

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

26 MARCH 2019

1.30 PM

PRESENT: Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding
Mr M Graham, Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
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 L Crawford, Interim Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
(Service Support)
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources
Mrs P White, Director of Finance
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary

Item 1: Apologies:

There were no apologies from Members.

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 there were no apparent conflicts of interest.

Item 3: Minutes of Board Meeting – 22 January 2019

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 22 January 2019, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Enright.

Item 4: Minutes of Special Board Meeting – 28 February 2019

The Minutes of the Special Board Meeting held on 28 February 2019, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Smyth.

Item 5: Reports from Board Committees, including noting of Committee Minutes and Adoption of Recommendations

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee Minutes – 7 February 2019

The Minutes of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee Meeting held on 7 February 2019 were noted.

Mr Smyth, Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, 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 ICT Under Behaviour; Training; Recruitment and Staffing Stability; Budgetary Control; Desertcreat Project Governance; and Risk Management;**
- **Approval of the Quarter 3 Progress on the Corporate Business Plan (April to December 2018), along with the Balanced Scorecard;**
- **Approval of the revised Data Sharing Protocol and CCTV Policy;**
- **Approval of the draft 2019/19 External Audit Strategy covering (i) Revenue; and (ii) Pension Accounts.**

Service Delivery Committee Minutes – 19 December 2018

The Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 19 December 2019 were noted. It was also that the recommendations contained therein were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 22 January 2019.

Service Delivery Committee Minutes – 27 February 2019

The Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 27 February 2019 were noted.

Mr Irvine, Chairperson of the Service Delivery Committee, proposed that the Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Henning.

Service Delivery Committee – Recommendations

- **Approval of the draft Pilot Crewing Levels Framework for the On Call Duty System;**
- **Approval of the proposal to amend part of the People at Risk Strategy definition pertaining to age from aged 60 or older to aged 50 or older;**
- **Approval of the revised NIFRS Policy on Significant Safety Events subject to a further amendment;**
- **Approval of the pilot Service Delivery Support Team with Downpatrick.**

Resources Committee Minutes – 19 December 2018

The Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 19 December 2019 were noted. It was also noted that the recommendations contained therein were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 22 January 2019.

Resources Committee Minutes – 7 March 2019

The Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 7 March 2019 were noted.

Mr Henning, Chairperson of the Resources Committee, 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 revised 10-Year Capital Plan subject to amendment;**
- **Approval of NIFRS Acquisition & Disposal Policy;**
- **With regard to an issue relating to the allocation of Annual Leave for Operational staff joining from other Services, approval to move employees affected to the correct leave allocation and seek to recover any overpayments;**
- **Approval of the recommendation pertaining to overtime and the calculation of holiday pay as outlined in the Minutes;**
- **Approval to implement Phase 2 of the Operations Function Structure;**
- **Approval, in principle, of the draft revised NIFRS Travel & Subsistence Policy;**
- **Approval of the draft Pilot Crewing Levels Framework for the On Call Duty System.**

Remuneration Committee Minutes – 28 February 2019

The Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 28 February 2019 were noted.

Mr Henning, Member of the Remuneration Committee, proposed that the Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mr Martin.

Remuneration Committee – Recommendations

- **Approval of the Pay Remits for RCC Staff, RDS Personnel and Wholetime Personnel for the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 and submission of the documentation to DoH;**
- **With regard to an issue relating to the allocation of Annual Leave for Operational staff joining from other Services, approval to move employees affected to the correct leave allocation and seek to recover any overpayments;**

- **Approval of the draft Pilot Crewing Levels Framework for the On Call Duty System.**

The Director of HR noted that the Remuneration Committee had been briefed with regard to an issue relating to overtime and the calculation of holiday pay. He explained that the legal advice had subsequently been received and he would circulate an update to Remuneration Committee Members via email. The Director of HR further explained that the Resources Committee had also considered the matter on 7 March and had recommended approval as outlined within the Committee's Minutes.

Item 6: Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson thanked Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Walmsley for his work whilst undertaking the role of interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer. She welcomed Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham into the role and stressed that the Board were there to support him also.

Resignation

The Chairperson paid tribute to the Director of HR and, on behalf of the Board, expressed her appreciation for all his work for the organisation. She extended best wishes in his new post.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer also extended best wishes to the Director of HR in his new post.

Board Membership

The Chairperson informed the Meeting that Mr Henning had been re-appointed for a further 3½ years.

Item 7: Standalone Strategic Items

Finance Report

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

The Director of Finance reported on the overall Revenue budget position as at 28 February 2019. She explained that there is a projected pressure of £300k which relates largely to the summer spate conditions and that DoH has indicated that NIFRS should work on the principle that this pressure will be funded by DoH. She informed Members that an additional allocation of £200k was received in February to fund Wholetime recruitment.

The Director of Finance noted the Capital budget position as at 28 February 2019.

The Chairperson thanked the Director of Finance for her briefing.

Financial Strategy & Resource Plan

Members noted NIFRS draft Financial Strategy & Resource Plan for 2019/20. The Chairperson acknowledged that the draft document had been discussed at an Information Session held immediately prior to the Board Meeting.

The Director of Finance provided a synopsis of the key information presented at the Information Session.

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

Guaranteed Minimum Pension Reconciliation

Members noted a Briefing Paper outlining a proposal to write off overpayments arising from the Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) Reconciliation Exercise.

The Director of Finance gave a detailed overview of the background to the issue and the proposal to write-off of overpayments to retired NIFRS Firefighters resulting from the GMP Reconciliation Exercise.

The Director of Finance explained that agreement was being sought from the Board that NIFRS will not seek to recover these monies and approval is required (in line with delegated authority) from DoH to write off overpayments identified as part of the Exercise. She noted that a Business Case has been prepared for submission to DoH and also that it had been based on a template which had provided by the Department of Finance.

During a full discussion, the Director of Finance answered Members' questions relating to the information presented. Members also sought assurance that those pensioners affected are notified of the impact of the exercise on their pensions. The Director of Finance assured Members that this will be followed up.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Ms McKinney, unanimously agreed, subject to DoH approval, to write off overpayments arising from the Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) Reconciliation Exercise and also any further overpayments which may arise as the Reconciliation Exercise finalises.

NIFRS Business Plan 2019/20

It was noted that the 2019/20 NIFRS Business Plan had been circulated and considered by Members at an Information Session held immediately prior to the Board Meeting.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Enright, seconded by Ms McKinney, unanimously approved the NIFRS Business Plan 2019/20.

Change in the Order of Business

It was agreed to take the next Item – Death-Benefit Payment – as the last Item of Business.

Item 8: Relevant Correspondence

The Chairperson noted that a request had been received by a member of the public to attend the Board Meeting and the person had forwarded a number of questions to raise. She highlighted that NIFRS Standing Orders allowed for members of the public to observe a Board Meeting noting that they did not have speaking rights. The Chairperson advised Members that NIFRS had responded to the questions raised and had also advised the person on the 'observer' status.

Item 9: Documents for Sealing

There were no documents for sealing.

Item 10: Schedule of Future Meetings

The schedule of future Meetings, etc, was noted.

It was pointed out by the Chairperson that full attendance by Members was critical given the potential difficulties around quoracy working 5 Members down at this time. She thanked Members for their continued commitment to attend not only scheduled Meetings but also events and other business meetings when required.

Item 7: Standalone Strategic Items **Death-Benefit Payment**

The Chairperson noted that she and Mr Irvine had previously declared a potential conflict of interest with regard to this matter and explained that, having considered the matter further she felt there was no conflict for either herself or Mr Irvine.

A Briefing Paper regarding the payment of pension death benefit was noted. The Chairperson stressed the confidentiality and sensitivity of the issue.

The Director of Finance gave an overview of the information presented noting that the Briefing Paper provided additional information in response to queries raised by Members at the December Board Meeting.

During discussion the Officers answered Members' questions/provided further clarification relating to the information presented.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Enright, unanimously approved Option 3b as contained in the Briefing Paper.

Additional Item of Business

Membership of Service Delivery and Resources Committees

The Chairperson referred to the current position with respect to membership of the Service Delivery and Resources Committees and potential difficulties with respect to quoracy.

The Chairperson proposed that all Members, with the exception of herself and the interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, serve on both Committees. This was seconded by Mr Enright

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 3.10 PM
