appliances”.**

The Chairperson, through Mr Barbour, referred to Item 13 relating to Health & Safety and, in particular training and induction for new Members across a range of NIFRS business areas including Directorate briefings. She advised Members that she and the Director of Planning, Performance & Governance had initial discussions regarding a training programme for the Board and that those proposals would come through to the Board in January 2016.

### **Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 22 October 2015**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 22 October 2015, were noted.

Mr Smyth, Chairman of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, sought clarification as to the process for approving Committee Minutes suggesting that such Minutes should be approved by the Committee and then come through to the Board for noting. The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance concurred. She advised that this matter would be implemented through the review of Board governance processes which was currently underway.

The Minutes were taken as read and signed as a true record, and the recommendations, as detailed below, adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Irvine.

### ***Recommendations***

- Acceptance of Audits of Bank & Cash; Complaints, Grievances Whistleblowing & Fraud Processes; Fleet & Associated Equipment Management; Management of Fuel Usage; Non Pay Expenditure; Payroll and Stations Visits;
- Approval of Internal Audit Mid-year Follow-Up Report on Outstanding Internal Audit Recommendations;
- Approval of Quarter 2 Update on the Corporate Business Plan (April to September 2015) along with the Balanced Scorecard; and
- Approval of Quarters 1 and 2 Risk Register Summary Reports.

Mr Smyth gave Members an overview of the key items discussed at the meeting. In particular he highlighted the concerns raised within the Mid-Year Follow-Up Report regarding resources in the Planning, Performance & Governance Directorate. He stated that the issue of resourcing was continually flagged and noted that the Committee would be receiving a progress report at its December Meeting.

In response to a question from the Chairperson regarding resourcing in this Directorate, the Director of Planning, Performance & Governance explained that she was currently conducting a root and branch review of her Directorate and the outcome of this review would be presented to the Resources Committee in December. She suggested that this information could also be presented to the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee.

Mr Smyth welcomed the announcement that NIFRS was remaining with DHSSPS. He stated that the organisation had been demonstrating progress and a positive direction of travel. He commended the Business Assurance Manager for all her work.

### **Resources Committee – Minutes – 22 October 2015**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Resources Committee held on 22 October 2015, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, and the recommendations, as detailed below, adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Smyth.

#### ***Recommendations***

- Approval of NIFRS Learning & Development Strategy 2015-2020;
- Approval of the Review of NIFRS Manual Technicians subject to consultation;
- To confirm the Caretaker post at Newtownards Safety Centre redundant and to terminate the employment of the current postholder on the grounds of compulsory redundancy.

Mr Henning, Chairman of the Resources Committee, gave Members an overview of the key items of business discussed and noted that the Budget 2016/17, along with the budget planning scenarios, had been discussed at that morning's Workshop.

### **Remuneration Committee – Minutes – 23 October 2015**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 23 October 2015, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, and the recommendation, as detailed below, adopted by the Board, on the motion of Mr Hanna, seconded by Mr Martin.

#### ***Recommendation***

- To confirm the Caretaker post at Newtownards Safety Centre redundant and to terminate the employment of the current postholder on the grounds of compulsory redundancy.

The Chairperson noted her discussion with the Committee Chairs regarding the streamlining of information being brought to the Board.

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

Members noted a Briefing Paper providing an update on the financial position as at 31 October 2015.

The Director of Finance drew Members' attention to the revenue financial position which is reporting an overspend £189k. She highlighted that overtime is a key risk for the organisation and noted that an overtime reduction strategy was reintroduced in September and that some reduction in overtime spend is expected going forward.

With respect to the capital financial position, the Director of Finance updated Members on the current position noting an underspend variance of £6k.

The Officers answered Members' questions regarding the information presented.

### **Budget Scenario Planning 2016/17**

Members noted correspondence from DHSSPS relating to 2016/17 budget planning scenarios, along with NIFRS draft response.

The Chairperson stated that following on from the financial savings scenario planning discussions at the Workshop prior to the Board Meeting, the Corporate Management Team will now finalise NIFRS' response for submission to DHSSPS. The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer outlined how the submission would be progressed and noted that the finalised submission would be circulated to Members for comment/approval before final submission.

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At this point,  
the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and the Assistant Chief Fire Officers  
left the Meeting

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### **Pension Matters Temporary Promotions/Secondments**

A Briefing Paper updating Members on the issue of temporary promotions/secondments following an amendment to the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (NFPS) was noted.

The Director of Finance outlined the background to the issue and noted the current position explaining that DHSSPS made the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (No 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 on 9 October 2015 which will come into operation on 8 December 2015. This Order amends the NFPS by revoking Article 61(6). She noted that, as a consequence of this Article being revoked, NIFRS can now enact The New Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (No 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 which changed the provision of pensionable pay to state that it related only to permanent emoluments of pay. This effectively means that temporary promotions/secondments from 8 December 2015 can no longer be included in final pensionable pay.

The Director of Finance explained that the Board, as the employer, now needs to determine if additional pay as a result of new temporary promotions/secondments are to continue to be treated as pensionable from 8 December 2015 for both the Firefighters' Pension Scheme and the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme. She gave Members an overview of the options/considerations going forward noting that no decision is required regarding the CARE Scheme as this legislation does not permit temporary promotions/secondments to be treated as pensionable.

During discussion, the Officers answered Members' questions relating to the matter.

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

**Resolved: “that from 8 December 2015, new periods of temporary promotions/secondments continue, for an interim period, to be treated as pensionable, ie, treated as Additional Pension Benefit until 1 April 2016, to enable time for consultation with representative bodies and ensure compliance with appropriate legislation; and that any new promotions/secondments undertaken from 1 April 2016 are not treated as pensionable so that there is consistency going forward across the 3 Pension Schemes”.**

The Director of Finance outlined the next steps and assured Members that staff will be kept informed.

### **Pension Discretion Policy**

Members noted a draft NIFRS Policy statement on Local Government Pensions Discretions and Discretionary Compensation Regulations.

The Director of HR explained that the Policy Statement had been updated to reflect the new template from NILGOSC. He further explained that the updated Statement does not change any provisions within the Organisational Change Policy for Support Staff. He advised that the Statement supports the Policy and enables NIFRS to continue as stands.

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At this point,  
the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer rejoined the Meeting

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Mr Irvine asked that in future any changes to amended/revised Policies be highlighted in bold to assist Members in their consideration of such documents. The Chairperson concurred stating this should be implemented from January onwards.

The Director of HR explained that although the draft Policy Statement was in a new template the information was the same. He noted that the normal protocol would have been to present the document to the Resources Committee but that, due to timeframes, it had been presented to the Board.

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

**Resolved: “to approve NIFRS draft Policy Statement on Local Government Pension Discretions and Discretionary Compensation Regulations”.**

### **Banking Arrangements**

A Briefing Paper reviewing NIFRS’ current banking arrangements was noted.

The Director of Finance informed Members that NIFRS’ current banking contract is due to expire on 31 January 2016 and Bank of Ireland had been successful in the tendering process. She provided an overview of the proposed arrangements and highlighted that all NIFRS Imprest Accounts, with the exception of the ‘LIFE Scheme’ Imprest Account, will be closed with effect from 1 January 2016.

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

**Resolved: “to approve the proposed arrangements as detailed within the Briefing Paper”.**

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At this point,  
Assistant Chief Fire Officers Graham, Thompson and Walmsley  
rejoined the Meeting

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### **Procurement Arrangements**

A Briefing Paper relating to Procurement Panels and the role of the Board was noted.

The Director of Finance summarised the key proposals within the paper noting in particular that with respect to procurements over the EU threshold, it is proposed to remove the requirement for a Board Member to chair Evaluation Panels now that the arrangement with BSO is in place. She advised Members that Procurements exceeding the EU threshold will not be awarded until Board approval has been received and explained that approval will be sought either through a Special Meeting or via email.

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

**Resolved: “to approve the proposals for Procurement arrangements as detailed in the Briefing Paper”.**

### **RDS Recruitment**

Members noted a Briefing Note relating to the Retained Duty System (RDS) recruitment exercise.

The Director of HR explained that, following an assessment of the Retained Availability System, approval was being sought to increase the number of Day Contract recruits to 3 in Donaghadee, Newtownards and Newry Fire Stations and also in Western Area Command as required depending on the establishment and availability levels at the time of appointment. Members were informed that increasing the number of recruits to 3 will help enhance public and Firefighter safety by achieving safe to manage crewing levels.

The Director of HR stated that the introduction of Day Contracts on a fixed term basis of 3 years was a pilot exercise and the impact of the Day Contracts will be monitored.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Thompson explained that a team was being established to monitor Retained availability from the centre. He noted that a review of the Day Contract pilot exercise would be conducted at the end of the pilot.

Mr Barbour welcomed this innovative approach to RDS recruitment. He enquired as to the budgetary implications of the recruitment exercise, eg, on training, due to timeframes for completing the exercise.

The Director of HR stated that there would be some impact on the training budget due to the delay in the recruitment process and explained how this would be addressed.

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

**Resolved: “to give approval to enable the Corporate Management Team to increase the number of Day Contract recruits to 3 in Donaghadee, Newtownards and Newry Fire Stations; and to increase the intake in Western Area Command as required”.**

### **Management Statement & Financial Memorandum**

Members noted the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM) between DHSSPS and NIFRS which had recently been updated by DHSSPS in association with NIFRS Management.

The Chairperson welcomed the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum highlighting that these were key documents for NIFRS, as the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined within the documents. She suggested that there may be the opportunity to consider the detail of both at training sessions going forward.

The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance stated that NIFRS Management had worked through the 2011 document with DHSSPS and explained that the document reflects the generic MSFM. She added that the document had been considered by the Corporate Management Team and, following Board approval, would be submitted for approval by the Minister and DHSSPS. She presented the document to Members for approval.

The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance advised the Board that all other governance documents will now be reviewed accordingly.

Mr Irvine then enquired as to what the changes/amendments within the document were and suggested the need for all reviewed documents to have any changes highlighted in bold for ease of reading for Members. The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance explained that the revised MSFM had been completed as per the model template. In her view to present the previous document with tracked changes would have been complex and substantial. It was agreed that any methodology to assist the Board Members to see amendments clearly before they approved them would be most welcome and that going forward this would be valued by the Board.

The Board, on the proposal of Mr Smyth, seconded by Mr Hanna, unanimously –

**Resolved: “to approve the updated Management Statement and Financial Memorandum between DHSSPS and NIFRS”.**

### **Estates Strategy**

NIFRS Operational Asset Management Strategy 2015-20 was noted.

The Director of Planning, Performance & Governance advised Members of the current position explaining that the consultation period for the Strategy had closed in August 2015 and no responses had been received.

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

**Resolved: “to approve NIFRS Operational Asset Management Strategy 2015-20”.**

### **Business Cases**

#### **Job Evaluation Arrears – Support Staff**

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for Job Evaluation Arrears for Support Staff was noted.

The Director of Finance outlined the purpose of the Business Case and also gave an overview of the Executive Summary.

In response to a query from Mr Smyth, the Director of HR gave an overview of the Job Evaluation process. He also explained that a Job Evaluation Policy was imminent.

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

**Resolved: “to approve the Business Case for Job Evaluation Arrears for Support Staff”.**

### **Addendum to Management and Organisational Development Solutions Business Case**

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to an Addendum to Management and Organisational Development Solutions Business Case.

The Director of HR gave an explanation to the purpose of the Addendum and answered Members' questions regarding same.

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

**Resolved: “to approve the Addendum to Management and Organisational Development Solutions Business Case”.**

### **Voluntary Exit Scheme 2016/17**

The Executive Summary for the Business Case for a Voluntary Exit Scheme 2016/17 was noted.

The Director of HR outlined the purpose of the Business Case explaining that it addresses the current need within NIFRS to fund a voluntary exit option for Support staff.

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

**Resolved: “to approve the Business Case for Voluntary Exit Scheme 2016/17”.**

### **Additional Item of Business**

#### **Review of the Pension Function**

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the revised Business Case for the Review of the Pension Function.

The Director of Finance advised Members that the Business Case had been revised primarily due to the announcement last week that NIFRS will be retained by DHSSPS. She explained the previously approved Business Case was for a period of 2 years only as DoJ had not wanted NIFRS to commit to anything longer. The revised Business Case is for 5 years in line with tender returns and the expected life of the software.

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

**Resolved: “to approve the revised Business Case for the Review of the Pension Function”.**

For the Minutes - Mr Hanna did not vote regarding the approval of these Business Cases.

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

Members noted the undernoted documents for sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Shelbourne Motors – supply and delivery of parts for Renault Vans;  
BNOS Meditech Limited – supply and delivery of parts for Microvent Resuscitators;  
Godiva Limited – supply and delivery of Hale Godiva Parts; and  
Supply Plus Limited – supply and delivery of parts for AS Fire Ladders.

**Item 9: Routine Correspondence**

There was no routine correspondence.

**Item 10: Schedule of Future Meetings**

Members noted a schedule of future meetings and events.

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THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS  
AND THE MEETING ENDED  
AT 4.10 PM

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