

NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

MINUTES OF A MEETING (HYBRID MEETING)

30 AUGUST 2022

3.30 PM

PRESENT: Ms C McKinney, Chairperson presiding
Mr A Hearn, Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
Ms B Anley (*via video link*)
Mr J Craig
Mr K Henning
Mr R Irvine
Mr J Quinn
Mrs H Singleton (*via video link*)
Ms L Smith (*via video link*)

APOLOGY: Mr C Enright
Mr T O'Hanlon

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Harper, Deputy Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
Mr A Jennings, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
(Operations Delivery)
Mr D Rooney, T/Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer
Mrs P White, Director of Corporate Services
Mrs T Ramsay, Director of People & Culture
Miss D Reynolds, Head of Planning, Performance &
Governance
Ms I Hill, Governance & Business Support Services Advisor
Mrs L'V Montgomery, DoH Observer
Mr R Scott, HM Inspector of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
Mr A Hay, HMI Team
Mr J MacDonald, HMI Team
Ms M Dawshuis, HMI Team
Ms A Johnson, HMI Team

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Scott and his Team and Mrs Montgomery to the Meeting. She invited Mr Scott to introduce the new members of his Team, Ms Dawshuis and Mrs Johnson, to the Meeting.

The Chairperson referred to the level of Minutes contained within the Agenda Pack and proposed that the Adoption/Approval of Committee Minutes and adoption of Recommendations; and Noting of Committee Minutes, be taken in a bundle. Members agreed to the proposal.

Item 1: Apologies

Apologies from Members 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.

There were no other apparent conflicts of interest declared.

Item 3: Minutes of Special Board Meeting – 26 April 2022

The Minutes of the Special Board Meeting held on 26 April 2022, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a true record, subject to amendment, on the motion of Ms Smith, seconded by Mrs Singleton.

Change in the Order of Business

Item 4 & 5: Items for Information/Noting Reports from Board Committees, including noting of Committee Minutes and adoption of Recommendations

People & Culture Committee - Minutes - 24 March 2022

The Minutes of the People & Culture Committee Meeting held on 24 March 2022 were noted.

Mr Henning, Chairperson of the People & Culture Committee, provided an overview of the business discussed at the Meeting.

The Board, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Ms Anley, adopted the following recommendation.

People & Culture Committee – Recommendation

- **The Committee unanimously agreed that cultural issues within the Organisation need to be examined by the Board. A recommendation would be presented to the Board to take forward an action to seek advice, either external or in-house, with respect to this matter.**

Action – Update with associated timescales to come back to the full Board in November.

People & Culture Committee - Meeting – 18 May 2022

It was noted that a Meeting of the People & Culture Committee Meeting had been held on 18 May 2022 and the Minutes of the Meeting will be presented for noting at the next Meeting of the Board.

Mr Henning outlined the key business discussed at the Meeting.

Mr Henning proposed that the Committee’s recommendation, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. Ms Smith seconded the proposal.

People & Culture Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of a Coach Approach Framework for delivering Values Based Transformation.**

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee - Minutes – 22 March 2022

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 22 March 2022 were noted.

Mrs Singleton, Audit, Risk & Governance Committee Member, noted the recommendations emanating from the Minutes.

The Board, on the motion of Ms Smith, seconded by Mr Quinn, unanimously agreed to adopt that the Committee’s recommendation as detailed below.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of the 2021/22 Audit Plan Progress Report, incorporating the Audit of Fuel Management and Audit of Pensions.**

Arising out of the Minutes:

Referring to the Audit of Pensions, Mrs Singleton explained that limited assurance had been provided in respect of NIFRS Pension governance arrangements one of the reasons being that the Pension Board had not met since March 2019. She sought an update on progress in relation to the appointment of an independent Pension Board Chair.

The Director of Corporate Services informed the Meeting that NIFRS had successfully appointed an independent Chair with the start date to be confirmed. She explained that once confirmed training for the successful candidate will be organised.

Action – Board to be advised on the successful candidate at its next Meeting.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee - Minutes – 19 May 2022

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee held on 19 May 2022 were noted.

Mrs Singleton presented the recommendations contained within the Minutes.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Ms Smith, unanimously agreed to adopt that the Committee’s recommendations as detailed below.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Recommendations

- **Approval of the 2021/22 Audit Plan Progress Report, incorporating –**
 - **Asset Management;**
 - **Governance Audit Update; and**
 - **Assurance Mapping Exercise;**

- **Approval of the Year-End Follow-Up Report 2021/22;**
- **Approval of the Internal Audit Strategy including Audit Plan 2022/23;**
- **Approval of the NAO Audit Committee Self-Assessment 2021/22.**

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee - Meeting – 28 June 2022

It was noted that a Meeting of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee had been held on 28 June 2022 and the Minutes will be presented to the next Meeting of the Board.

Mrs Singleton noted the business discussed at the Meeting and presented the recommendation emanating from same.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mr Irvine, agreed to adopt the Committee’s recommendation as detailed below.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of the updated Information Management Action Plan 2022/23.**

Remuneration Committee - Meeting – 26 April 2022

It was noted that a Meeting of the Remuneration Committee had been held on 26 April 2022 and the Minutes will be presented to the next Meeting of the Board.

The Chairperson proposed that the Committee’s recommendation, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. Mr Henning seconded the proposal.

Remuneration Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of the Pay Remits for Support Directors and all other Support Staff for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and submission of the documentation to DoH.**

Remuneration Committee - Meeting – 30 August 2022

It was noted that a Meeting of the Remuneration Committee had been held immediately prior to the Board Meeting. The Minutes will be presented to the next Meeting of the Board.

Mr Henning, Remuneration Committee Member, gave a brief overview of the business discussed at the Meeting.

Mr Henning proposed that the Committee’s recommendations, as detailed below, be adopted by the Board. Ms McKinney seconded the proposal.

Remuneration Committee – Recommendation

- **Approval of the amended Development to Competent Policy; and**
- **Approval the Business Case covering Development to Competent – Application of Legal Agreement & Policy.**

Service Delivery Committee - Minutes – 13 January 2022

The Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 13 January 2022 were noted.

People & Culture Committee - Minutes – 13 January 2022

The Minutes of the People & Culture Committee Meeting held on 13 January 2022 were noted.

Audit, Risk & Governance Committee - Minutes – 27 January 2022

The Minutes of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee Meeting held on 27 January 2022 were noted.

Service Delivery Committee - Minutes – 24 March 2022

It was noted that the Minutes of the Service Delivery Committee Meeting held on 24 March 2022 are to be amended and will be presented to the next Meeting of the Board.

Special Service Delivery Committee - Minutes – 14 April 2022

Members noted that the Minutes of the Special Service Delivery Committee held on 14 April will be presented to the next Meeting of the Board.

Remuneration Committee - Minutes – 11 November 2021

The Minutes of the Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 11 November 2021 were noted.

Item 3: Minutes of Special Board Meeting – 5 July 2022

Members were informed that the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting, held on 5 July 2022, will be presented to a future Board Meeting for approval.

Arising out of the Minutes:

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2021/22

The Director of Corporate Services explained that with the appointment of the new Comptroller & Auditor General there has been a delay in the laying of NIFRS Annual Report & Accounts 2021/22. She updated Members on the current position advising that she anticipated sign-off imminently. She noted that DoH is aware of the delay in the laying of the Annual Report & Statement of Accounts.

Action – Director of Corporate Services to keep the Board updated on progress.

Item 4: Items for Adoption/Approval Standalone Strategic Items

Draft Strategic and Directorate Business Plans 2022/23

Members noted the draft Strategic and Directorate Business Plans 2022/23.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance explained that the Plans had been developed in line with DoH guidance and will support development of a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). She further explained that, following Board and DoH approval and public consultation, this Strategic Plan will provide the medium to long-term direction of travel for NIFRS.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance outlined the background to the development of the Strategic Plan noting that the direction of travel had been agreed by the Board on 26 November 2021. She noted changes to the Strategic Performance Indicators and provided a detailed overview of the Strategic Outcomes and the key tasks.

Mr Irvine referred to the issues with resourcing and timing for the original IRMP and sought clarification as to whether there was any difference with the CRMP. The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance noted the current position and impact of new software which was due to be implemented. She outlined the timescales for progressing the Plan explaining that the base case would be ready at the end of the week which would allow initial stakeholder engagement, with public consultation anticipated in Quarter 4.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance suggested that an update on the software, ie, its purpose, etc, be presented to the Away Day on 1 November.

Action – To be facilitated on that day by Head of Planning, Performance & Governance.

During discussion regarding the development of NIFRS CRMP, Members sought clarification regarding the transition to post inspection period and the potential impact on the draft Plan. Members noted that it had been recognised where projects will exceed one year. Members commented on the level of tasks within the Plan and suggested the need to look at the narrative and the weighting of the tasks.

Action – ELT to revisit and present back to the Board in due course.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer explained how the CRMP will be developed over the next number of months. Members suggested that this be referenced within the Plan. He acknowledged the level of tasks within the Plan and explained that some of the tasks were already work in progress. He noted the need to establish priorities for a 3-5 year Plan. He suggested that the Executive Leadership Team consider the weighting for the tasks and bring same to the Board Away Day.

Action – ELT to present at Away Day.

Following further discussion regarding the CRMP, the Chairperson suggested that the Executive Leadership Team give a presentation on the timeline for its development to the Board on 1 November.

The Board, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Mr Irvine, unanimously approved the draft Strategic and Directorate Business Plans 2022/23 subject to amendments/Members' comments.

Finance Breakeven Plan

Members noted the Finance Breakeven Plan and also noted that Members' comments were considered and some minor amendments made the Plan.

The Director of Corporate Services explained that, as agreed at the last Board Meeting, the amended Plan had been circulated in accordance with Standing Order 2.6 for consideration and approval of Members. She noted that Members had approved the Plan for submission to DoH.

The Director of Corporate Services provided a synopsis of the changes to the Plan and answered Members' questions relating to same.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Henning, seconded by Mrs Singleton, formally adopted the recommendation under Standing Order 2.6

IDRP (Internal Dispute and Resolution Procedure)

The Director of Corporate Services stated that at the end of the Board Workshop on 24 May, she had explained a change in the legislation regarding IDRPs wherey DoH will no longer represent as the Appeal Panel and that both stages are now the responsibility of NIFRS.

The Director of Corporate Services noted that Members had agreed that the first stage Panel would now be 2 senior members of NIFRS staff and the Board would act as the second Panel to hear any appeal cases.

The Board, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Mr Irvine, formally adopted this change to NIFRS IDRP.

Business Cases

Refurbishment & Extension of Antrim Fire Station

Members noted the Business Case for the refurbishment and extension of Antrim Fire Station.

The Director of Corporate Services provided a synopsis of the key points within the Business Case drawing attention to the Assessment of Need highlighting that the facilities at Antrim Fire Station are no longer fit for purpose. She noted that Option 4 is the preferred option.

During discussion, Members raised concern regarding the risk analysis for the Station given the absence of a current IRMP and sought assurances with regard to the data presented given that NIFRS' CRMP is under development. Members also sought clarification as to what the organisation was considering with regard to its CRMP, the timescales and the business going forward. Mr Irvine suggested the need for a moratorium on such projects and to focus efforts to developing NIFRS' CRMP which would provide the strategic plan for going forward.

During further discussion, Members agreed with the need for caution in progressing the Business Case and stressed the need for robust evidence to support same.

The Officers noted the position with regard to the implementation of new risk modelling software explaining that this may provide assurance around the need for the Station. They also stressed that the Station was not currently fit for purpose highlighting in particular the need to address welfare issues.

Mr Irvine reiterated that the over-arching issue was the lack of a CRMP and stressed the need for the Board to be aware of what the assumptions for the project were and how they were arrived at.

The Chairperson noted Members' comments and noted the current position with respect to NIFRS' Estate Strategy; the implementation of risk modelling software; the potential impact of deferring capital projects on the Capital Budget; and the increasing costs of the project.

The Chairperson proposed that the Executive Leadership Team consider what information can be collated and presented to the Board at its Meeting on 27 September in liaison with the Head of Facilities & Assets and to ensure alignment with NIFRS Estate Strategy. Members agreed to this.

Addendum to Business Case for Welfare Upgrade Programme

The Executive Summary relating to the Addendum to Welfare Upgrade Programme Business Case was noted.

The Director of Corporate Services noted the purpose of the Addendum.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Ms McKinney, unanimously approved the Addendum to the Business Case for Welfare Upgrade Programme.

Business Case for Laundry Services

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

The Director of Corporate Services provided a brief overview of the purpose of the Contract.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Craig, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously approved the Business Case for Laundry Services.

Business Case for Counselling Services

The Executive Summary relating to the Business Case for Counselling Services was noted.

The Director of People & Culture provided an explanation as to the purpose of the Business Case noting NIFRS' commitment to provide support for its managers and staff.

During discussion, the Officers answered Members' questions/provided clarification

The Board, on the motion of Ms Smith, seconded by Ms McKinney, unanimously approved the Business Case for Counselling Services.

Project Bank Account – LDC Cookstown

Members noted a Briefing Paper relating to the opening of a Project Bank Account for LDC Cookstown.

The Director of Corporate Services provided an overview of the information presented.

The Board, on the motion of Mr Irvine, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously approved the opening of a Project Bank Account for all banking transactions relating to the Learning & Development Centre, Cookstown. The Board also authorised Miss Siobhán Steele (Financial Accountant) to act on behalf of NIFRS as the main administrator/personal officer of this account.

CHANGE IN THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

Item 6: Chairperson's Business

Report back from Meeting with Minister Swann

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer updated Members on the business discussed at last week's meeting with Minister Swann attended by himself and the Chairperson, which included HMI inspection progress; EMR proposals at Carnlough; confirmation of funding for recruitment and media elements around this.

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer noted that Minister Swann had agreed to officially open Larne Fire Station on 5 October 2022.

The Chairperson advised Members that following discussions with DoH, it was hoped that the Minister will join the Board and the Executive Leadership Team at the Away Day diary permitting.

Freedom of the City of Belfast

The Chairperson noted that Belfast City Council had agreed to award the Freedom of the City of Belfast "to healthcare workers and all those working tirelessly on the frontline to care for vulnerable citizens during the COVID pandemic". She informed the Meeting that the Council had hosted a concert at the Belfast Waterfront Hall on 25 August 2022 and that NIFRS had received a formal invite.

The Chairperson also informed Members that the Deputy Chief Fire & Rescue Officer had represented NIFRS at this excellent event which also recognised the role of the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.

The Deputy Chief Fire & Rescue Officer explained that 50 tickets to event had been allocated across the organisation and reported positively on the event.

Organisational Development Award

The Chairperson advised the Meeting that NIFRS had been nominated for Awards at the CIPD Awards.

The Director of People & Culture explained that a member of NIFS' Organisational Development team had been nominated for the Rising Star Award and that NIFRS had also been nominated for an award with respect to its Ambit Survey.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, wished everyone success at the awards.

Report back on Visit to Enniskillen

The Interim Chief Fire & Rescue Officer reported positively on Minister Swann's visit to Enniskillen Fire Station.

NIFRS Board

The Chairperson updated the Meeting on the current position with respect the appointment of new Members to the NIFRS Board.

Board Effectiveness Working Group

In response to a request from the Chairperson, the Head of Planning, Performance & Governance explained that the Group would meet in Quarter 3 post HMI inspection.

Item 5: Items for Information/Noting Strategic Standalone Items

Finance Report

The Finance Report updating Members on the financial position for the period ended 31 July 2022 was noted.

The Director of Corporate Services provided a synopsis of the salient points within the information presented noting the July Revenue position was showing a year-to-date underspend of £688k. She provided an explanation of same. The Director of Corporate Services highlighted that the Minister had approved funding of £2.7m specifically for recruitment and overtime pressures.

With respect to Capital performance, the Director of Corporate Services updated Members on the Capital spend at 31 July 2022.

The Director of Corporate Services answered Members' questions on the information presented.

Members noted the position with respect to Prompt Payment Performance and Business Case approvals.

At this point
Mrs Singleton left the Meeting (5.30 pm)

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

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

Members noted an Independent Review Action Plan Update as at 2 May 2022.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance provided a high level update on progress against actions.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance highlighted the significant work progressed by the Working Group and noted the support of Mr Quinn as the Board's representative on same. She recommended that the Working Group now be disengaged and this item of business move to Business Assurance.

The Chairperson noted that only 2 recommendations were outstanding and acknowledged the excellent work progressed and paid tribute to the Head of Planning, Performance & Governance and the Working Group and also to Mr Quinn for all their work.

The Board, on the motion of Ms McKinney, seconded by Mr Henning, unanimously agreed Working Group now be disengaged and this item of business move to Business Assurance.

Annual Report – Audit, Risk & Governance Committee

The 2021/22 Annual Report of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee was noted.

The Head of Planning, Performance & Governance gave a brief overview of the information presented.

Performance Management

Members noted the Annual Business Plan Progress Updates and Performance Updates.

The Chairperson proposed that discussion regarding these reports be deferred to the next Meeting of the Board. Members agreed to this.

Item 7: Relevant Correspondence

There was no relevant correspondence.

Item 8: Documents for Sealing

Members noted the undernoted documents for sealing:

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service with –

- Bell Contracts Company Limited – NIFRS Headquarters Roof Replacement;
- Seaview Developments Limited – Deed of Variation - Larne Fire Station Refurbishment.

Item 9: Schedule of Future Meetings, etc

A Schedule of Meetings, etc, was noted.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Official Opening of Larne Fire Station would be held on 5 October 2022.

The Chairperson noted that Ken Henning's tenure with Board ended on 30 September. She explained that this was Ken's last Board Meeting and paid tribute for all his work and his commitment during his tenure. She also expressed appreciation for the support he provided not only to her personally but also to NIFRS. The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, extended best wishes to Ken.

Mr Henning thanked the Chairperson and the Board for their good wishes and their support, and wished them well for the future.

The Chairperson thanked Members for their attendance at the Meeting.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
AND THE MEETING TERMINATED
AT 5.50 PM
