

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING

30 NOVEMBER 2021

2.00 PM

PRESENT:
(in the room) Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding
Mr P O'Reilly, Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
Ms B Anley
Mr C Enright
Mr K Henning
Mr R Irvine *(via video link)*
Mr J Quinn
Mrs H Singleton
Ms L Smith

APOLOGIES:
Mr J Craig
Mr T O'Hanlon

IN ATTENDANCE:
(in the room) 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 D O'Connor, Interim Director of Human Resources
Miss D Reynolds, Head of Planning, Performance & Governance
Miss A Maguire, Personal Assistant
Mr R Scott, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services & DoH Advisor, Observer
Mrs R Morgan, DoH Observer

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the Meeting and noted it was a good opportunity to sit down with everyone for the first time since the pandemic. She welcomed Mr R Scott, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services & DoH Adviser and Mrs R Morgan, DoH Observer, to the Meeting.

Item 1: Apologies

Apologies were noted.

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.

Mr Quinn declared a potential conflict of interest with respect to Agenda Item 3 – Public Sector Pensions Update. The Chairperson noted same and stated that if she considered it appropriate she would request Mr Quinn to leave the Meeting for this item of business.

There were no other apparent conflicts of interest declared.

Item 3: Minutes of Board Meeting – 29 September 2021

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 29 September 2021, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Ms Smith, seconded by Mr Henning.

Arising out of the Minutes:

Motor Insurance Business Case Update

Members noted a response regarding clarity around DoH’s approach to additional vehicle insurance use and around the legal advice received.

Mrs Singleton highlighted that the legal advice received by the Board on this issue appears to be inconsistent with that provided to the Department of Health and that it was, therefore, important to clarify the correct legal position.

It was agreed that the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer would seek further clarity on the legal advice received and report back to Members.

Public Sector Pensions Update

The Interim Director of Finance gave a high level overview of the key summary points relating to the McCloud Remedy – Immediate Detriment, including the challenges and NIFRS position.

At this point,
Mr Irvine joined the Meeting (2.10 pm). Connectivity issues delayed joining at 2.00 pm

The Interim Director of Finance drew Members’ attention to the legal advice sought.

The Interim Director of Finance noted that the biggest challenge to NIFRS is delegated authority and that work is ongoing with DoH with respect to where this sits.

The Interim Director of Finance highlighted that the costs of the remedy are not yet known and it is anticipated that cost recovery will be through a ‘New Burdens’ claim to HMT, applicable across the UK.

Members noted that ongoing liaison had been taking place with the local FBU representatives.

The Interim Director of Finance highlighted that the Board, as the Scheme Manager, is asked to note the current position; however the decision regarding adoption and implementation of the Framework MOU should wait until clarity is received regarding delegated authority.

Members thanked the Interim Director of Finance for the very comprehensive paper and were supportive of the recommendation in principle, they stressed however the importance of following the legal advice and seeking clarity with respect to delegated authority. Members suggested that a small Board Working Group is set-up to interface with the Interim Director of Finance, which would help protect the Board's position.

Mr Quinn noted that this was a complicated case and stated that he appreciated and understood the NI position. However, he stated that the risks and issues need to be considered and further consideration is required with respect to the legal position. He suggested that further advice is sought.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer thanked Members for their comments and advice offered. He acknowledged Mr Quinn's comments and also the position of the FBU on the matter.

The Chairperson concurred with the set-up of a small Board Working Group to work with the Interim Director of Finance, and to regularly report into the Board.

The Board, on the motion of Ms Anley, seconded by Ms McKinney, unanimously agreed to appoint Ms Smith, Mrs Singleton, Mr Quinn and Mr Irvine to the Board Working Group to work with the Interim Director of Finance with respect to implementation of Immediate Detriment.

Action to follow - it was agreed that the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer and Interim Director of Finance would activate the Working Group as soon as possible and report back to the Board.

The Board, on the motion of Ms Smith, seconded by Mrs Singleton, unanimously agreed in principle with the recommendation to adopt and implement the Framework MOU, subject to clarity around delegated authority.

Minutes of Closed Board Meeting – 29 September 2021

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 29 September 2021, in closed session, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Ms McKinney.

Minutes of Closed Special Board Meeting – 26 October 2021

The Minutes of the Special Board Meeting held on 26 October 2021, in closed session, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to minor amendment, on the motion of Ms Smith, seconded by Mrs Singleton.

Arising out of the Minutes:

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer provided Members with an update with respect to Transformation, new Executive Leadership Team structure, review of Corporate and organisational capability, coterminosity, review of how to support new District Structures and implementation of new functional & support structures.

The Chairperson highlighted that the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer recently met with the Permanent Secretary and that she and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer would be meeting with the Minister on 1 December. She advised that they would report back promptly to the Board on the outcome of the meeting.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer then provided Members with a high level update of his meeting with the Permanent Secretary.

With respect to a Transformation Programme Board, the Chairperson noted that the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer wished to now take this forward. She asked for Members to be updated by the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer at the next meeting. The Chairperson advised that she would then in due course select the Board Member(s) to that forum.

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

Service Delivery Committee - Meeting – 11 November 2021

It was noted that a Meeting of the Service Delivery Committee had been held on 11 November 2021 and the Minutes of the Meeting will be presented at the next Meeting of the Board. There were no recommendations emanating from the Meeting.

Mr Irvine, Committee Chair, gave an overview of the business discussed at the Meeting.

Remuneration Committee - Meeting – 11 November 2021

It was noted that a Meeting of the Remuneration Committee had been held on 11 November 2021 and the Minutes of the Meeting will be presented to a future Meeting of the Board.

Ms Smith, Remuneration Committee Member, noted the recommendations emanating from the Meeting.

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

Remuneration Committee – Recommendations

- **Approval of the Pay Remits for Operational Directors; Wholetime Personnel; On-Call Personnel; and RCC Personnel, for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 and submission of the documentation to DoH; and**

- **Approval of Weekly to Monthly Payroll – Transitional Support proposal and submission of the documentation to DoH.**

People & Culture Committee - Meeting – 11 November 2021

It was noted that a Meeting of the People & Culture Committee had been held on 11 November 2021 and the Minutes of the Meeting will be presented at the next Meeting of the Board. There were no recommendations emanating from the Meeting.

Ms Smith, elected Committee Chair for that meeting, gave an overview of the business discussed at the Meeting.

Change in the Order of Business

Members agreed to take Item 5 – Items for Information/Noting - Reports from Committees, including noting of Committee Minutes and adoption of Recommendations – as the next item of Business.

Item 5: Items for Information/Noting

Reports from Committees, including noting of Committee Minutes and adoption of Recommendations –

People & Culture Committee - Minutes - 1 July 2021

The Minutes of the Meeting of the People & Culture Committee held on 1 July 2021 were noted. There were no recommendations emanating from the Meeting.

Service & Delivery Committee - Minutes - 1 July 2021

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Service Delivery Committee held on 1 July 2021 were noted. The recommendation contained therein was adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 9 July 2021.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee - Minutes - 2 July 2021

The Minutes of the Meeting of Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 2 July 2021 were noted. The recommendations contained therein were adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 9 July 2021.

Service & Delivery Committee - Minutes – 16 September 2021

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Service Delivery Committee held on 16 September 2021 were noted. The recommendation contained therein was adopted by the Board at its Meeting on 29 September 2021.

Item 4: Standalone Strategic Items

Business Cases - Business Case for Waste Management Services

Members noted the Executive Summary pertaining to the Business Case for Waste Management Services.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Jennings outlined the purpose of the project. He answered Members' questions relating to same.

Business Case for Appliance Room Doors

Members noted the Executive Summary pertaining to the Business Case for Appliance Room Doors.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Jennings outlined the purpose of the project. He answered Members' questions relating to same.

Business Case for ProCAD Support and Maintenance 22/23

Members noted the Executive Summary pertaining to the Business Case for ProCAD Support and Maintenance 22/23.

Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer Jennings outlined the purpose of the project. He answered Members' questions relating to same.

Business Case for WAN Network

Members noted the Executive Summary pertaining to the Business Case for WAN Network.

The Interim Director of Finance outlined the purpose of the project. She answered Members' questions relating to same.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Ms Smith, unanimously approved Business Case for Waste Management Services; Business Case for Appliance Room Doors; Business Case for Pro-CAD Support and Maintenance 22/23; and Business Case for WAN Network.

Item 5: Standalone Strategic Items

Finance Report

The Finance Report updating Members on the financial position for the period ended 31 October 2021 was noted.

The Interim Director of Finance noted that NIFRS is currently projecting a year end pressure of £1.5m. In addition to recruitment costs, the pressure largely relates to rising energy costs and demand led ill health retirement costs.

The Interim Director of Finance highlighted that NIFRS had submitted bids amounting to £2.2m to the January monitoring round and gave an overview of the bid submissions. Members noted that the outcome of the January monitoring round will not be known until the end of January 2022.

Action to follow – Members to be apprised of the outcome of that bid by the Interim Director of Finance at its February Meeting.

The Interim Director of Finance and Chief Fire & Rescue Officer answered Members' queries on the information presented within the report including budgetary projection and forecasting.

The Chairperson stated that the case of additional funding would be discussed with the Minister at the meeting on 1 December, and that she and the Chief Fire & Rescue Officer would report back to the Board on the outcome.

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

Members noted the Independent Review Action Plan Update as at 17 November 2021.

The Interim Director of HR provided a high level update on progress against actions. She answered Members' queries on the information presented.

Mr Quinn, Board Member on the Working Group, noted that good progress has been made with respect to the actions.

Performance Management

Members noted the Performance Management Updates for the period up to 30 September 2021 including the Performance Reports from each of the Standing Committees.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance answered Members' queries on the information presented.

Mr Quinn referred to SPI 12 – increased percentage of females in the Operational Workforce – and asked how NIFRS is actively considering ways to encourage females to apply. The Chairperson noted there is an enormous amount of work underway. She stated that priority area merited a session at the Board Planning Day on 22 February 2022 if that might be possible. The work of the Equality Sub-Committee should also be brought to that session for Members' information as it would also be of interest to Members.

The Interim Director of HR gave as an example a summary of the outreach measures to attract females into the organisation. She agreed with the Chairperson that a session with the full Board would be valuable in highlighting the work being done.

Action to follow - Interim Director of HR to liaise with the Chairperson to arrange a suitable date for this session in Spring 2022.

Item 6: Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson reiterated that it was a good opportunity to be meeting in person for the first time since the pandemic and especially meeting the new Board Members in person.

The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted the support he has received from Members since his appointment. He thanked Members, HMI Scott and Mrs Morgan, DoH, for their support also.

Item 7: Relevant Correspondence

There was no relevant correspondence.

Item 8: Documents for Sealing

There were no documents for sealing.

Item 9: Schedule of Future Meetings, etc

A Schedule of Meetings, etc, was noted.

It was noted that a Special Board Meeting would be held on 6 December.

Members noted that a menu of optional training would be issued to consider their training needs. The Chairperson asked Members to return same as soon as possible.

The Chairperson thanked all for their attendance and contribution to the Meeting. She hoped everyone enjoyed the bespoke lunch she had hosted to mark the return to 'in the room' meetings.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING ENDED
AT 4.45 PM
