

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING (VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE)

Social distancing and all PHA guidance adhered to for
Chairperson and Officers in the room

15 SEPTEMBER 2020

11.40 AM

PRESENT: Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding (*in the room*)
Mr M Graham, Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (*in the room*)
Ms B Anley (*via video link*)
Mr J Craig (*via video link*)
Mr C Enright (*via video link*)
Mr K Henning (*via video link*)
Mr R Irvine (*via video link*)
Mr T O'Hanlon (*via video link*)
Mr J Quinn (*via video link*)
Mrs H Singleton (*via video link*)
Ms L Smith (*via video link*)
Mr G Smyth (*via video link*)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Deeney, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
(*in the room*) (Transformation, Performance & Governance)
Mr A Jennings, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Service
Support)
Mr P Gallagher, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Service
Delivery)
Mrs P White, Interim Director of Finance
Mrs E Magee, Interim Director of Human Resources
Miss D Reynolds, Head of Planning, Performance &
Governance
Ms I Hill, Governance & Business Support Services Adviser
Ms R Morgan, DoH Observer (*via video link*)

Item 1: Apologies

There were no apologies.

Item 2: Conflicts of Interest

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: CFRO Update on Independent Review into Issues around the Investigation Processes and Timescales (Closed Session)

The Chairperson noted that the Meeting was in a Closed Session. She referred to the Board Meeting held on 24 July and noted the actions which the Board had requested the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and his team progress, ie, Progress Updates noting actions to date, etc, on the Independent Review.

Members noted the Action Plan; Case Conferencing Group Terms of Reference; and Independent Review Working Group Terms of Reference which had been circulated for information.

The Chairperson invited the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer to go through the documentation presented and asked Members to leave any questions to the end.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer briefly outlined the background to the Report and the current position noting there were 26 recommendations emanating from the Report with 38 actions on the Action Plan. He noted that when the recommendations were complete, Internal Audit will review same and report back to the Board.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted the Terms of Reference for the Case Conferencing Group chaired by the Director of HR and highlighted the level of work to be progressed by the Group within the next 2 months. He further noted that Mr Quinn nominated board member had attended a meeting the previous day.

The Chairperson emphasised the need for assurance to the Board that the Group is working to an outcome which ensures that issues highlighted within the Independent Review do not happen again. She emphasised that the Board would continue to monitor closely the work underway and she would seek assurances from the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer that the issues were being robustly dealt with and lessons learned going forward. She asked the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer how he proposed to measure progress to ensure all targets were achieved.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer explained that all issues identified will be collated in a central register and progress monitored by the Case Conferencing Group. He advised on how this would be done.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer answered Members' questions relating to other aspects of the information presented.

The Chairperson invited Mr Quinn, the Board's Representative on the Case Conferencing Group, to comment.

Mr Quinn reported positively on his attendance at the first meeting of the Group. He summarised the key areas of discussion. He highlighted that BSO Internal Audit will be involved in the process and welcomed the quality assurance measures put in place. Mr Quinn stressed the importance of NIFRS demonstrating that it is working to address the issues identified.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Quinn for his update. The Members welcomed Mr Quinn representing the Board on the Case Conferencing Group.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted the Terms of Reference for the Independent Review Working Group.

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

The Members thanked the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer for the update and stressed the importance of Members receiving these updates and receiving his assurances of progress in addressing the issues identified.

The Chairperson stated that she was content with the assurances provided by the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and acknowledged the work that had been undertaken by the Executive team since the July meeting. She stated that it is critical that the Board continue to monitor progress and receive regular update reports and also updates from Mr Quinn. She stressed that the Board in fulfilling its duty will continue to scrutinise progress and seek regular assurances that all targets were on track to assigned timescale.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer provided assurance to Members around the political element associated with the review noting that a recent Assembly Question response was reflective of the update presented. He re-emphasised the importance of and his commitment to closing off the Internal Audit recommendations.

The Chairperson noted that the Independent Review would be a Standing Item on the Board Agenda.

Referring to the Business Improvement Day scheduled for November, the Chief Fire & Rescue Office explained how the actions emanating from the Independent Review will be taken forward and addressed at the Business Improvement Day. This would provide another scrutiny channel for Members also.

The Chairperson highlighted the need for the Independent Review to be dealt with as a separate workstream from the other Business Improvement Projects.

The Chairperson concluded the Closed Session. She sought agreement that Members were content with progress and the updates provided and also with regular updates being presented to the Board, along with an update from Mr Quinn.

Members agreed to this.

The Chairperson adjourned the Meeting and noted that it would reconvene at 1.00 pm.

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12.10 PM
AND RECONVENED AT 1.00 PM

The Chairperson welcomed everyone back to the Meeting and noted that Ms Anley would be joining the Meeting in due course.

Prior to the commencement of business, the Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, extended deepest condolences to Ms Hill on the death of her Mother.

Item 4: Minutes of Board Meeting – 24 July 2020

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 24 July 2020, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Craig, seconded by Mr Henning.

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

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 26 May 2020

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 26 May 2020 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 Audit of Stores/Stock Management; Audit of Payroll (focused on payments to Retained personnel and the management of overtime); and Non-Pay Expenditure;**
- **Approval of the Independent Review into Investigation Processes and Timescales subject to the Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and Board Chairperson discussing how to ensure Board oversight of the matter;**
- **Approval of the Year-End Follow-Up on Outstanding Internal Audit Recommendations;**
- **Approval of the Quarter 4 Progress Update on the Corporate Business Plan (April 2019 to March 2020), along with the Balanced Scorecard;**
- **Approval of the Assurance Outcomes 2019/20;**
- **Approval of the NAO Audit Committee Checklist 2019/20.**

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Meeting – 23 June 2020

It was noted that a Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee had been held on 23 June 2020 and that the Minutes of the Meeting will be presented to the next Meeting of the Board.

Standalone Strategic Items

Standing Order 2.6

Business Case – NIFRS Fleet Motor Insurance Renewal

Regional Control Centre (RCC) and Operational Communications Recruitment

Business Case – Delivery of Estates Maintenance Service through an Estates Term Service Short Contract (TSSC)

Business Case – Dunmurry Lease Extension

Under Standing Order 2.6, Members unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for NIFRS Fleet Motor Insurance Renewal; Regional Control Centre (RCC) and Operational Communications Recruitment; the Business Case for the Delivery of Estates Maintenance Service through an Estates Term Service Short Contract (TSSC); and the Business Case for the Dunmurry Lease Extension.

The Board, on the motion of Mr O’Hanlon, seconded by Mr Enright, unanimously agreed to adopt the recommendations as outlined above.

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2019/20

Members noted the draft Annual Report & Statement of Accounts which were reviewed and recommended for approval by the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee at its Meeting on 23 June 2020 subject to any further amendments being presented to the Board.

The Director of Finance noted that at the July Board Meeting she had advised Members of outstanding issues to be resolved before the Annual Accounts could be certified by NIAO. She explained that she would provide an overview of the Accounts, highlight the key changes and update Members on the current position. She noted that this approach would update Members on the current position and provide an overview of the key changes to the Accounts. She noted that this approach had been agreed with Mr Smyth, Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee.

The Director of Finance noted that the NIFRS 2019/20 Accounts had been prepared in accordance with normal timelines, were compliant with the break-even target and that there would be no NIAO report appended to the Accounts or the Report To Those Charged with Governance (RTTGWG).

At this point,
Mr Irvine joined the Meeting

The Director of Finance provided a synopsis of the key highlights areas within the Operating Accounts and the Pension Accounts.

The Director of Finance updated the Meeting on the preparation of the Accounts to date noting the current position with respect to the annual GAD assurance; the McCloud/Sargeant; and holiday pay issues explaining that the narrative will change in respect of these 2 issues. She noted that these issues were out of the control of NIFRS and that the narrative will be agreed between herself and NIAO and will be consistent with the wider public sector. She also noted that DoH is being kept informed.

The Chairperson invited questions from Members.

Mr Smyth, Chairperson of Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, reiterated that the issues raised were out of NIFRS' control. He stated that he was in agreement with the approach for finalising the Accounts.

Mr Quinn thanked the Team for the comprehensive Report and for all their work. He referred to page 55 - Chairperson, Board Members and Senior Management Remuneration and pointed out that he does not take a salary and asked that this be noted for future reference. This was noted.

The Director of Finance outlined next steps noting that the statutory deadline for the laying of the Annual Report & Statement of Accounts is 15 November 2020. She sought clarification regarding how the Board wished to progress approval of the final Accounts.

The Chairperson acknowledged that the matter was outside NIFRS control and welcomed that NIFRS had engaged with DoH throughout.

The Director of Finance proposed, given the deadline for laying the Accounts, that on confirmation from NIAO of certification, the documentation be circulated, under Standing Order 2.6, with a summary report of changes that have been made for Members to be sighted on the final version for approval. **Members agreed to this.**

NIFRS Financial Plan 2020/21

The draft 2020/21 Financial Plan (Break-Even and Capital) was noted.

The Director of Finance provided an explanation with respect to the timeframe for the Financial Plan. She gave a detailed overview of the key highlights within the Plan which incorporates both the Revenue and Capital budgets.

She explained a first draft of the budget presented a pressure of £1.9m against the opening allocation and then COVID pandemic impacted. The Director of Finance explained that a further review took place to consider the impact of COVID-19 which reduced the pressure to £1.2m. She noted that funding for the impact of COVID-19 within NIFRS would be dealt with separately by DoH. She explained that the current indications are that the level of slippage in expenditure as a result of COVID-19 will offset the additional expenditure that is directly attributable to COVID-19. As a result, NIFRS should not require additional funding for COVID-19 at this time.

The Director of Finance summarised the key assumptions and the key risks within the Plan and noted in particular the position with respect to funding for Transformation.

The Director of Finance noted the Capital position.

At this point,
Ms Anley joined the Meeting

During discussion, the Officers answered Members' questions/provided clarification relating to various aspects of the information presented including IT systems; Pension costs; headcount and the impact on service delivery; impact of COVID-19 or potential impact if costs rise expeditiously.

In response to a query from Members regarding Brexit, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Deeney updated Members on the current position. The Chairperson suggested that an update report be presented to the next Meeting of the Board.

Referring to Transformation, Mr Irvine noted that at the DoH briefing prior to the Board Meeting, DoH was enthusiastic about moving forward but had commented on that there were issues to be resolved relating to the Business Case. He emphasised the need to keep driving forward with the Business Case for the Transformation Programme. The Chairperson asked what the status of the Business Case was and if there was anything further NIFRS needed to do to meet the DoH requirements

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Deeney updated Members on the current position with respect to the Business Case and noted that he was not aware of any further requests being required by DoH for the Business Case. The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer advised that he awaited feedback from DoH.

The Chairperson invited Ms Morgan, DoH to comment. Ms Morgan noted the current position explaining that queries on the Business Case had been received from the Economist. She noted that a combined formal response will be issued to NIFRS by the end of the month.

Following further discussion, the Board, on the motion of Ms Anley, seconded by Mr Quinn, unanimously agreed to approve the draft 2020/21 Financial Plan (Break-Even and Capital Plan).

Business Cases

On-Call Attendance and Operational Rostering Business Case

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the On-Call Attendance and Operational Rostering Business Case.

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

The Board, on the motion of Ms Anley, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously agreed to approve the On-Call Attendance and Rostering Business Case.

Replacement Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TeTRA)

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the Replacement Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TeTRA) was noted.

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

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Ms McKinney, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for Replacement Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TeTRA).

Capabilities Review – Revised Year 2 Proposals

Members noted a Briefing Paper outlining revisions to the Capabilities Review Year 2 proposals.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer explained that this Briefing Paper is being presented to the Board as Committee Meetings have not been scheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Gallagher explained that due to the impact of COVID-19 on workloads, the ability to obtain approval in a timely manner and the impact on timescales to implement the proposals in-year, the proposals for Year 2020/21 had been revised. It was noted that Briefing Paper outlines revised proposals that are considered achievable in-year.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Gallagher summarised the key elements of the proposals relating to the Flood Rescue; preparations for the movement of the Omagh High Volume Pump to Londonderry District; Rope Rescue; Urban Search & Rescue and Bulk Foam.

The Chairperson invited Mr Irvine, Chairperson of the Service Delivery Committee, to comment. Mr Irvine stated that he was content with the update and noted that the direction of travel had previously been agreed by the Committee.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously agreed to approve the revisions made to the Capabilities Review Year 2 proposals.

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

Terms of Reference for Standing Committees

The Chairperson welcomed the Head of Planning, Performance & Governance to the Meeting.

Members noted the draft Standing Committee Terms of Reference. The Chairperson outlined the background to the review of the current Committee structure and the development of the proposed Terms of Reference for Committees.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance explained that the Committee Terms of Reference had been reviewed in the first stage of 3-yearly review of Standing Orders and noting that a review of NIFRS Standing Orders would follow. She also highlighted that the review would address a number of Internal Audit recommendations.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance gave an overview of the proposed Board and Standing Committee structure and membership noting that underpinning the Board will be 3 primary Committees – Audit, Risk & Governance Committee; Service Delivery Committee; and People & Culture Committee. She further noted that there will be 3 ad hoc Committees – Remuneration Committee; Joint Negotiating Committee; and Platinum Committee.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance summarised the responsibilities for each of the Committees and highlighted that elements from the Transformation Programme had been incorporated within the responsibilities of the Committees. The Chairperson suggested the need for induction sessions for new Members with the Committee Chairs, the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and the Lead Officers prior to the first Meeting of each of the Committees. She explained that she was currently considering mentors for new Members as a direct point of contact and she would return to this idea at a later stage.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance drew attention to the proposed Membership for each of the Committees and provided a brief synopsis of the key areas within the Terms of Reference.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance noted the next steps pending the approval of the proposed Standing Committee Terms of Reference which would include working with Committee Chairs and the Corporate Management Team regarding information requirements; a review of Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation.

The Committee Chairs welcomed the proposal for Committee induction sessions for new Members.

Mr Enright expressed concern there was no reference to the establishment of a Transformation Committee. He stressed the importance of the Transformation Programme and the need for an oversight Committee to drive and monitor progress.

During a full discussion, the Officers noted Members' comments, particularly with respect to the establishment of a Transformation Oversight Committee and answered Members' questions/provided clarification relating to the information presented.

The Chairperson asked the Corporate Management Team to consider the comments raised by Members particularly with regard to Transformation and to bring their thoughts back to the Board.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Enright, seconded by Mr Smyth, unanimously agreed to approve, in principle, the draft Standing Committee Terms of Reference, including Committee membership, subject to consideration of Members' observations.

**Item 6: Items for Information/Noting
Reports from Board Committees, including noting of Committee Minutes and adoption of Recommendations**

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Minutes – 12 February 2020

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 12 February 2020 were noted. It was also noted that the recommendations contained therein were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 25 February 2020.

Remuneration Committee – Minutes – 25 February 2020

The Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 25 February 2020 were noted. It was also noted that the recommendations contained therein were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 25 February 2020.

Standalone Strategic Items

Annual Report – Audit, Risk & Governance Committee

Members noted the 2019/20 Annual Report of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee.

Mr Irvine, Member of Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, provided a synopsis of the key points within the Report. It was noted that the Head of Internal Audit overall for the year had provided limited assurance but had recognised Management's continued focus and progress made on the implementation of outstanding Internal Audit recommendations.

Annual Business Plan 20/21

Members were informed that further to correspondence from DoH and having due regard for the current pandemic, DoH has deferred the launch of the consultation process on the NIFRS 5-Year Strategic Plan. Members noted the Annual Business Plan 20/21 which had been extracted from the document.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer explained that in line with this Departmental correspondence an exercise had been conducted linking the Annual Business Plan to the DoH measures. The Annual Business Plan previously approved by the Board in March 2020 still stands. The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted that further detail on the Business Plan had been requested by DoH and updated Members on the current position. He noted that once DoH approval had been received for the Plan, the final version would be circulated to Members.

Finance Report

The Finance Report updating Members on the financial position as at 31 July 2020 was noted.

The Director of Finance drew attention to the inclusion of a 'negative contingency' in the budget and explained how this will be managed. She highlighted that overall the accounts are showing an underspend of £1.2m. The Director of Finance updated Members on costs directly attributable to COVID-19.

The Director of Finance assured Members that the Corporate Management Team closely monitors the budget position and highlighted that NIFRS is in line to deliver a breakeven position at year end.

Directors' Reports

Members noted Directors' Reports from the Director of HR; Director of Service Delivery; Director of Service Support; and Director of Transformation, Performance & Governance updating Members as at 31 July 2020. The Reports had been circulated as Committee Meetings have not been scheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chairperson thanked the Directors for their Reports. She stated that the Reports will provide important background information to Members in advance of Committee Meetings.

Estate Survey

A Paper relating to the Estate-Wide Condition Survey Outputs and Backlog Maintenance was noted.

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

Command & Control Project

Members noted the progress update on the Command & Control Project and associated Risk Register.

Assistant Chief Fire & Officer Jennings summarised the key areas and whilst noting the impact of COVID-19 on progress of the functional analysis, highlighted significant progress in other elements of the project.

Finance/HR Service Delivery Model

The Outline Business Case (OBC) for NIFRS Finance and HR/Payroll System was noted.

The Director of Finance outlined the current position with respect to the OBC explaining that following a direction of DoH, NIFRS is re-engaging with BSO to review the Business Case and that due to the need for further considerations to take place the OBC could not be considered for approval at this time. She added that the draft OBC circulated was an indication of the work already completed to date.

The Director of Finance advised Members that discussions have already taken place with BSO and stated that given those discussions, the OBC will change.

The Chairperson invited comments from Members.

In response to a question from Mr Quinn regarding a potential conflict given that BSO, the potential supplier, is working with NIFRS on the OBC, the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted the position with regard to the requirement to consider shared services and earlier comments regarding other sources for the provision of services.

During a full discussion, the Officers noted Members' comments regarding the requirement to consider shared services versus the need to ensure that any solution meets the needs of the organisation. The Officers also answered Members' questions/provided clarification regarding the information presented. The Chairperson advised that the Permanent Secretary had requested that NIFRS look at the shared services agenda closely and explore if there were opportunities therein.

The Chairperson pointed out that the OBC had been presented for information only.

Item 7: Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

Item 8: Relevant Correspondence

Members noted correspondence outlining the Minister's approval of NIFRS Purpose, Strategic Objectives and Values.

Item 9: Documents for Sealing

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

IBI Group (UK) Limited in joint venture with Kennedy Fitzgerald Architects LLP – for the provision of professional services in connection with Carrickfergus Fire Station Roof Support Works.

Item 10: Schedule of Future Meetings, etc

A Schedule of Meetings, etc, was noted.

The Chairperson noted that a Special Board Meeting (closed session) was scheduled for 20 October for the presentation of the Executive Team Review Report.

Referring to the Standing Committees, the Chairperson stressed the importance of scheduling the Committee Meetings as soon as possible and in particular the Committee inductions.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 3.50 PM
