

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

19 DECEMBER 2019

2.10 PM

PRESENT: Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding
Mr M Graham, Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Interim)
Mr C Enright
Mr K Henning
Mr P Martin

APOLOGIES: Mr R Irvine
Mr G Smyth

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Deeney, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
(Transformation, Performance & Governance)
Mr A Jennings, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Service
Support)
Mr A Walmsley, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Service
Delivery)
Mrs P White, Director of Finance
Mrs E Magee, Acting Director of Human Resources
Ms I Hill, Board Administrative Secretary
Ms R Morgan, DoH Observer

Item 1: Apologies:

Apologies from Members 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 there were no apparent conflicts of interest.

Item 3: Minutes of Board Meeting – 24 September 2019

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 24 September 2019, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to a minor amendment, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Martin.

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

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 11 September 2019

The Minutes of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee Meeting held on 11 September 2019 were noted. It was also noted that the recommendations contained therein were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 24 September 2019.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 7 November 2019

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

Mr Enright, Vice-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 Martin.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Recommendations

- **Acceptance of the Audit of Station Visits;**
- **Approval of the Mid-Year Follow-Up Report;**
- **Approval of the revised Information Governance Framework; and**
- **Approval of the Quarter 2 Update on the Corporate Business Plan (April-September 2019), along with Balanced Scorecard.**

Service Delivery Committee – Minutes – 19 September 2019

The Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2019 were noted. It was also noted that the recommendations contained therein were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 24 September 2019.

Service Delivery Committee – Minutes – 21 November 2019

The Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 21 November 2019 were noted.

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

Service Delivery Committee – Recommendations

- **Approval to continue the current Service Delivery Improvement Team pilot in Downpatrick District until 31 March 2020 (team of 3); and to extend the pilot into Enniskillen District from 1 January 2020 (team of 6); and**
- **Approval of the Capabilities Review Year 1 proposals as detailed within the Briefing Paper.**

Resources Committee – Minutes – 19 September 2019

The Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2019 are attached for the information of Members. The recommendations contained therein were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 24 September 2019.

Resources Committee – Minutes – 21 November 2019

The Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 21 November 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 Martin.

Resources Committee – Recommendations

- **Approval of NIFRS Property Asset Management Plan 2019-2023/24;**
- **Approval of the interim Post Project Evaluation for the Service Support Centre, subject to amendment;**
- **Approval to end the Pilot and adopt the Banded Contract for On-Call staff.**

Remuneration Committee – Meeting – 19 December 2019

It was noted that a Meeting of the Remuneration Committee had been held immediately prior to the Board Meeting.

The Director of HR provided a synopsis of the business discussed at the Meeting noting the recommendations being brought forward by the Committee for adoption.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Martin, unanimously agreed that the Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board.

Remuneration Committee – Recommendations

- **Approval of the Pay Remits for Support Directors and Support Staff for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 and submission of the documentation to DoH;**
- **Approval to assimilate 4 existing Assistant Group Commander postholders to Group Commander roles with the associated pay increase in pay.**

Item 5: Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson referred to the current position with respect to Board membership. She advised that she had no further information as to when the new Board Members will be joining. Her expectation would be 1 February but this was to be confirmed. She paid tribute to her Member colleagues for their continued commitment to NIFRS which has been over and beyond that required of their required time commitment.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted that DoH had expressed their appreciation to the work of Board Members under difficult circumstances.

The Chairperson commented on 2019 being a very demanding and challenging year and commended the Board Administrative Secretary for her assistance and support. She also expressed her appreciation to her Member colleagues for all their support throughout the year.

The Chairperson also expressed her appreciation to Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Walmsley who took up the interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer role in January 2019. She thanked him for his support during that challenging time.

The Chairperson felt it was also important to highlight the many successes in the organisation throughout the year, and the willingness of Board Members and the Senior Team to work in harmony to move the organisation forward.

The Chairperson put on record her thanks to Lynne Curran who had been the DoH official for part of 2019 and she also paid tribute to Rebecca Morgan who was now the point of contact for the Public Safety Unit.

Item 6: Standalone Strategic Items Standing Order 2.6

Under Standing Order 2.6, Members unanimously agreed to approve the following:

- agreement, in principle, to submit the Business Case for NIFRS Transformation Programme Phase 1 to DoH;
- agreement to commission the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a review of Principal Officers' Terms and Conditions; the Acting Director of HR to facilitate the review and to report into the Remuneration Committee;
- agreement, in principle, of the Transformation Programme Governance Structure (Appendix 2 of Business Case);
- agreement to baseline, and obtain ongoing peer support and external validation through National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer updated Members on the current position with respect to the Business Case explaining the changes required by DoH. The Chairperson enquired as to when the final Business Case would be submitted to DoH and Board Members would then have a final version to consider.

Members also received an update with respect to the review of Principal Officers' Terms and Conditions and with regard to baselining and NFCC peer support.

During discussion relating to the baseline exercise, the Officers noted Members' concerns regarding same and provided further clarification on the purpose of this exercise and the associated costs before proceeding.

Following discussion, the Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Martin, formally adopted the recommendations previously agreed under Standing Order 2.6.

Finance Report

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

The Director of Finance provided an explanation of the Revenue budget position as at 31 December 2019 drawing attention to the key budget pressures. She informed Members that NIFRS had received informal confirmation from DoH that funding of £1.9m will be made available to address the £2.2m leaving a balance of £0.3m to be met through savings measures. She added that a break-even position was anticipated at year-end.

Referring to the operational pay award, the Director of Finance updated Members on the current position with regard to DoH allocating additional funding to meet this pressure.

The Director of Finance gave an overview of the Capital budget position as at 31 October 2019.

The Director of Finance updated Members on the current position with respect to the Pension Administration project; Prompt Payment performance; and Business Case approvals.

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

The Chairperson confirmed that Members would continue to keep close scrutiny on budget profile.

Pension Matters Voluntary Scheme Pays

Members noted a Briefing Paper relating to a request from a member of one NIFRS' pension schemes for the Board to approve payment of tax liability from a breach of annual allowance as a voluntary action.

The Director of Finance provided an overview of the issue to be considered and noted the legal advice which the Local Government Association had sought on behalf of UK Fire and Rescue Authorities regarding same. She also noted the criteria to be considered as sound reasons for offering Voluntary Scheme Pays. She further noted the options for consideration by the Board in exercising its discretion to approve the payment of this tax liability under Voluntary Scheme Pays.

During discussion, the Director of Finance answered Members' questions/provided clarification regarding the information presented.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Ms McKinney, unanimously agreed to align to the guidance provided by the Local Government Association/Home Office. It was also agreed that, on the basis of the criteria outlined in the Briefing Paper, not to approve the payment of this tax liability.

Death in Service – Pension Benefit

A Briefing Paper relating to the payment of a Lump Sum Death Benefit was noted.

The Director of Finance gave an overview of the information presented.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Enright, unanimously agreed to approve the recommendation as outlined in the Briefing Paper.

Members noted a Briefing Paper relating to the payment of Survivor Pension and Lump Sum Death Grant.

The Director of Finance provided an explanation of the information presented and answered Members' questions relating to the information presented.

Following a full discussion, the Board, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Mr Martin, unanimously approved Option 2 as per the Briefing Paper.

IDRP (Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure)

A Briefing Paper updating Members in relation complaints which have been submitted under the Pension's Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP) was noted.

The Director of Finance summarised the background to the complaint and explained that, in line with IDRP, a Panel of the Board was convened to consider the complaints. She further explained that Panel had requested that the matter be referred to the Board. She noted the issues being raised and gave an overview of the options under consideration to resolve the complaints.

The Panel Members updated the Board on their meetings regarding the complaints and also the meeting with one of the complainants.

Following discussion, the Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Martin, unanimously agreed to approve Option 3 as per the Briefing Paper.

OBC2 Learning & Development Centre

Members noted a Briefing Paper providing an update on the OBC2 for NIFRS Learning & Development Centre.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer gave an overview of the key changes to OBC2 particularly in relation to the capital costs. Members noted that these changes had not impacted on the preferred option, ie, a centralised Learning & Development Centre at Cookstown.

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

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Martin, unanimously approved the changes from the original Business Case.

Business Cases Microsoft Licensing

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for Microsoft Licensing.

The Director of Finance outlined the purpose of the project and answered Members' questions relating to the information presented.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Henning, approved the Business Case for Microsoft Licensing.

Risk Management Software

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for Risk Management Software was noted.

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

The Board, on the motion of Mr Martin, seconded by Mr Enright, approved the Business Case for Risk Management Software.

Memorandum of Rent Review

A Briefing Paper updating Members on the conclusion of the recent rent review for the Boucher Road site was noted.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Jennings provided an overview of the information presented.

DoH Guidance Circular

A Briefing Paper apprising Members of the Department of Health Policy Guidance Circular Change or Withdrawal of Services – Revised Guidance on Roles and Responsibilities was noted.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer explained that the Guidance had been circulated to Members for information.

Item 8: Relevant Correspondence

There was no relevant correspondence.

Item 9: Documents for Sealing

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

Belfast City Council – Memorandum of Rent Review, Boucher Road Site;

McKenzies (NI) Limited – Second Lease Extension – Larne Temporary Fire Station;

IBI – Design Team Fees – Stage 2 Reports – Cushendall, Fintona and Newtown Stewart Fire Stations;

IBI – Headquarters Infrastructure Upgrades and RCC Refurbishment Contract.

Item 10: Schedule of Future Meetings

The schedule of future Meetings, etc, was noted.

The Chairperson noted that a Special Board Meeting was provisionally scheduled for 16 January 2020 should it be required to revisit the Transformation Business Case.

Members were informed that the Chairperson and the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer would be attending an Accountability Meeting on 7 January 2020 and that they would report back to Members.

Transformation Programme Governance Structure

Members were referred to the Transformation Programme Governance structure as contained in the Business Case for NIFRS Transformation Programme Phase 1 which had been adopted by the Board earlier in the Meeting.

The Chairperson proposed that Mr Enright represent the NIFRS Board on the Transformation Programme Board. Mr Henning seconded this.

Board Information Session

The Chairperson referred to the Information Session which had been held immediately prior to the Board Meeting and in particular to discussions regarding the proposed Area Management Structure.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Enright, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously agreed to approve, in principle, the proposed Area Management Structure.

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and extended season's greetings to all.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 4.35 PM
