

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

23 JANUARY 2018

2.00 PM

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Deeney, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
(Operations)
Mr M Graham, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
(Service Support)
Mr A Walmsley, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
(Community Protection)
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources
Mrs C Lyness, Acting Head of Finance
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Mr J Millar, DoH Observer

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the first Board Meeting of 2018, particularly Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Deeney and Mrs Lyness, Acting Head of Finance, who was in attendance, with the Board's agreement, as an observer.

Ms McKinney also welcomed Mr Millar, DoH observer to the Meeting.

Item 1: Apologies

There were no apologies.

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.

However, Mr Barbour highlighted a potential conflict with regard to Item 6 – Pensions Update as he was in receipt of an NIFRS pension. He suggested that it may also impact on others attending the Meeting. The Chairperson acknowledged this point and advised that if required the appropriate procedure for absencing from the meeting would be effected.

Item 3: Minutes – 5 December 2017

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 5 December 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 Henning.

Matters arising out of the Minutes:

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

The Chairperson advised Members that the Public Appointment Unit process for Board vacancies was progressing.

Boardroom Apprentices

The Chairperson informed Members of her and the Director of HR's attendance at a recent Boardroom Apprentice Programme event. She noted that NIFRS is emerging as a model of good practice with regard to the training and induction received by its Apprentices. She expressed her appreciation to the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and all involved in the training/induction provided to NIFRS' Boardroom Apprentices.

The Chairperson advised that the apprentices were currently working on some case studies and other appropriate governance papers as part of their continuing professional development and that they would attend meetings at a later stage in the year. She advised that it was important that at this time they self-directed with their own study and research on governance. The Chairperson advised that their time with NIFRS would conclude at the end of June.

NIFRS Pension Scheme Advisory Board Representative

The Chairperson referred to the resignation of the Interim Director of Finance and proposed that Mr Gordon Smyth be NIFRS' representative on the Advisory Board. This was seconded by Mr Enright.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Smyth for agreeing to undertake this role for NIFRS.

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

Service Delivery Committee – Meeting – 9 January 2018

It was noted that a Meeting of the Service Delivery Committee had been held on 9 January 2018 and that Minutes of the Meeting will be presented to the next Board Meeting for noting.

Mr Barbour, Chairperson of the Service Delivery Committee, noted that a key item of business considered by the Committee was NIFRS Significant Safety Events Policy. He outlined the purpose of the Policy and gave a brief overview of the key areas of change following a review of the Policy.

Mr Barbour proposed that the Committee's recommendation, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Irvine.

Service Delivery – Recommendation

- **Approval of NIFRS Significant Safety Events Policy.**

Mr Barbour reported on the other business discussed at the Meeting. He highlighted that the Community Protection Directorate's collaboration work had been recognised with NIFRS winning the Large Organisation of the Year Award at the Dementia Friendly Awards. NIFRS was also runner-up in the Partnership of the Year Award.

Mr Barbour noted that the Committee Members had raised some slight concerns with respect to the Command & Control project, however, Members were content that the project is being confidently led and driven by Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham.

Resources Committee – Meeting – 9 January 2018

It was noted that a Meeting of the Resources Committee had been held on 9 January 2018 and that Minutes of the Meeting will be presented to the next Board Meeting for noting.

Mr Henning, Chairperson of the Resources Committee, noted the recommendations being brought forward by the Committee for adoption.

Mr Barbour proposed that the Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Smyth.

Resources Committee – Recommendations

- **Approval of the undernoted HR Policies:**
 - **Organisational Change Policy for NIFRS Operational Personnel;**
 - **Reasonable Adjustment Policy;**
 - **Critical Incident Stress Management Policy;**
- **Approval of the proposal for resourcing the delivery of maintenance contracts within NIFRS;**
- **With respect to the Finance structure, approval of the following:**
 - **progression of the partial transfer of one Procurement post to BSO;**
 - **implementation of the proposed amended structure with flexibility to have a Senior Business Case Adviser if required;**
- **Approval of NIFRS Travel & Subsistence Policy, subject to minor amendments;**
- **Approval of the revised Planning, Performance & Governance structure;**
- **Approval for the closure of the 2015/16 Divergence – Contract Management Minor Works Contract in Estates.**

Remuneration Committee – Minutes – 5 December 2017

The Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 5 December 2017 were noted. It was also noted that, under Standing Order 2.6, Members had unanimously agreed to adopt the recommendation contained within the Minutes.

Mr Martin brought forward the Committee's recommendation, as detailed below, for formal adoption. Ms McKinney seconded this.

Remuneration Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of the Job Evaluation Business Case for an existing postholder within the Facilities & Assets structure.**

Item 5: Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that, following on from the NIFRS letter to her from August 2017, Mrs McCloskey had taken up the invitation to meet with NIFRS now that the appropriate policies had been refreshed. She noted that both she and Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham would be meeting with Mrs McCloskey the following week. The Department of Health had been informed and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer fully supported the visit which would discuss the updated policies with the family members. Members would be provided with an update at the March Meeting.

Item 6: Standalone Strategic Items

Finance Report

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer updated Members on the current position with respect to staffing within the Finance Directorate, including the restructuring, and noting the assistance from DoH in progressing a secondment exercise. He informed Members that, in the meantime, the BSO Director of Finance will be providing assistance on a short-term, part-time basis and explained that they will be attending Board/Committee Meetings as appropriate. The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer further explained that elements of the Director of Finance's portfolio had been redistributed – ICT to be managed by the Director of HR whilst he would be managing Pensions. He noted that the Director of HR had also offered additional assistance.

During discussion regarding the vacant Director of Finance post, the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer answered Members' questions and provided further clarification. The Chairperson and Members acknowledged that this was a difficult situation and welcomed the assistance currently being offered but they also stressed the need for the Board to be advised should any problems arise with the current arrangement or if any further risks emerged. Members requested an update at the March Meeting.

Members commended the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer for taking the lead on the Finance agenda items at the Meeting.

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

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer gave Members an overview of the key areas within the Report noting the Revenue financial position as at 31 December 2017 which is reporting a small variance of less than £1k for the year to date. He noted the update on Savings Plan measures and assured Members that the Revenue budget is closely monitored by the Corporate Management Team.

With regard to other risks facing the Revenue budget, the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer informed Members that a 1% pay award had been agreed for Firefighters effective from 1 July 2017. However, he explained that discussions are ongoing which may result in a further award.

Referring to the Revenue budget 2018/19 and 2019/20, the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted that DoH had commissioned a financial planning exercise. He stated this is a recurrent exercise and NIFRS was asked to develop a range of savings proposals for a reduction of up to 5% of the 2017/18 opening budget in 2018/19 increasing to 10% in 2019/20. Members noted the scale of the savings required which will have major implications for frontline service.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer reported on the Capital financial position as at 31 December 2017 and advised Members that an easement of £0.7m had been declared in December. He stated that the Corporate Management Team will focus attention to manage the remaining budget tightly and ensure that the capital allocation for the year is utilised in so far as it can be controlled by NIFRS.

Mr Smyth welcomed the progress with respect to the Finance Directorate restructuring and also the interim arrangements put in place to address senior staffing issues.

Pensions Update

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer updated Members on the current position with respect to the procurement of pensions software and the outsourcing of the Pensions service.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted that NIFRS has engaged with the contractor providing the pensions software and it was anticipated that the system will be in place by March 2019. Referring to the outsourcing of the Pensions service, Members were informed that NIFRS is working closely with the Assistant Director of Pensions (HSC Pensions Service) to progress the project.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer also updated Members on calls with the Pension Regulator and also on the current position in relation to Annual Benefit Statements and the development of a Record-Keeping Improvement Plan. He noted that a refresh of the Business Case will be discussed later in the Meeting. He explained that the addendum sets out the requirement for additional, dedicated project resources, primarily to deal with the key data migration part of the project and to facilitate project management, eg, co-ordination and liaison between HSC, Capita and NIFRS. He noted that a key element is the appointment of a Project Manager and that he hoped the position will be filled within the next 6 weeks.

The Chairperson questioned how NIFRS had reached this point and explained that she is seeking the paperwork setting out the rationale for changing. She stated that she is more comforted now than previously as the Board is liable as the Scheme Manager. She acknowledged the significant work undertaken and advised Members that the Pension Regulator is also more assured. Members noted that the Chairperson and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer will discuss the matter further.

During discussion, the Members expressed their appreciation to the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer for taking lead on this significant issue. Mr Irvine expressed concern regarding the timeframe for this significant piece of work and stated that he would like an in-depth update on the matter at the next Business Improvement Day scheduled for March.

Following discussion, the Chairperson proposed that the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, working with the appropriate personnel, prepare an in-depth overview of the progress of the pension matter for the information of Members. This is to be presented to Members at the Meeting on 27 March. This proposal was seconded by Mr Barbour and agreed by all Members.

Business Cases

Addendum – Business Case for the Review of the Pension Function

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the addendum for the Business Case for the review of the Pension Function.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer gave an overview of the addendum explaining that the Business Case had been refreshed to include costs for a dedicated project team to progress the Pensions Administration Transfer Project Plan.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously resolved to approve the Addendum to the Business Case for the review of the Pension Function.

Sophtlogic Support 2018-19

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the provision of Sophtlogic Support and associated services for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 was noted.

The Director of HR outlined the purpose of the Business Case noting that this would ensure support for NIFRS corporate Management Information Systems. He explained that the Business Case had been prepared for one year only as this will allow NIFRS to take forward the line of business review and updated Members on the current position.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Enright, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously resolved to approve the Business Case for the provision of Sophtlogic Support and associated services for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

Fire Alarm Upgrades

Members noted the Executive Summary of the Business Case for Fire Alarm upgrades.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham outlined the purpose of the project.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Martin, unanimously resolved to approve the Business Case for Fire Alarm upgrades.

Item 7: Relevant Correspondence

There was no relevant correspondence.

Item 8: Documents for Sealing

There were no documents for sealing.

Item 9: Schedule of Future Meetings

Members noted a Schedule of Future Meetings and also the Provisional Meeting, Training and Events Schedule for 2018/19.

The Chairperson noted that the next Board Meeting is scheduled for 27 March 2018.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 3.00 PM
