

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

26 JUNE 2018

2.00 PM

PRESENT: Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding
Mr G Thompson, Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
Mr J Barbour
Mr C Enright
Mr R Irvine
Ms A Jones
Mr P Martin
Mr K Millar
Mr J Quinn
Mr W Webb

APOLOGIES: Mr K Henning
Mr G Smyth

IN ATTENDANCE: 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 P White, Director of Finance
Mr P Harper, Area Commander (Community Protection)
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Mr J Millar, DoH Observer
Ms M McCaughley, Boardroom Apprentice
Mr R Hyland, Boardroom Apprentice

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the Meeting particularly the new Members Ms Jones and Messrs Millar, Quinn and Webb; and Mrs White, who had been recently seconded to the role of Director of Finance. The Chairperson also welcomed the Boardroom Apprentices, Michelle and Ryan, who were attending their last Meeting with NIFRS; and also Mr Millar, DoH Observer, and Area Commander Harper.

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.

Mr K Millar declared he is a non-executive member of NIHE. Mr Quinn declared that he is a Trade Union Representative for the Fire Brigades' Union.

The Chairperson referred to NIFRS Standings Orders and reminded Members that they should indicate to her any matter which they considered a potential conflict and that if she felt there was a conflict she would indicate that to them.

Item 3: Minutes – 27 March 2018

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 27 March 2018, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Mr Barbour.

Matters arising out of the Minutes:

Remuneration Committee – Minutes – 13 March 2018

Mr Quinn referred to the Pay Remits documentation for Uniformed Directors, Wholetime Firefighters, Retained Firefighters and Control personnel which had been submitted to DoH and sought an update.

Mr Millar, DoH observer, updated Members on the current position advising that the Pay Remits had been forwarded to DoF for approval.

Pensions Update

The Chairperson asked the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer for an update on the progress of Pension matters.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer provided a synopsis of the background to the pension matters and updated Members on progress with respect to the implementation of pensions software, the outsourcing of NIFRS pension service and the issuing of Annual Benefit Statements. He noted that a Project Manager had been appointed and that regular calls are held with the Pension Regulator who is content with NIFRS' progress. He also advised Members that the Director of Finance will now lead on pension matters. Members stressed that they would require a regular update on this significant matter from the Director of Finance.

Mr Enright thanked the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer for taking this matter forward in the absence of a Director of Finance.

Hyponatraemia Report

The Chairperson referred to the Action Plan which was to be developed and noted that she had no update currently and will return to this at the next Meeting.

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

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 17 May 2018

The Minutes of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee Meeting held on 17 May 2018 were noted.

Mr Barbour, Vice-Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, noted the recommendations emanating from the Meeting.

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

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Recommendations

- **Acceptance of the Audits of Risk Management; Governance; and Estates Procurement & Contract Management;**
- **Approval of the Year-End Follow-Up on Outstanding Internal Audit Recommendations;**
- **Approval of the Internal Audit Strategy and Internal Audit Plan 2018/19;**
- **Approval of the Quarter 4 Progress Update on the Corporate Business Plan (April 2017 to March 2018), along with the Balanced Scorecard;**
- **Approval of the Controls Assurance Questionnaire Outcomes 2017/18;**
- **Approval of the draft Annual Report 2017/18; and**
- **Approval of the National Audit Office Audit Committee Checklist 2017/18 subject to a minor amendment.**

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Meeting – 19 June 2018

It was noted that a Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee had been held on 19 June 2018 and that Minutes of the Meeting will be presented to the next Board Meeting for noting.

Mr Barbour, Vice-Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, informed Members that the key item of Business had been the presentation of the draft Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2017/18. He noted that the Committee's recommendation with respect to this item would be considered later on the Agenda.

Mr Barbour reported that the Committee had also considered a proposed amendment to the Internal Audit 2018/19 Audit Plan. He explained that it is proposed that the Audit of Governance be postponed until early 2019/20 to facilitate the Travel Audit commissioned by the DoH Permanent Secretary.

Mr Barbour commended Mr Smyth, Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, for his work and commitment. He read an extract from the Auditor & Comptroller General's Report to the accounts welcoming the progress which NIFRS has made in recent years in progressing outstanding recommendations and highlighting that this year Internal Audit has been able to provide an overall satisfactory opinion in relation to the adequacy and effectiveness of the system of governance, risk management and control in place at NIFRS.

Mr Barbour noted that there was a historic regularity issue relating to expenditure in 2011 and 2012 which had been discovered by the External Auditors. However, as this relates to earlier years and NIFRS has confirmed that all required business cases have been appropriately approved since 2012, the Auditor & Comptroller General had not qualified his 2017-18 audit opinion in respect of this.

The Chairperson expressed her appreciation to Mr Smyth for his leadership and commitment as Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee.

Members concurred with this and also acknowledged the work of the Corporate Management Team and the need to maintain that momentum and continue to progress and address internal audit recommendations.

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

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee - Recommendation

- **Approval of an amendment to the Internal Audit 2018/19 Audit Plan.**

Service Delivery Committee – Minutes – 17 April 2018

The Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 17 April 2018 were noted. There were no recommendations emanating from the Meeting.

Service Delivery Committee – Meeting – 19 June 2018

It was noted that a Meeting of the Service Delivery Committee had been held on 19 June 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, gave a brief overview of the business discussed.

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

Service Delivery Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of NIFRS Health & Safety General Policy subject to minor amendments.**

Resources Committee – Minutes – 17 April 2018

The Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 April 2018 were noted.

Mr Martin, Member of the Resources Committee, noted the recommendation contained within the Minutes.

Mr Martin proposed that the following recommendation contained within the Minutes be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Enright.

Resources Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of the suggested amendments to NIFRS' Finance Report.**

Resources Committee – Meeting – 19 June 2018

It was noted that a Meeting of the Resources Committee had been held on 19 June 2018 and that Minutes of the Meeting will be presented to the next Board Meeting for noting.

Mr Martin noted the recommendations emanating from the Meeting and deferred to the relevant Directors to provide further detail on each of the recommendations.

Resources Committee – Recommendations

Approval of the proposed restructure of the Community Protection Directorate, Headquarters only, Phase 2 Station Commander level and Phase 3 Watch and Crew Commander level

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Walmsley outlined the proposal for the restructure of the Community Protection Directorate, Headquarters only, Phase 2 and Phase 3.

Mr Irvine expressed his concern regarding the proposed restructure being presented given the Area & District review, a fundamental review, was not, as yet, completed. His view that the proposal was premature at this time, however, he commended the work with respect to the proposal and also acknowledged the impact of the timeline for the Area & District review. It was his view that the restructure and the review should be considered as a whole.

The Chairperson deferred to the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer for response.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer updated Members on the current position with respect to the Area & District review noting that a draft report had been received by the Corporate Management Team. He explained that the review deals with the structures at Area Command and District level and emphasised that the Community Protection Directorate was standalone. He further added that the Area & District review relates to a management model which would not inform prevention/protection/resilience operationally.

During further discussion around this matter, Members noted Mr Irvine's view. Members noted that the Board was not currently sighted on the outcome of the Area & District review. Members acknowledged that the Area & District review had been commissioned by the Corporate Management Team and the author of the report was HSCLC, however, it was essential that this piece of work was presented to the Board for consideration as soon as practicable.

The Chairperson enquired if the restructure proposal was what the Community Protection Directorate required to ensure an efficient and effective team. The Director of HR assured all Members that whilst reviewing the Community Protection Directorate structure cognisance was taken of interdependencies. Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Walmsley explained that the proposed restructure set out the business units required at Headquarters to lead the strategy from the centre. Members noted these assurances.

Mr Enright referred to the ongoing issue of the impact of the high level of temporary posts currently and stressed the need for stability and therefore the need to progress the filling of substantive posts. He noted the assurances provided by the Officers that progressing the restructure of the Community Protection Directorate will not be impacted by the Area & District review.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Enright, adopted the Resources Committee recommendation to approve the proposed restructure of the Community Protection Directorate, Headquarters only, Phase 2 Station Commander level and Phase 3 Watch and Crew Commander level.

Acceptance of the Home Office position in relation to Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack (MTFA) Pension, Death and Injury Compensation arrangements

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Walmsley outlined the background to the issue relating to clarification of MTFA pension, death and injury compensation arrangements. He noted that the Home Office has completed a clarification exercise and concluded that the Firefighter Pension Scheme does not differentiate between a Firefighter killed, or injured, whilst undertaking MTFA activities, as opposed to any other activity that forms part of a Firefighter's role.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Walmsley explained that NIFRS' assessment would be that MTFA response would be covered within the wider scope of resolving operational incidents within NIFRS (similar to England and Wales). He highlighted that this approach would form the basis of an interim arrangement in the absence of NJC agreement on the issue. For clarity this motion relates solely to issues relating to pension, death and injury compensation but does not pertain to the Home Office position regarding National Firefighter Rolemaps.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Quinn, adopted the Resources Committee recommendation to accept the Home Office position in relation to Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack (MTFA) Pension, Death and Injury Compensation arrangements.

***Approval of the revised NIFRS Business Case Policy
Approval of the proposed Scheme of Delegated Authority (SODA) for the approval of requisitions and purchase orders***

The Director of Finance gave an explanation as to the proposed amendments to NIFRS Business Case Policy and also outlined the purpose of the proposed Scheme of Delegated Authority (SODA) which will streamline NIFRS procurement processes. She noted that the SODA framework will remain a 'live' document and will be used by the Procurement Department in determining whether a purchase can be initiated.

Mr Martin noted the Committee is appreciative of the work undertaken to streamline NIFRS procurement processes.

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

The DoH observer suggested the need for NIFRS to forward the Policy for consideration prior to implementation. Members noted that this would be taken forward by the Director of Finance.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Ms McKinney, adopted the Resources Committee recommendation to approve the revised NIFRS Business Case Policy, subject to DoH approval, and to approve the proposed Scheme of Delegated Authority for the approval of requisitions and purchase orders.

Approval of the Operations function structural proposal Phase 1

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer provided an overview of Phase 1 of the Operations Directorate restructure proposal and outlined the background to the proposal to change the Assistant Group Commander roles to Station Commander (Flexi Duty).

The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Barbour, adopted the Resources Committee recommendation to approve the Operations function structural proposal Phase 1.

Item 5: Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson welcomed the opportunity to highlight "good news" for NIFRS.

Diversity Charter Mark for NIFRS

The Chairperson informed Members that NIFRS has been awarded the Gender Diversity Charter Mark NI bronze award in recognition of its commitment to, and progress on, gender diversity.

The Chairperson stated that she had been delighted to attend with the HR Manager, Equality, Inclusion & Legal to accept the award on behalf of NIFRS and commended all for their work.

CIPD NI Awards

The Chairperson congratulated the Director of HR and his team on winning 'Team of the Year' at the annual Northern Ireland Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Awards (CIPD NI).

The Director of HR explained that NIFRS won the award for its recent Wholetime Firefighter recruitment campaign. This was the first recruitment of Wholetime Firefighters since 2011 and it was a huge undertaking for NIFRS which required a collective team effort across the organisation.

IoD Awards

The Chairperson noted that at this year's annual Institute of Directors (IoD) NI Director of the Year Awards, NIFRS received 2 awards recognising the work of the organisation.

The Chairperson stated that these recent achievements were examples of the good work within NIFRS and recognised the ambassadors of NIFRS.

Committee Membership

The Chairperson informed the Meeting that the new Board Members are assigned to Standing Committees as follows:

- Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Mr J Quinn;
- Resources Committee – Mr K Millar; and
- Service Delivery Committee – Ms A Jones and Mr W Webb.

The Chairperson noted that the respective Committee Chairpersons will be briefing the new Members on the work of their Committees.

The Chairperson also noted the details of an informal mentoring arrangement for new Members during the first 6 months of their tenure.

Wholetime Trainee Firefighters' Graduation Ceremony

The Chairperson reported positively on the Wholetime Trainee Firefighters' Graduation Ceremonies held in April and June. She commended Area Commander Rooney and his team of Instructors for all their work and expressed her appreciation.

The Innovation Lab – Insight Report

Members noted a copy of the Departmental Sponsorship Arm's Length Bodies Lab Insight Report which had been circulated by the Chairperson for their information.

NIAO – Performance Management for Outcomes

The Performance Management for Outcomes Good Practice Self-Assessment Toolkit, launched by the NI Audit Office on 15 June 2018, was noted.

The Toolkit had been circulated by the Chairperson for the information of Members.

Boardroom Apprentices

The Chairperson commented on the Boardroom Apprentice programme which NIFRS had participated in during the year. She stated that NIFRS had had 2 exemplary apprentices and added that the experience had been a positive journey for NIFRS.

The Chairperson stated that she is proud of the induction and training provided by NIFRS and had managed the Apprentices' expectations well.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, made a presentation to Ms McCaughley and Mr Hyland.

Ms McCaughley and Mr Hyland expressed their appreciation to NIFRS for the opportunity to participate in the Boardroom Apprentice programme.

Item 6: Standalone Strategic Items

Annual Report of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee

Members noted the 2017/18 Annual Report of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, presented on behalf of the Committee Chairperson.

Mr Barbour, Vice-Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, noted that this was the first Annual Report of the Committee to be presented to the Board and explained that it covered, in the main, activity within the 2017/18 financial year.

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2017/18

Members noted the draft Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2017/18 which had been reviewed by the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee on 19 June 2018. Members were informed that the Committee recommended approval of the draft document subject to minor amendments.

The Director of Finance highlighted the excellent out-turn achieved by NIFRS and also that the Auditor & Comptroller General had issued a non-qualified audit opinion with respect to both sets of Accounts. She commended the team for all their work. The Director of Finance noted that Board approval was being sought for the Chairperson and Chief Fire & Rescue Officer to sign-off the Statement of Accounts 2017/18.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted that this was the first NIFRS has produced 2 separate sets of Accounts. He acknowledged the work of the External Auditors and commended the team involved in preparing the accounts for all their work.

The Director of HR explained that the document would only be available in a word format.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Irvine, unanimously approved the draft Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2017/18.

Finance Report

A Briefing Paper updating Members on the financial position was noted.

The Director of Finance gave an overview of the information presented highlighting NIFRS 2017/18 financial performance with respect to Revenue and Capital. The Director of Finance also updated Members on the 2018/19 financial position. She answered Members' questions relating to the information presented.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted the support provided by Mrs Wendy Thompson, BSO Director of Finance, and extended his thanks. He also commended the Acting Head of Finance and the Finance team for all their work.

Financial Strategy

NIFRS Financial Strategy 2018/19 was noted.

The Director of Finance informed Members that formal notification of NIFRS revenue budget had now been received. She provided a detailed overview of the Strategy outlining the background to its development; the assumptions made and the establishment of a recurrent budget. The Director of Finance drew Members' attention to the key risks and assumptions to achieving a balanced year-end for revenue. She stated it would be a challenging year but welcomed the increase in the recurrent budget.

The Director of Finance gave a brief overview of the Strategy with respect to NIFRS capital budget.

During a detailed discussion, the Officers answered Members' questions relating to aspects of the information presented.

The Chairperson noted the level of discussion around the Strategy and suggested the need to present the Strategy again at the next Board Meeting or, if more appropriate, to the Resources Committee Meeting with more detail incorporated which captured Members' comments.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Ms McKinney, approved NIFRS Financial Strategy 2018/19 in principle only subject to further clarification being presented to Members promptly at the next appropriate Meeting.

Losses and Special Payments

Members noted NIFRS 2017-18 Losses and Special Payments Register.

The Director of Finance gave an overview of the information presented and the Officers answered Members' questions relating to same.

Contract Amendment

Members noted a Briefing Paper relating to a variation to standard terms and conditions to enable the award of a contract for a Stock and Fleet Management System.

The Director of Finance outlined the background to the proposed contract amendment explaining that the approval is being sought to agree the amendment to the indemnity clause to allow the contract to be signed off and delivery of the system to commence.

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

The Board, on the motion of Mr Barbour, seconded by Mr Enright, unanimously approved the variation to standard terms and conditions of the contract for a Stock and Fleet Management System.

Business Cases

Renewal of Chemdata Licences

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the renewal of Chemdata Licences was noted.

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

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Martin, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for the renewal of Chemdata Licences.

Addendum – NIFRS Learning and Development Centre at Desertcreat – Phase 1

Members noted the Executive Summary pertaining to an addendum to the Business Case for NIFRS Learning and Development Centre at Desertcreat Phase 1.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham explained that the Business Case Addendum is to seek approval for cost increases and additional contingency over and above the current 10% allowed variation.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham noted that at the recent Resources Committee Meeting it had been agreed that progress updates with respect to the Desertcreat project will be a standing item on the Resources Committee Agenda and also that a progress update will be given to the Board at its Meeting in September.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham answered Members' questions relating to the information presented.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Ms McKinney, unanimously approved the Addendum to the Business Case for NIFRS Learning and Development Centre at Desertcreat – Phase 1.

Renewal of Leases for Dunmurry Fire Station, Ballymena Fire Safety Department and Cookstown District Offices

The Executive Summary relating to the renewal of Leases for Dunmurry Fire Station, Ballymena Fire Safety Department and Cookstown District Offices was noted.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham outlined the background to the Business Case and its purpose. He answered Members' questions relating to the information presented.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Enright, seconded by Mr Irvine, unanimously approved the Business Case for the renewal of Leases for Dunmurry Fire Station, Ballymena Fire Safety Department and Cookstown District Offices.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham updated Members on the current position with respect to the Command & Control Project informing Members that Business Case approval had been received and NIFRS will be moving forward with the award of the Contract.

Voluntary Exit Scheme

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the Voluntary Exit Scheme 2018/19 was noted.

The Director of HR outlined the background to the Business Case and its purpose.

The Board, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Mr Irvine, unanimously approved the Business Case for the Voluntary Exit Scheme 2018/19.

Larne Refurbishment and Command & Control Infrastructure Works

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham updated Members on the current position with respect to the Business Case for the refurbishment of Larne Fire Station and also the Business Case for the infrastructure works to support the new Command & Control system. He explained that to ensure business continuity it may be necessary to circulate the Business Cases for approval under Standing Order 2.6.

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

The schedule of future Meetings, etc, was noted.

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 4.10 PM
