

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING

23 OCTOBER 2015

1.00 PM

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

APOLOGIES: Mr R Irvine

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Thompson, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations)
Mr M Graham, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operational Support)
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
Dr B Gregory, Programme Director
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary

Item 1: Apologies

Apologies were noted.

Item 2: Declaration of Interests

The Chairperson sought clarification as to whether any Members wished to declare any potential conflict with the Business Item on the Agenda. All Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest.

Mr Enright stated that he had had discussions with PSNI regarding Ballykinlar as a suitable site for the Community Safety College.

The Chairperson indicated that Dr Gregory is the Chairman of a Governing Body of which she had previously been a member.

Mr Henning noted that he had been a member of the previous Programme Board.

Item 3: Desertcreat

The Chairperson advised Members that Dr Gregory would give a presentation on the draft NICSC Outline Business Case (OBC1) and noted that the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer was the NIFRS lead for the project.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer explained that following the presentation Dr Gregory would leave the Meeting to allow for an open discussion.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer introduced Dr Bryan Gregory, NICSC Programme Director, to the Meeting.

Dr Gregory expressed his appreciation for the support provided by NIFRS and all their work. He stated that he was conscious there was a network of people involved in collating the information for the OBC1.

Dr Gregory gave a synopsis of the background leading to the development of a revised OBC1 and outlined the Business Case approach. He explained that OBC1 seeks to take into account all training requirements, identifies the preferred strategic option, subject to NI Executive approval, and seeks approval for funding for OBC2 and advances works but not the funding for the major capital works.

Referring to the preferred strategic option, Dr Gregory explained that Option 6 was the preferred option. He gave Members an overview of this option which proposed that NIFRS relocate to Desertcreat with the PSNI and NIPS refurbishing and rationalising their current estate. He also noted the other options considered within OBC1 and the associated risk assessment. Dr Gregory pointed out that all of the 'do' options would require funding from the NI Executive.

Dr Gregory informed Members that the Programme Board was committed to submitting OBC1 to the NI Executive by the end of November.

The Chairperson and the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer thanked Dr Gregory for his presentation.

During discussion, Members expressed their concerns regarding the timeframes and the potential for further slippage and the subsequent impact on NIFRS of these ongoing timeframes. They referred to NIFRS' current training facilities and stressed the need for NIFRS to have the appropriate facilities to train personnel in the meantime.

In response to a question from Mr Hanna regarding the governance arrangements of the College going forward, Dr Gregory agreed with the need for a review of governance arrangements.

The Chairperson thanked Dr Gregory for attending the Meeting and noted that the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer would lead on the Board discussion. She also noted that the Steering Group was meeting the following Tuesday.

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At this point,
Dr Gregory left the Meeting

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Members noted the draft NICSC Outline Business Case (OBC1). The Chairperson highlighted that the Business Case was an official and sensitive document. She stated that the document would be collected back at the end of the Meeting.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer highlighted the key considerations including revenue costs and the overall affordability of the preferred option – he noted that the revenue costs would need to be considered in further detail in OBC2 should the Board decide to endorse OBC1. He outlined the assurances he would be seeking with regard to revenue matters. He referred Members to constraints contained within the Executive Summary and highlighted that these only related to sites owned by the Services and Desertcreat. He pointed out that no other greenfield sites were considered as Desertcreat has planning approval.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer referred to the capital funding for the project and explained that NIFRS would have to re-bid for capital funding.

He noted Members' concerns regarding the governance arrangements for the College going forward.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted the timeline for the submission of the Outline Business Case and explained that Members were only being asked to consider whether to proceed to the next stage. He added that if it is decided to proceed there was still considerable work to be undertaken to ensure Desertcreat is the right option for NIFRS.

At this point,
the Director of Finance joined the Meeting

During discussion, Members commented on the ongoing timeframes for the project, the viability of the project and the impact on NIFRS training facilities currently. The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer accepted the need to address NIFRS training needs and stated that if Desertcreat was the only option NIFRS will proceed. He stated that the Corporate Management Team was aware of the ongoing impact of the timeframes and has submitted a SOC for Interim Training Solutions. He acknowledged the work going forward and accepted that the project may not proceed. He highlighted that should OBC1 be approved the enabling works contained within same would assist NIFRS to mitigate its risk.

Mr Barbour stated that the development of a Fire Service College was a positive way forward and welcomed the inclusion of the enabling projects.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Martin, unanimously agreed that NIFRS endorse OBC1 and the preferred strategic option – option 6 and proceed to OBC2, with regular reports thereafter to be presented to the Board.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted that, at the Steering Group Meeting the following Tuesday, he would agree the way forward but would record NIFRS concerns regarding revenue costs, the governance arrangements for the College going forward, the need to revisit the branding for the College and the timeframes. He stated that Desertcreat would be a Standing Item on the Board Agenda.

Members requested a clear response, in writing, to the issues of concerns as above.

The Chairperson thanked Members for their attendance.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED AT 2.20 PM
