

# NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

## MINUTES OF A MEETING

5 DECEMBER 2017

1.30 PM

PRESENT: Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding  
Mr G Thompson, Chief Fire & Rescue Officer  
Mr C Enright  
Mr K Henning  
Mr P Martin  
Mr G Smyth

APOLOGIES: Mr J Barbour  
Mr R Irvine

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Graham, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer  
(Operational Support)  
Mr A Walmsley, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer  
(Community Protection)  
Mr A Mills, Interim Director of Finance  
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources  
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary  
Mrs J Ramsay, Head of Facilities & Assets  
Ms M McCaughley, Boardroom Apprentice  
Mr R Hyland, Boardroom Apprentice  
Mr J Millar, DoH Observer

The Chairperson welcomed Mrs J Ramsay, recently appointed Head of Facilities & Assets to the Meeting, and Ms McCaughley and Mr Hyland noting that the Boardroom Apprentice Programme was well underway. She also welcomed Mr Millar, DoH Observer.

### **Item 1: Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

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

The Chairperson enquired as to whether any Members of the Board wished to declare any potential conflicts of interest with any of the business items on the Agenda. Members confirmed that there were no apparent conflicts of interest.

### **Item 3: Minutes – 11 October 2017**

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 11 October 2017, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Smyth, seconded by Mr Enright.

Matters arising out of the Minutes:

**Chairperson's Business**  
***Board Vacancies***

The Chairperson noted that the Public Appointment Unit process for Board vacancies had commenced.

***Boardroom Apprentices***

The Chairperson noted that the Boardroom Apprentice programme was well underway and invited comments from NIFRS' Apprentices.

Ms McCaughley and Mr Hyland reported positively on their experience to date. They expressed their appreciation to the Chairperson for their induction and training sessions to date and also visits within the Organisation which went over and beyond expectations.

***NIFRS Pension Scheme Advisory Board Representatives***

The Chairperson noted that the Department of Health had been notified that the Director of Finance will be NIFRS' representative on the Advisory Board.

**Item 4: Reports from Board Committees, including noting of Committee Minutes and adoption of Recommendations**

**Audit, Risk & Governance – Minutes – 14 September 2017**

The Minutes of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee Meeting held on 14 September 2017 were noted. The recommendations contained within the Minutes were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 11 October 2017.

**Audit, Risk & Governance – Meeting – 2 November 2017**

The Minutes of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee Meeting held on 2 November 2017 were noted.

Mr Smyth, Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, gave an overview of the business discussed at the Meeting highlighting that Internal Audit had provided satisfactory assurance for both the Audit of Payroll and the Audit of Overtime and Claims Management.

**The Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, were adopted by the Board on the motion of Mr Smyth, seconded by Mr Martin.**

***Audit, Risk & Governance - Recommendations***

- **Acceptance of the Audits of Payroll and Overtime & Claims Management; and**
- **Approval of the Quarter 2 Progress Update on the Corporate Business Plan (April to September 2017) along with the Balanced Scorecard.**

### **Service Delivery Committee – Minutes – 17 August 2017**

The Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 17 August 2017 were noted. The recommendations contained within the Minutes were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 11 October 2017.

### **Service Delivery Committee – Minutes – 19 October 2017**

The Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 19 October 2017 were noted.

**Mr Martin proposed that the Committee’s recommendation, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Enright.**

#### ***Service Delivery – Recommendation***

- **Approval of Option 5 of the Restricted Operational Activity Mode (ROAM) Review – mobilisation of next closest Station with local RDS Crews not alerted if Station identified as having less than 4 available on Gartan.**

### **Resources Committee – Minutes – 17 August 2017**

The Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 August 2017 were noted. It was also noted that the recommendations contained within the Minutes were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 11 October 2017.

### **Resources Committee – Minutes – 19 October 2017**

It was noted that a Meeting of the Resources Committee had been held on 19 October 2017.

**Ms McKinney proposed that the Committee’s recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Martin.**

#### ***Resources Committee – Recommendations***

- **Approval of the Constitution and functions of the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee for Support Staff; and**
- **Approval to progress the revised interim Operational Support Directorate structure and for the Head of Fleet, Engineering & Supplies role to be filled on an acting-up basis.**

### **Item 5: Chairperson’s Business**

#### ***Accountability Meeting***

The Chairperson informed Members that the Accountability Meeting with the Permanent Secretary was scheduled to take place on 12 December 2017.

The Chairperson acknowledged that this was the last Board Meeting before Christmas and extended best wishes for the festive season.

The Chairperson expressed her appreciation to the Board Administrative Secretary for all her work during the year.

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

### **Finance Report**

A Briefing Paper updating Members on the financial position as at 31 October 2017 was noted.

The Director of Finance informed Members that following consideration of NIFRS' savings plan, DoH had provided additional funding of £717k. He explained that the budget position was being realigned to address key budgetary pressures and to direct spend to priority areas.

The Director of Finance referred to the revenue financial position as at 31 October 2017 and reported a net overspend of £507k for the year to date. It was noted that the financial position reported represents the working budget which was based on the opening indicative RRL for 2017/18 of £72.2m. The Director of Finance gave a brief analysis of financial performance noting the key budget pressures. He stated that it is hoped that the Savings Plan initiatives will see an impact in the November figures.

The capital financial position as at 31 October 2017 was noted. The Director of Finance provided an overview of the information presented.

The Director of Finance noted the update on NIFRS prompt payment compliance up to 31 October 2017.

The Officers answered Members' questions relating to the information presented.

### **Pensions Update and Pensions Administration Transfer Project Plan**

A Briefing Paper updating Members on the Project Plan to implement a new Pensions Administrative software system and transfer of administration activity to HSC Pension Services was noted.

The Director of Finance gave an overview of the significant emerging risks/issues to the project implementation and NIFRS' overall plan to address these and progress the project.

The Director of Finance highlighted his concerns currently with regards to staff resources to address Pension matters and noted the additional resourcing requirements to progress and ensure completion of the project.

The Chairperson and Members expressed their grave concern at the situation viewing it as a significant risk for the organisation. She requested regular updates to be given to Members by the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and the Director of Finance on progress. This should be done through the Resources Committee as well as the Board. The Chairperson also noted that, in her view, it might be useful to establish the timeline and rationale for decisions on a number of areas around this matter.

The Director of Finance answered Members' questions relating to the information presented.

During further discussion regarding the matter, the Chairperson acknowledged that the Director of Finance could not provide assurances currently in relation to Pensions administration within NIFRS. Members also suggested the need to communicate with staff to keep them apprised of the current position/progress.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer highlighted that there were 2 core issues to be addressed – the outsourcing of Pension administration and the implementation of the software solution. He assured Members that NIFRS was endeavouring to progress and address these issues. He also accepted the need to communicate with staff.

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At this point,  
Mr Henning joined the Meeting (2.10 pm)

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The Chairperson stated that everyone recognised this was a significant risk to the organisation and requested that Members be kept up-to-date with regard to progress.

### **Losses and Write-Offs**

Members noted a Briefing Paper relating to losses and write-offs.

The Director of Finance outlined the background to 2 losses resulting from an Agency overpayment and an Injury Pension overpayment. He explained that Board approval was being sought to write-off these losses and noted that DoH approval will also be required.

**The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Enright, unanimously resolved to give approval to write-off 2 losses resulting from an Agency overpayment and an Injury Pension overpayment.**

Mr Martin referred to the current position with regard to NIFRS' legal service provision and asked for the detail to be presented to the appropriate Committee.

The Chairperson noted previous discussions regarding NIFRS' legal service provision and discussions with regard to this service being provided by BSO. She asked that the item be brought to the Resources Committee.

### **Facilities & Assets Department**

Members noted a Briefing Paper outlining the way forward for the delivery of maintenance contracts within NIFRS.

The Head of Facilities & Assets provided a synopsis of the key strands of work required to ensure that the Facilities & Assets Department is best placed to provide an effective and efficient service which will adequately support the critical infrastructure of NIFRS. These areas included the future delivery of the maintenance function; procurement of the Term Service Contracts for Maintenance; and resourcing the model to support delivery.

The Head of Facilities & Assets noted that the Business Case for the delivery of Maintenance Services through an Estates Term Service Contract (TSC) was being presented later in the Meeting for approval.

The Head of Facilities & Assets outlined the proposed approach to the future delivery of maintenance contracts and sought Members' endorsement of same.

The Head of Facilities & Assets explained that a structural review had been undertaken to clarify the resources required to deliver the proposed approach and noted that Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham would be bringing an amendment to the Facilities & Assets structure to the next Meeting of the Resources Committee.

The Members welcomed the proposed approach and the Officers answered their questions relating to the information presented.

## **Business Cases**

### ***Replacement Boilers***

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for replacement Boilers.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham gave Members an explanation as to the purpose of the project.

Mr Enright expressed concerns with regard to the project and suggested the need to consider other options for energy provision/reducing energy costs. He also suggested that consideration be given to employing an Energy Officer.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham and the Head of Facilities & Assets noted Mr Enright's comments and updated Members on key pieces of work to be taken forward in the New Year, including the development of an Energy Strategy.

The Chairperson stated that it may be useful for Mr Enright to feed into the proposed Energy Strategy.

**The Board, on the motion of Mr Enright, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously resolved to approve the Business Case for Replacement Boilers.**

### ***Measured Term Contract***

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the delivery of Maintenance Services through an Estates Term Service Contract (TSC) was noted.

Members also noted that a Briefing Paper relating to the delivery of Maintenance Services within NIFRS had been considered earlier in the Meeting.

**The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Martin, unanimously resolved to approve the Business Case for the delivery of Maintenance Services through an Estates Term Service Contract (TSC).**

#### ***Refurbishment of Antrim Fire Station***

Members noted the Executive Summary of the Business Case for the refurbishment of Antrim Fire Station.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham gave an explanation as to the purpose of the project.

**The Board, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Mr Smyth, unanimously resolved to approve the Business Case for the Refurbishment of Antrim Fire Station.**

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

The Addendum to the Management and Organisational Solutions Business Case was noted.

The Director of HR explained that the Business Case relates to the SLA with HSC and the addendum will allow NIFRS access to a flexible service provision that can be amended throughout the year and assistance with organisational reviews. He added that NIFRS had recently identified the need to acquire services that will assist with the restructuring of Areas and Districts.

**The Board, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Mr Smyth, unanimously resolved to approve the Addendum to the Business Case for Management and Organisational Solutions to 31 March 2018.**

#### ***Upgrade of Windows Licences Project***

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the Upgrade of Windows Licences Project.

The Director of HR outlined the purpose of the Project and answered Members' questions relating to same.

**The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Smyth, unanimously resolved to approve the Business Case for the upgrade of Windows Licences Project.**

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

There was no relevant correspondence.

#### **Item 8: Documents for Sealing**

Members noted the undernoted document for sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with

Tom Smyth and Ronald Mathews T/A MSM Promotions – Renewal of Dunmurry Fire Station Lease.

**Item 9: Schedule of Future Meetings**

Members noted that the next Board Meeting was scheduled to take place on 23 January 2018.

Members were reminded that the Chairperson and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer would be hosting a Christmas 'At Home' event on 15 December to thank personnel for all their work during the year. The Chairperson explained that invitations will be extended to personnel across the Organisation. She also noted that it was Save the Children's Christmas Jumper fundraising day and encouraged all to show their support to the Charity.

It was noted that the Service Delivery and Resources Committees were scheduled to meet on 19 December and that a working lunch was also scheduled with Mr W Warke.

The Chairperson thanked the Members for all their support during the year particularly given the level of vacancies on the Board. She also thanked the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and the Corporate Management Team and the Boardroom Apprentices.

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THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS  
AND THE MEETING ENDED  
AT 2.40 PM

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