

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

22 JANUARY 2019

1.35 PM

PRESENT: Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding
Mr A Walmsley, Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
Mr C Enright
Mr K Henning
Mr R Irvine
Ms A Jones
Mr K Millar
Mr J Quinn
Mr G Smyth
Mr W Webb

APOLOGIES: Mr P Martin

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Deeney, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Operations)
Mr M Graham, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Service Support)
Mr A Jennings, Interim Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Community Protection)
Mr D Moore, Director of Human Resources
Mrs P White, Director of Finance
Miss D Reynolds, Head of Planning, Performance & Governance
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Mr S Routh-Jones, Chief Inspector, HM Fire Service Inspectorate
Ms L Curran, DoH Observer

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Routh-Jones, Chief Inspector, HM Fire Service Inspectorate to the Meeting and introductions followed.

The Chairperson also welcomed Mr Jennings, Interim Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Community Protection) and wished him well in his interim role. She also welcomed Ms Curran, 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.

Change in the Order of Business

It was agreed to take Agenda Item 5 – Chairperson’s Business – Brexit Update – as the first Item of Business.

Item 5: Chairperson’s Business Brexit Update

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance gave a presentation updating Members on NIFRS EU exit planning noting that NIFRS is currently working with DoH and with other key stakeholders, locally and nationally, to identify any potential impacts.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance summarised the issues identified in the initial DoH NIFRS assessment and also provided an overview of the actions required. She updated Members on NIFRS progress to date.

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

The Chairperson noted Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Deeney will present future updates to the relevant Committee. She thanked the Head of Planning, Performance & Governance for her attendance.

At this point,
the Head of Planning, Performance & Governance
left the Meeting

Item 3: Minutes – 19 December 2018

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 19 December 2018, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to an amendment, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Enright.

Arising out of the Minutes:

Standalone Strategic Items - 10 Year Capital Priorities Review

The Chairperson sought an update with respect to the issue raised regarding renewable energy solutions. Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham updated Members on the current position.

The Director of Finance advised Members that the Review document had been revised to reflect Members’ comments. She provided an explanation of the information now included within the Review document.

The Chairperson stated that it would be useful for this information to be circulated to Members for consideration.

Following further discussion, it was agreed that revised wording be circulated to Members and that the matter be presented to the Resources Committee for discussion.

Standalone Strategic Items – Death-Benefit Payment

The Chairperson sought an update on this matter.

The Director of Finance advised Members of the current position.

Resources Committee – Minutes – 1 November - Recommendations

The Director of Finance referred to the Resources Committee recommendation adopted by the Board relating to the NIFRS exiting the contract with its current Pension System provider and engaging with the current HSC Pensions System provider. She updated Members on the current position with regard to DoH's request for a revised Business Case.

Ms Curran, DoH Observer, on the invitation of the Chairperson, informed the Meeting that the revised Business Case had now been accepted by DoH.

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

Service Delivery Committee – Meeting – 19 December 2018

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

Mr Irvine, Chairperson of the Service Delivery Committee, noted the recommendation being brought forward by the Committee for adoption.

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

Service Delivery Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of the Data Processing & Analysis Policy.**

Resources Committee – Minutes – 19 December 2018

It was noted that a Meeting of the Resources Committee had been held on 19 December 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 recommendation being brought forward by the Committee for adoption.

The Director of Finance gave a brief overview of the proposed approach to recurrent, Business as Usual expenditure up to £250k noting it will be implemented from 1 April 2019.

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

Resources Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of the revised Business Case approach to recurrent, Business as Usual expenditure up to £250k.**

Item 5: Chairperson's Business

Queen's New Year's Honours

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, extended congratulations to Heather Smart who had received an MBE for services to the advancement of women in NIFRS. She stated that she and the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer will write to Ms Smart on behalf of the Board and the Organisation.

IoD Chartered Directors Programme

The Chairperson congratulated Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham and the Director of HR on achieving both the Certificate and Diploma in Company Direction.

In response to a question from the Chairperson, the Director of HR outlined how the knowledge gained will be shared within the Organisation. The Chairperson explained her expectation with regard to learning being disseminated throughout the Organisation.

The Chairperson noted that the Corporate Management Team would be undertaking a course next week and Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham provided an overview of same and the benefits the course would bring to the participants.

Public Information Evening – Desertcreat

The Chairperson informed Members of a public information evening about the new Learning & Development Centre at Desertcreat being held on 5 February.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham explained that the evening will be an opportunity for NIFRS to engage with the local community on the new Centre and outlined the format for the evening.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham updated Members on the external Gateway Review being undertaken in early February.

The Chairperson noted that Mr Henning is the Board's representative on the Desertcreat Programme Board and that Members will be kept updated on progress.

The Chairperson informed Members that Mr Barbour had asked that his thanks be extended to everyone for the gift and good wishes received on his retirement from the Board.

Letter from Permanent Secretary

Members noted correspondence from the Permanent Secretary.

The Chairperson outlined the background to the correspondence which provided conditional approval for the revised Corporate Management Team (CMT) structure subject to conditions for continuing approval being met. The Chairperson explained the importance of Members meeting to consider this correspondence and agree a direction of travel and also it was important to capture the views from the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and CMT. She noted that DoH representatives had agreed to meet and engage with Members regarding same and that this was to be welcomed. She noted also that the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and CMT would also be meeting officials on a date to be agreed

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer circulated a Briefing Paper in response to the Permanent Secretary's correspondence. He gave a detailed overview of the Paper noting that it is proposed to implement the revised CMT structure effective from 1 April 2019. He stated that he and CMT believed the revised structure will deliver the stability and capacity to facilitate the delivery of transformational change.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer updated Members on discussions with DoH regarding the contents of the letter noting that further information has been requested with respect to the wider organisation review and DoH expectations with regard to the Shared Service Agenda. He also noted work being progressed to include the key tasks required to ensure delivery of the caveats associated with the CMT structure are delivered within the timeframes. He added that discussions had now commenced to develop a transformational plan for the organisation going forward. The Chairperson pointed out that the Board will also form a view regarding transformation and that she proposed to establish an appropriate scrutiny and oversight mechanism to measure progress. She would reflect further on the nature and shape of this with colleagues in the coming weeks

During a full discussion, Members stressed the need for the Board to strategically drive the transformation of the Organisation in partnership with CMT and in full engagement with DoH and other appropriate stakeholders. The Chairperson also acknowledged the need for clarity of roles and responsibilities between DoH, the Board and CMT in taking NIFRS forward. Members also noted the need to seek further clarification in relation to each of the caveats within the Permanent Secretary's letter which are associated with the conditional approval of the revised CMT structure.

Referring to the meeting scheduled with DoH representatives, the Chairperson noted that a date for Members to meet and discuss the correspondence in advance of that meeting of 28 February will be promptly facilitated.

The Chairperson asked if Members were content to approve the proposal to implement the revised CMT structure with effect from 1 April, noting that the Board will require regular reviews on progress through Committees and the full Board.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously approved implementation of the revised Corporate Management Team structure with effect from 1 April 2019.

Item 6: Standalone Strategic Items Area & District Review

A Briefing Paper relating to the Corporate Management Team's response to the Report on the Area & District Review (ADR) was circulated at the Meeting.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer apologised that the paper had been tabled that day. He then provided an overview of the paper and updated Members following the ADR Working Group meeting of 17 January with Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officers Deeney and Graham and the Director of HR. He advised Members that the Corporate Management Team (CMT) had accepted the Report from HSCLC on the Area & District Review.

Referring to the letter dated 28 November from the Permanent Secretary, and the key themes within that letter, the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer explained that CMT had discussed same and reached the position that, at this moment in time, given the potential outwork of a wider organisational review, before progressing with the implementation of ADR, discussion and confirmation regarding the wider organisational review would be required with DoH.

Members of the ADR Working Group confirmed that the expectations of an immediate wider organisational review needed to be discussed and agreed with DoH. Members noted that, as agreed at the Special Board Meeting held in November, CMT were to prepare a full response to the HSCLC ADR Report outlining their proposals for implementation and how the costings indicated within the Report would be addressed to the January Board Meeting. The Working Group concurred that in their view it was appropriate for the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer to bring forward the recommendation to pause progression of ADR.

A number of Members sought clarification on what decision the Board was being asked to take given that the paper had only been tabled at the Meeting. A full and frank discussion followed around a number of elements relating to the Briefing Paper and the status of the ADR Report. The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer provided clarification on the questions raised.

During further discussion, the Members reiterated that a full response from CMT to the HSCLC report had not been presented as per the action from the November Meeting, therefore the Board was not in a position to approve the direction of travel with respect to ADR. However, Members acknowledged that in the light of the correspondence from the Permanent Secretary, and the potential impact of the wider organisational review they concurred with the view of the Working Group.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Irvine, agreed to pause progress of ADR as a standalone action pending further discussions and action planning with DoH regarding the context of a wider organisational review.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer highlighted the need for a communication strategy stressing the importance of keeping staff informed of the current position.

Standing Order 2.6

Under Standing Order 2.6, Members unanimously agreed to approve the revised NIFRS TV Licensing Policy.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Henning, formally adopted the revised NIFRS TV Licensing Policy.

Finance Report

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

The Director of Finance summarised the overall position and forecast with respect to NIFRS revenue budget as at 31 December 2018 reporting a year-to-date pressure of £239k. She drew members' attention to a residual budget pressure of £0.3m which relates largely to the summer spate conditions and noted the actions to mitigate this pressure. The Director of Finance also noted that correspondence relating to NIFRS' budgetary pressures is an Item on the Agenda.

Referring to the capital budget, the Director of Finance gave a brief overview of the position as at 31 December 2018.

The Director of Finance updated Members with regard to Pension administration noting that a call with the Pension Regulator was scheduled for the end of January. She also noted the current position with regard to NIFRS' performance in relation to prompt payment compliance

Additional Item of Business – Bank Signatories

The Director of Finance referred to the interim arrangements in place to cover the role of Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and noted the approvals required for general amendments to NIFRS' 4 main bank accounts involving a change to the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer was delegated to the Board.

The Director of Finance explained that approval is being sought to set up Chief Fire & Rescue Officer signatories on NIFRS' 4 main bank accounts to reflect the current interim arrangements with effect from 13 December 2018 and again from 13 March 2019.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Enright, seconded by Ms McKinney, unanimously approved the change of signatories on NIFRS' 4 main bank accounts to reflect the current interim arrangements with effect from 13 December 2018 and again from 13 March 2019.

Letter to Permanent Secretary – Budget Pressures

Members noted correspondence to the Permanent Secretary outlining NIFRS' in-year budgetary pressures.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer provided an explanation with respect to the information presented highlighting the key budget pressures, the need to recruit and the financial impact of same.

Referring to the need to recruit, the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer explained that without recruitment NIFRS cannot populate and deliver the current service delivery model without placing a significant reliance on the use of overtime. He noted the immediate and longer term actions to address the funding gap. Members noted that NIFRS are seeking additional funding to facilitate recruitment and that discussions have taken place with DoH.

Ms Curran, DoH Observer, on the invitation of the Chairperson, advised Members of the current position and that a response is imminent. The Chairperson stated that the Board will therefore await DoH's response in due course.

Discussion took place with regard to the impact of budget constraints on NIFRS' ability to commit to recruitment and the need for NIFRS to be aware of its budget allocation 3 years ahead to assist with forward planning.

The Chairperson again acknowledged that DoH's response was imminent and that feedback to members should then be given promptly.

Request to Change Scheme of Delegation – Approval of Business Cases

Members noted a Briefing Paper relating to a request to change the Scheme of Delegation with respect to Business Case approvals.

The Director of Finance outlined the background to the proposal to increase the delegated limit for Corporate Management Team/Director approval of Business Cases from £100k to £250k with Business Cases above £250k requiring Board approval. The Director of Finance noted exclusions from the proposal.

During discussion, the Director of Finance updated Members on the progress of Business Case training and also Budget training. She answered Members' questions relating to aspects of the information presented.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Enright, unanimously agreed to approve the change to the Scheme of Delegation to increase the requirement for NIFRS Board approval of Business Cases from £100k to £250k.

Mr Webb referred to the Business Cases approved up to the value of £100k and enquired if the Board will be advised of these for information.

The Director of Finance suggested that these could be included within the Finance Report for a period of time. **This was agreed by Members.**

Business Case – Replacement Priority 1 Fire Alarms

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the replacement of Priority 1 Fire Alarms.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Graham outlined the purpose of the Business Case. He also explained that this was a refresh of the original Business Case as the estimated cost of the work had increased following the completion of detailed surveys of the Priority 1 Stations.

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

The Board, on the motion of Mr Smyth, seconded by Ms Jones, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for replacement Priority 1 Fire Alarms.

Item 7: Relevant Correspondence

There was no relevant correspondence.

Item 8: Documents for Sealing

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

H & J Martin Limited; Maurice Flynn & Sons Limited; and Combined Facilities Management – term Service Contract for Response Maintenance and Minor Building Works; and
McKenzies (NI) Limited – Lease Extension – Larne Temporary Fire Station.

Schedule of Future Meetings

The schedule of future Meetings, etc, was noted.

The Chairperson referred to the Business Improvement Day on 28 February and confirmed that DoH representatives will be in attendance that afternoon. The Chairperson advised that the Board Administrative Secretary would circulate dates to Members to convene to plan for the meeting with officials.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Routh-Jones and Ms Curran for their attendance.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 3.35 PM
