

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING (VIRTUAL MEETING)

24 NOVEMBER 2020

11.30 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 C Enright (*via video link*)
Mr K Henning (*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*)

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

APOLOGIES: Mr J Craig
Mr R Irvine

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

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

Item 1: Apologies

Apologies from Members were noted.

Item 2: Conflicts of Interest

It was noted that, in accordance with the Code of Conduct and Code of Accountability for Board Members of NIFRS (paragraph 21), Members, should on appointment, declare any business interests, positions of authority in a charity or voluntary body in the field of health and social care, any connection with a voluntary or other body contracting for NIFRS' services.

Accordingly, the Chairperson asked the new Members present to formally declare any conflicts of interest.

Ms Anley declared the following - Chairperson of Londonderry Port & Harbour Commissioner; Chairperson of Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service; Director in Mourne Country Park Limited; and Committee Member of Institute of Directors Northern Ireland Committee.

Mr Quinn stated he had no conflicts to declare. However, he noted he is the Trade Union Member on the Board and a NIFRS employee.

Mrs Singleton declared the following - Deputy Chairperson of the Health & Safety Executive Northern Ireland; Member of the local Government Staff Commission. Director of mid-Armagh Community Network; Board Member of the International Fund for Ireland; Husband is the Senior Partner in the firm of Nelson Singleton Solicitors.

Ms Smith declared the following - Board member/Non executive Director HSE NI; Associate lecturer at QUB and Ulster University; and LJS Consulting - sole trader organisational development.

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 4: Minutes of Board Meeting – 15 September 2020

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 15 September 2020, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to minor amendments, on the motion of Mr Smyth, seconded by Mrs Singleton.

Arising out of the Minutes:

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2019/20

Members noted that, as agreed at the Board Meeting on 15 September, the Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2019/20, following confirmation from NIAO of certification, was circulated under Standing Order 2.6 and unanimously approved by Members.

The Board, on the motion of Mrs McKinney, seconded by Mr Smyth, formally adopted this approval.

Terms of Reference for Standing Committees

Members noted the draft Terms of Reference for Standing Committees which had been revised to reflect discussion at the Board Meeting and further noted that the document now includes a List of Information Requirements for the Committees.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance explained that the draft document presented takes on board Members' comments and observations and also includes the information requirements for the Committees. She further explained that the Terms of Reference for a Transformation Oversight were now incorporated and the Committee would be established in due course. She provided a synopsis of the Terms of Reference for the Committee and also the Information Requirements for the Committees.

In response to a question from the Chairperson with regard to initiation meetings for the Committees, the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted that a couple of the newly constituted Committees had already met and highlighted the focus for those introductory meetings which would also form part of the induction for new Members into Committee work.

Mr Enright welcomed the inclusion of a Transformation Oversight Committee and expressed his interest in serving on the Committee. This was noted. The Chairperson advised that she would liaise with the Head of Planning, Performance & Governance to populate that Committee in early 2021.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Enright, seconded by Ms Anley, unanimously approved the revised Terms of Reference for Standing Committees.

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

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

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 23 June 2020 were noted.

Mr Smyth, Chairperson of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee, proposed that the Committee's recommendation, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Ms McKinney.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee - Recommendation

- **Approval of the Internal Audit Strategy 2020-2023 & Internal Audit Plan 2020/21.**

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Meeting – 11 November 2020

It was noted that a Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee had been held on 11 November 2020 and the Minutes of the Meeting will be presented to the next Meeting of the Board.

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

- **Approval to defer the Audit of Governance of Transformation Programme to 21/22;**
- **Acceptance of the Audit of NIFRS Governance during Covid-19;**
- **Approval of the Mid-Year Follow-Up Report.**

The Chairperson referred to the Audit of NIFRS Governance during COVID-19 and welcomed the Report noting that satisfactory assurance had been provided on the basis that NIFRS responded quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Service Delivery Committee - Minutes – 16 October 2020

The Minutes of the Meeting of the newly constituted Service Delivery Committee held on 16 October 2020 were noted.

Mr Enright, in the absence of the Committee Chairperson Mr Irvine, 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 proposed Committee Information Flows;**
- **Approval of the proposed increase in resources for the NIFRS Sourcing Service provided by BSO Procurement and Logistics Service (PaLS).**

Service Delivery Committee - Meeting – 17 November 2020

It was noted that a Meeting of the Service Delivery Committee had been held on 11 November 2020 and the Minutes of the Meeting will be presented at the next Meeting of the Board.

Mr Enright, in the absence of the Committee Chairperson Mr Irvine, proposed that the Committee's recommendation, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Mrs Singleton.

Service Delivery Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of NIFRS Procurement Strategy 2020-2035 subject to a minor amendment.**

People & Culture Committee - Minutes – 16 October 2020

The Minutes of the Meeting of the newly constituted People & Culture Committee held on 16 October 2020 were noted.

Mr Henning, Chairperson of the People & Culture Committee, proposed that the Committee's recommendation, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Ms Anley.

People & Culture Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of the proposed Committee Information Flows.**

People & Culture Committee - Meeting – 18 November 2020

It was noted that a Meeting of the People & Culture Committee had been held on 18 November 2020 and the Minutes of the Meeting will be presented at the next Meeting of the Board.

Mr Henning gave a verbal report to Members on the Business discussed at the Meeting.

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

People & Culture Committee – Recommendations

- **Approval to recruit a further 56 On-Call Firefighter posts;**
- **Approval of the NIFRS Breathing Apparatus & Compartment Firefighting Policy;**
- **Approval of the revised NIFRS Casualty Care Policy; and**
- **Approval of the revised NIFRS Road Traffic Collision Policy.**

Remuneration Committee – Meeting – 23 November

It was noted that a Meeting of the Remuneration Committee had been held on 23 November 2020 and the Minutes of the Meeting will be presented at the next Meeting of the Board.

Ms McKinney, Chairperson of the Remuneration Committee, proposed that the Committee's recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. This was seconded by Ms Smith.

Remuneration Committee – Recommendations

- **Approval of the Pay Remit for Support Staff for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and submission of the documentation to DoH, subject to minor amendment;**
- **Approval of the Pay Remit for Wholetime Personnel for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 and submission of the documentation to DoH, subject to minor amendment;**
- **Approval of the Pay Remit for On-Call Personnel for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 and submission of the documentation to DoH, subject to minor amendment;**

- **Approval of the Pay Remit for RCC Personnel for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 and submission of the documentation to DoH, subject to minor amendment;**
- **Approval of the Pay Remit for Support Directors for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and submission of the documentation to DoH, subject to minor amendment.**

Standalone Strategic Items

Finance/HR Service Delivery Model

Members noted the revised NIFRS Finance & HR Delivery Model Business Case and supporting Briefing Paper.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted that the Interim Head of Finance was in attendance for this Item.

The Interim Director of Finance noted that the Business Case has been revised to incorporate the outworkings of NIFRS/BSO Joint Working Group and gave Members a detailed overview of the 3 main changes made to the Business Case.

The Interim Director of Finance drew Members' attention to Section 12 of the Business Case and summarised the options considered. She advised that the Business Case evidences significant consideration of full alignment with the shared services agenda; however it did not demonstrate shared services to be the best value for money option available to NIFRS. She also noted the challenges around this given the Permanent Secretary's letter regarding the need for the Board to consider shared services in line with the PFG agenda.

During a full discussion, Members sought the Executives' views regarding the service provided with respect to those areas currently outsourced and the resilience of same. A number of Members raised concerns with regard to BSO being involved in the development of the Business Case given they were the potential service provider. Members noted that option 5, based on the information they had been given, namely, retention of services in house, appeared to be most cost effective. Members raised concerns that the shared service option is the more expensive option. Members noted the need to discuss with DoH the issue of additional funding should the shared service option be taken.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer clarified that a Direction had been received from DoH regarding a joint NIFRS/BSO Working Group to progress the Business Case. He advised Members on some negative feedback NIFRS had received from other organisations with respect to outsourcing of some services. Members noted same.

Members also noted concerns with respect to outsourced services currently, highlighting recent approvals sought for additional costs for resourcing of same.

Members suggested that, given the information and advice they had been given, they should seek to proceed with Option 5 with a full rationale and justification on why it was the preferred Option given to DoH. Feedback from officials should then be sought as soon as possible from DoH. The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer agreed to take this forward.

In response to a question from the Chairperson, Ms Morgan, DoH Observer, noted that a discussion between the Board and DoH could be facilitated if requested. Members noted this and considered this might be worthwhile going forward.

The Chairperson then sought Members' views regarding their preferred option having now had the opportunity to consider the information presented to them by the Interim Director of Finance and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer.

5 Members favoured Option 5; and 2 Members favoured Option 3.

The Chairperson stated that she felt it would be essential to engage with DoH and obtain their feedback as soon as practicable and bring that back in to the Board.

She noted Members' agreement to progress the submission of the Business Case with the preferred Option 5 with the caveat from her that DoH feedback was sought and reported back to the Board for information and further consideration if deemed appropriate.

She thanked Members for their contributions to the robust discussion on the matter.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer stated that he and the Interim Director of Finance would progress the submission of the Business Case and request discussions with DoH. He undertook to report back to Members as soon as could be facilitated.

At this point, the Meeting adjourned for a 5-minute break

Business Cases

Occupational Health Service Provision

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for Occupational Health Service Provision was noted.

The Interim Director of HR gave an overview of the purpose of the Business Case.

The Board, on the motion of Ms Smith, seconded by Mr Smyth, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for Occupational Health Service Provision.

Provision of End of Life Vehicles for Road Traffic Collision Training

Members noted the Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the Provision of End of Life Vehicles for Road Traffic Collision Training.

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

The Board, on the motion of Ms Anley, seconded by Mr O’Hanlon, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for the Provision of End of Life Vehicles for Road Traffic Collision Training.

Delivery of Estates Cleaning Services

The Executive Summary pertaining to the Business Case for the delivery of Estates Cleaning Services was noted.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Jennings gave an explanation as to the purpose of the Business Case and answered Members’ questions relating to same.

The Board, on the motion of Ms Smith, seconded by Mr O’Hanlon, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for the Delivery of Estates Cleaning Services.

Renewal of Maintenance Support for the Command & Control System (Motorola ProCAD)

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for the renewal of Maintenance Support for the Command & Control System (Motorola ProCAD) was noted.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Jennings explained the need to renew the maintenance support to cover the period April 2021 to March 2022.

The Board, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Mr O’Hanlon, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for the Renewal of Maintenance Support for the Command & Control System (Motorola ProCAD).

Road Network Routing Data – Provision and Maintenance

Members noted the Executive Summary pertaining to the Business Case for Road Network Routing Data – Provision and Maintenance.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Jennings provided an overview of the information presented and answered Members’ questions relating to same.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Ms Smith, unanimously agreed to approve the Business Case for Road Network Routing Data – Provision and Maintenance.

Item 6: Items for Information/Noting Standalone Strategic Items

Update on Independent Review into Issues around the Investigation Processes and Timescales

Members noted the Independent Review Action Plan Update as at 5 November 2020.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer provided an overview of the information presented highlighting the key achievements up to 5 November and also work ongoing. He noted that the number of recommendations had been reduced to 9 and actions to 11 and that the intent is to close off all recommendations/actions by end of March 2021.

The Chairperson referred to Mr Quinn the Board's Representative on the Independent Review Working Group.

Mr Quinn reported positively on the work of the Group and the progress achieved. He commended the Working Group for all their work and support. He assured Members that he would continue to monitor progress as it was essential to continue to provide that oversight and scrutiny going forward.

The Chairperson stated that she was content with Mr Quinn's assurances on their behalf. Members noted Mr Quinn's report.

Project Highlight Report

A Project Highlight Report providing updates on COVID-19; Area Management Structure; and EU Exit was noted.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer updated Members on the management of COVID-19. He noted the statistics relating to COVID-19 absences and outlined the key issues identified during this second wave. He provided an overview of the actions being progressed including implement NIFRS track and trace approach following sign off by PHA; accelerate return to operational training including Station based on-call training days; return to recruitment activity – including Wholetime Recruitment Exercise and roll out of 6 key messages to all staff.

During discussion, the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer answered Members' questions/ provided clarification relating to the information presented including NIFRS track and trace approach; and impact on Business Plan. Members commented positively on NIFRS management of COVID-19.

With respect to the impact on the Business Plan, the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted this would be picked up under the next Agenda item. He explained that the Quarter 3 reporting period would show the impact of COVID-19 and how NIFRS is delivering against the Business Plan.

Mr Quinn thanked the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer for his update and extended his congratulations on the management of COVID-19 noting the relatively low rates of absence within NIFRS. He acknowledged that it takes time to implement changes and welcomed the efficient and effective implementation of actions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

The Chairperson concurred with Mr Quinn's comments.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Deeney provided a high level summary of progress with respect to the Area Management Structure (AMS) Project noting the RAG status, risks, issues and key milestones for the project.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Deeney provided an explanation of the Red RAG status for the project and noting the current position with respect to resourcing for the project.

The Chairperson noted there were 6 new Members on the Board and she was conscious that they were not up to speed with regard to the Transformation Programme and projects relating to same. She suggested that new Members be given an opportunity to receive a briefing on the background to the project either through the Service Delivery Committee or a one-to-one.

The Chairperson deferred to colleagues and Mr O'Hanlon indicated that he would welcome a briefing on the project.

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

Referring to the EU Exit Project, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Deeney updated Members on the current position. He provided a synopsis of the RAG status, risks, issues and planned actions. He answered Members' questions regarding same.

Planning & Performance Management

Members noted the Annual Reporting Summary as at September 2020; the Quarter 2 Business Plan and the Quarter 2 Performance Report.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer drew attention to the Annual Reporting Summary and gave a detailed overview of the information presented. He also summarised the salient areas within the statistical information.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer answered Members' questions relating to same.

Finance Report

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

The Interim Director of Finance drew attention to the current position with respect to the 'negative' contingency included in the budget noting that detailed review had been conducted. She highlighted that overall the accounts are showing an underspend of £1.3m. She provided an explanation with respect to the underspend. The Director of Finance updated Members on costs directly attributable to COVID-19.

Referring the Capital Budget, the Interim Director of Finance noted the position as at 31 October.

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

Item 7: Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson stated she would take this Item at the end of the Meeting.

Item 8: Relevant Correspondence

There was no relevant correspondence.

Item 9: Documents for Sealing

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –
NI Water – Transfer of Land at Slieve Croob.

Item 10: Schedule of Future Meetings, etc

A Schedule of Meetings, etc, was noted.

Item 7: Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that Mrs Magee was leaving NIFRS to take up a new role. She thanked Mrs Magee on behalf of the Board, and extended her best wishes as she takes up her new post in January 2021

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer echoed the Chairperson's comments and expressed his appreciation to Mrs Magee for her commitment to NIFRS.

Mrs Magee thanked everyone and wished the Board success going forward into 2021.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 2.20 PM
