

## NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

<p><b>Minutes of a Meeting of the Trust Board held at 1.30pm on Thursday, 1 December 2005 in the Boardroom, Headquarters, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8SG</b></p>
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<b>Present:</b>	Mr D Smyth OBE	Chairman
	Mr L McIvor	Chief Executive
	Dr D McManus	Medical Director
	Mr B McNeill	Director of Operations
	Ms R O'Hara	Director of Human Resources
	Mrs S McCue	Director of Finance
	Mr F Hughes	Non Executive Director
	Mrs L Gillespie	Non Executive Director
	Prof R Perrott	Non Executive Director
	Mr S Mullan	Non Executive Director

<b>In Attendance:</b>	Miss A Vitty	Corporate Manager
	Mrs M Crawford	Personal Assistant

### **1.0 Apologies**

Apologies were received from:

Mrs M Greer, Non Executive Director

### **2.0 Welcome and Format of the Meeting**

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming members of the public. The Chairman also advised and congratulated Mr Frank Hughes on his re-appointment to the Board for a further 4 years as from 1 December 2005.

### **3.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting of the Trust Board held on 29 September 2005**

The minutes were accepted by Trust Board members as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

### **4.0 Matters Arising**

#### **4.1 Long Service Medal Ceremony (03/10/05)**

The Chief Executive advised members that the Long Service Medal Ceremony had went very well and thanked all those involved for making the day run so well.

The Chairman also extended his thanks to those who organised the event and congratulated the recipients involved for their long service to the Trust.

## **5.0 Chairman's Business**

### **5.1 Review of Public Administration**

The Chief Executive advised members that the Minister had announced the proposals for the Review of the Public Administration on 22 November 2005 and that he was happy to advise that the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) would remain as a distinct Trust directly reporting to the Regional Health Authority.

He further advised that this view broadly reflected the position that Trust Board had previously put forward during the consultation process.

Members congratulated the Management team and those involved on this outcome and duly noted.

### **5.2 Trust Delivery Plan 2005-2007**

The Chief Executive advised members that NIAS had received approval in mid-November 2005 to progress the Trust Delivery Plan which sets out the programme of action of the year. The Trust had already made progress on issues that did not require additional funding and are continuing to work through remaining issues.

The Chief Executive will report to Trust Board on Trust Delivery Plan monitoring for the period 01/04/2005 to 31/12/2005 at the next meeting of the Board.

## **6.0 Financial Position of the Trust as at October 2005**

The Chairman reminded members of the requirement to breakeven at the end of each financial year. However, although a break even situation was reported at the last board a reduced allocation of funding from the Department notified in November 2005 could now result in a potential deficit of up to £1.1m. The Chairman advised that the matter had been discussed at length "In-Committee" and that Trust Board had asked the Chief Executive to engage with the Department and the Boards as a matter of urgency to try to resolve the position. Members were to be kept informed of developments on a regular basis.

The Director of Finance directed members' attention to the Finance report and advised that the format used was familiar to the Board.

Members were advised, as previously indicated, that the Trust is currently forecasting a deficit of £1.1m by the financial year end. Contingency plans are being developed with Commissioners and DHSSPS to aim to achieve breakeven at the end of this financial year.

An increase of 6.4% in mileage was noted on the same period last year.

Total hours lost through sickness absence represents 8.16% compared to 7.57% for October 2004. The increase was noted. Members were advised of the policies in place to deal with sickness absence and attendance management meetings are also taking place on a regular basis.

This area continues to be closely monitored and is a key focus for all operational Managers.

Fees for legal claims stand at £183,625 for the seven months to 31 October 2005. These costs continue to be monitored and managed in an effort to contain costs.

Mr Seamus Mullan expressed his concerns regarding both the funding issue and sickness absence. Mrs Linda Gillespie further endorsed this view stating that members found these financial pressures very worrying and commented that it was a very regrettable position for the Trust to be in. These views were endorsed by all present.

The Chairman advised that he was very proud of the financial record of the Trust and that this current position in no way been down to managerial or financial mismanagement. He further advised the Department and Boards had been forcibly apprised of the consequences of the predicted reduced allocation and that Trust Board members would be monitoring the situation closely.

## **7.0 Operations Report as at November 2005**

The Director of Operations directed members' attention to the Operations Report and advised that the report identified trends for Northern Ireland as a whole and highlights significant trends for each Division. Members were advised that the number of 999 calls has risen by 4.5% from the last quarter and that in Quarter 2 we had dealt with an additional 1,131 emergency calls. A total of 26,379 calls were dealt with from July to September 2005. For Northern Ireland as a whole, Cat A calls have improved from Quarter 1 at 52.7% to 54.2% in Quarter 2.

Members were directed to Chart 1 in the report and were advised as follows regarding the overall performance in Northern Ireland and where we sit at 31 October 2005. The percentage of Cat A calls responded to within 8 minutes - 53.2%; with Cat B & C Calls within 18/21 minutes - 91.3%. The total number of 999 calls being categorised as life threatening Cat A fell from 63.6% in April 2005 to 35.2% in October 2005. This is a positive trend.

Even though there has been an increase in 999 calls, there has been a decrease in the number of Cat A calls for this Quarter (by 2692) but this improved prioritisation, along with the increase in activity, has resulted in a shift with a 34% increase in Cat B and 41% increase in Cat C.

With the new Regional Control Centre now open, we expect to see further reductions in the percentage of Cat A calls, as staff move to the new Centre, become more familiar with the technology and we then develop improved protocols and procedures for call take and dispatch which will be common to all Divisions.

Mrs Linda Gillepsie commented that she had some difficulty reading the black and white charts and was advised that these would be provided in colour for members only for future meetings.

Members' attentions were drawn to Chart 2 and the Director of Operations continued to advise members on the Divisional trends for Cat A calls. East Division is still the best performer at 62.4% with East City being the main contributor at 63.6% compared with East Country at 56.6%. The percentage of calls classified as Cat A – 35.9%.

Northern Division has shown a fall in Cat A performance due mainly to a 6.5% in activity from the last Quarter which equates to 336 calls.

Southern Division has climbed out of the performance dip experienced in August 2005 improving by 8% in September 2005 but falling back to 3.5% to 40.4% at October 2005. The Director of Operations highlighted that this can be explained by an additional 834 calls being activated over the Quarter and that an additional deployment point at Lurgan is needed to improve performance in this Division and that the Trust is presently working with the Commissioners regarding this issue.

Western Division is maintaining a consistent performance up to September 2005. It then dropped to 4% as we experienced an increase in the number of longer distance transfers and 999 activities. Northland Road continues to make a contribution to response in the West of the city with 54.8% Cat A calls were reached within 8 minutes.

It was noted that there had been a fall in overall performance in relation to Cat B & C calls within 18/21 minutes from the last Quarter. Cat B & C performance has suffered as a result of the increase in activity (34% for Cat B and 41% for Cat C) from 93.2% at the 18/21 target in Quarter 1 to 92.2% in Quarter 2. This downward trend continued into October 2005 with 91.3%.

Non-urgent activity for Quarter 2 was reported at 56,387 which was a similar level of activity as for Quarter 1.

Calls are being triaged better as the staff are becoming more proficient in the use of the system.

There is still a lot of uncertainty in relation to control reconfiguration which is having an impact on morale, attendance and performance. We expect this to carry over to the new year.

Mrs Linda Gillespie expressed her concerns regarding the issue of funding for Control Re-configuration and that it would be regrettable if this could not occur due to the funding issue. The Chairman advised that this was one of the main planks of NIAS development and a priority for early commissioning in full.

Mr Seamus Mullan enquired on the impact in the Western area in respect of longer transfers. The Chief Executive advised that the Commissioners have been made aware of this and the impact on service provision.

Members continued to be advised by the Director of Operations on the following issues:

### **Emergency Planning**

During September POD cover continued and a training exercise was held in Londonderry. Two Airport alerts were also attended and adequately dealt with.

There were a number of civil unrest events which made excessive demands on the service and two stations were closed for periods during the civil unrest. The Director of Operations highlighted that this had been very well handled by Mr Billy Newton, Emergency Planning Officer.

During October an incident at the Royal Victoria Hospital was also noted along with an incident at Portadown at a private airfield involving a light aircraft which raised issues of categorisation of this type of call. Mr Frank Hughes enquired if an off-roader or A&E vehicle had attended this call. The Director of Operations is to advise Mr Hughes further.

Contingency Plans in Northern Division were tested on 18 October 2005, when North Control suffered an electricity supply failure and a back-up generator failed to start when the power was returned. The radio system suffered a power surge and blew one of the screens. A mobile control vehicle from Broadway was dispatched, however, by the time of its arrival, the situation had been resolved.

Mrs Linda Gillespie enquired regarding the arrangements for the funeral of George Best at Stormont and of NIAS involvement. The Director of Operations advised that St John's Ambulance would attend the event with the back-up support of NIAS. In principle, this event would be managed similar to those arrangements put in place during the 12 July period.

### **Control Issues**

The Regional Emergency Medical Dispatch Centre was opened on 23 November 2005.

The new Centre, with the latest technology represents many years of work and sincere congratulations were offered to Mr Gabe McClean, Assistant Director of Operations and his team and Mr Paddy Dornan, IT Manager and his team for all their efforts, especially during the pressure of the last few weeks and technical hitches that occurred. The emergency call takers and dispatchers from Eastern Control are the first to move into the new facility and a migration plan for the other Divisions would be followed.

A key part of this modernisation is the use of new technology through the Integrated Command and Control Systems (ICCS) which will enable more effective and efficient management.

Professor Perrott commented how good it was to see this happening.

### **Fleet Issues**

The Trust has an ongoing issue of vehicles going out of standard. Major mileage profile for A&E vehicles indicated an establishment of 140. It was noted however, that due to chassis problems on older vehicles, 8 vehicles had to be taken off the road for disposal. Members were further advised that another 9 vehicles were due to inspected, but it was anticipated that it may be 4/5 vehicles that have to be taken off the road.

In essence, the Trust has a smaller, ageing fleet which is working harder. The Interim Business Case was resubmitted on 9 November 2005. Mrs Linda Gillespie enquired if the Trust had any feedback regarding this issue. The Chief Executive advised that the Trust have had formal confirmation from a number of Health Boards supporting the Business Case but to date, no feedback from the Department.

This issue has been identified as a priority to the Department and Board Chief Executives and NIAS have indicated the need for a safe and reliable fleet. Mrs Linda Gillespie enquired as to why the Business Case had needed resubmitted and the Director of Finance advised a number of queries had been raised by the Department to which the Trust needed to respond.

The Chairman enquired as to the "lead-in" time for a vehicle, if approval was granted. The Director of Operations commented that it depended on the time of year but on average, 6-8 months.

### **Estate Issues**

All major works are completed at Regional Emergency and Non-Emergency Dispatch Centres.

The Training Room at Altnagelvin is being restored to its previous use. Electrical supply issues at the Emergency Control Centre remains unsolved with new phase 3 power and new PCS being installed.

Ballymacarret Ambulance Station became operational on 7 October 2005 and is working well, with staff pleased with the facility. Mr Frank Hughes enquired how many vehicles were operating out of the station and was updated on service provision.

Members were pleased to note this information, as they had knowledge of the difficulties at the Templemore Site and are looking forward to a Trust Board visit in the near future.

Planning work for Ballynahinch Ambulance Station is going ahead with outline planning permission being applied for and Valuation and Lands Agency negotiating with the developer.

Main structural work renovations are complete at Northland Road, however, some difficulties with contractors were noted and a meeting had taken place last week. It is anticipated it will become available very shortly.

Discussions are ongoing regarding Carrickfergus Ambulance Station, with the site being seen as adequate but not ideal as a problem with access/egress exists. The Trust is currently working with the new owner. The Trust has renewed the lease but is looking at other options. Presently moved to other location on the same site. Carrickfergus Borough Council has been contacted and representations made regarding identification of other vacant/suitable sites.

Kilkeel Business Case was resubmitted on 13 October 2005 and queries from the Department have been responded to. The Trust is currently awaiting formal response from the Department.

NIAS still awaits material and costing analysis from Health Estates before the Trust's Estate Strategy can be submitted.

## **8.0 Summary of Complaints/Compliments (Period 01/09/2005 to 31/10/2005)**

The Director of Human Resources advised that there are 26 ongoing complaints and 13 compliments received, samples of which are contained within the report. Members were advised that response times continue to be monitored closely.

Members duly noted.

## **9.0 Application of Trust Seal**

No application of the Trust Seal was reported.

## **10.0 Forum for Questions**

No questions were received from the floor.

**11.0 Any Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

**12.0 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Trust Board is to be held on 2 February 2006 (venue to be decided).

The Chairman thanked members of the Trust Board and members of the public for their attendance and called proceedings to a close.

Signed:   
(Chairman)

Date: 29/01/2006