

NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Trust Board held at 1.30pm on Thursday, 30 June 2005 in the in the Palace Function Room, Royal Hotel, 64-72 Coagh Street, Cookstown, Co Tyrone, BT80 8NG

Present:	Mr D Smyth OBE	Chairman
	Mr L McIvor	Chief Executive
	Ms R O'Hara	Director of Human Resources
	Mrs S McCue	Director of Finance
	Dr D McManus	Medical Director
	Mr F Hughes	Non Executive Director
	Mrs L Gillespie	Non Executive Director
	Prof R Perrott	Non Executive Director
	Mrs M Greer	Non Executive Director
	Mr S Mullan	Non Executive Director
In Attendance:	Miss A Vitty	Corporate Manager
	Mrs M Crawford	Personal Assistant

1.0 Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Mr B McNeill, Director of Operations.

Mr Brian McNeill was appointed Director of Operations as from the 1 June 2005. The Board wished to extend their thanks to Mr Bryan Snoddy for his hard work as Acting Director of Operations.

2.0 Welcome and Format of the Meeting

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming members of the public and Trust Board.

3.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting of the Trust Board held on 5 May 2005

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

Proposed by Frank Hughes and seconded by Margie Greer.

5.2 Retirement of Mr Clive Gowdy, Permanent Secretary

The Chairman advised members of Mr Gowdy's imminent retirement at the end of July 2005. The Board expressed their thanks to Mr Gowdy for his support to NIAS over recent years and the Chairman will write to Mr Gowdy wishing him well on his retirement on behalf of the Board.

As yet, no replacement has been identified.

6.0 Controls Assurance Assessments

The Finance Director advised members that a circular HSS (PPM) 5/2003 was formerly introduced in respect of Controls Assurance across the health service. There are 14 standards; 11 non-core and 3 core standards. The 3 core standards are Governance, Financial Management and Risk Management. A Trust self-assessment is required and has been completed against the key criteria and returned to the DHSSPS. Six of the Controls Assurance standards have also been subject to an internal audit and verified. Any recommendations that have been made will be progressed accordingly.

It was noted that although NIAS is substantially compliant, it cannot afford to be complacent. Fire, Safety and Environmental Management Standards were discussed. Members were also advised that new standards would be introduced next year. Members wished to extend their congratulations to the team for their hard work.

7.0 Strategic Plan 2005-2010 and Trust Delivery Plan 2005-2007

The Chief Executive advised members that the consultation on the NIAS Strategic Plan 2005-2010 was now complete. He advised that the Strategic Plan had been developed in line with other competing priorities targets eg reform, modernisation and efficiency, Trust Delivery Plan. The Board endorsed the content of the Strategic Plan.

Members were also advised that the Trust Delivery Plan had been shared with the DHSSPS and the four Boards and that NIAS were currently waiting for further feedback.

Members congratulated the Chief Executive and his staff for these excellent pieces of work.

8.0 Managers Resource Pack

Members were advised by the Director of Human Resources on the development of a Managers Resource Pack. She advised that this piece of work was identified in 2004 and that it had started in the Human Resources Directorate. NIAS are currently assessing all HR Policies and advised that a Trust wide Policy Review will also be taking place.

Issues around the draft template paper were discussed. In general, members endorsed the concept of the review and commented on how worthwhile it was. It is proposed that all Policies will be routinely placed on the Intranet for ease of reference for staff. Members commented that effective communication to all staff was of the essence.

The Managers Resource Pack is due to be launched in September 2005. It was reported that a guest list had not yet been identified.

9.0 Whistle Blowing Policy

The Director of Human Resources advised members that an existing policy from the EHSSB has been used historically in respect of Whistle Blowing and that a decision had been made to develop a Policy specifically for NIAS. This policy has been reviewed by our Legal Department and Equality assessed.

Professor Perrott (as the Head of the Audit Committee) was unanimously appointed as the nominated person for the initial point of contact for complaints under the formal procedure.

10.0 Operations Report as at June 2005

The Chief Executive updated members (in the absence of the Director of Operations) paying particular attention to the following:

Emergency and Non-Emergency Activity

The increase in ambulance activity identified in the operations report was noted by members. The Chief Executive advised that the Trust has been working with the DHSSPS and Health Boards to update the SMOSS Model which had been used in the Strategic Review to guide and support conclusions in relation to ambulance placement and resource requirement to achieve targets. The current work was designed to develop updated proposals to achieve the PSA target of responding to 75% of Category A, life-threatening emergencies within 8 minutes for Northern Ireland. The Model clearly indicated that activity volumes were a key factor, impacting on the response times delivered. The proposals are being developed in the context of the current financial situation and DHSSPS budget allocations, which indicate little prospect of significant additional revenue resources.

Discussions ensued around increased activity and effective use of resources. Currently managers (Directors, Divisional Officers, Control Managers) meet on a bi-monthly basis, in an open forum to report on current issues including actions taken to decrease activation times, improving reporting mechanisms, engaging in recruitment and development of full training plan, developing out-posting, introduction of additional Rapid Response units with satellite navigation to assist NIAS in achieving quicker response times etc. The intention of these meetings is to review performance at an appropriate level, promote innovative and best practice and identify and progress measures to improve performance.

Emergency Planning

NIAS offered assistance to a major incident in Drogheda when a bus crash occurred. Resources were deployed to provide cover. A letter of appreciation was received.

Control Issues

AMPDS training has been completed.

Fleet Issues

A meeting took place on Friday, 24 June 2005 with DHSSPS to discuss the Interim Fleet Business Case. This is in respect of 20 A&E Vehicles and 20 PCS Vehicles. Those present at the meeting were receptive to the points raised by NIAS. The proposal for Fleet has been supported by the Commissioners and the 4 Boards and it is hoped that this matter will be progressed satisfactorily.

Estate Issues

Members were updated on an ongoing programme of work to enhance existing estate.

NIAS has been working with Mr Tony Hindle using the SMOSS Model in analysing historical data to assist with planning for enhancing ambulance response.

It was noted that the lease for Ballymacarratt station had been signed and appreciation was made to the Eastern Board for release of funds. Work is due to start on-site shortly. An invite is to be extended to the Chief Executive of the Eastern Board to official opening of site.

Northland – Out-posting on the city side (Westbank) is continuing and Managers have met with staff regarding concerns raised. A sub-station on the site at the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service is planned and this information has been shared with staff. Meetings have taken place with Contractors and funds have been released. A problem on-site has been identified, however Health Estates are to progress and works are hoped to be completed by September 2005.

Mr Hughes raised the incident of the child choking which had a lot of publicity. This incident involved a mother ringing the control centre very distressed and by following the control officer's advice was able to clear the child's airway. The child made a full recovery. Members praised the staff involved.

It was reported that an Emergency Equipment vehicle had now been replaced in Broadway. Other Emergency Equipment vehicles exist in Dungannon and Derry. At the request of members, the Medical Director outlined the inventory of equipment carried in the Emergency Equipment vehicles.

Members raised concerns about the increased A&E activity and the fact it is over and above previous years' figures; and how NIAS can sustain the increase without impacting on response times. Members considered that a proposal for additional resources should be developed.

Rapid Response Units are operating in East Belfast, Bangor, North Antrim, Cookstown, Coleraine and Lurgan and has addressed gaps in those areas.

Funding issues were raised by members. NIAS is funded by the Boards at different levels. The setting-up of the Consortium has improved the situation but not fully solved it. Protocol issues exist from Board area to Board area.

Members considered that an alternative mechanism for funding would be more appropriate however, it was noted that legislation would be required to change the existing system. It was agreed that NIAS should continue to make application for additional funding. The Chief Executive advised that we would need 63/65 response locations to meet the target of 75% of calls within 8 minutes. We currently operate out of 32 stations or outposts. The DHSSPS identified £400,000 to be spent on improving response times.

Members were advised that a major programme of work was required to develop new locations and that if the Estates Business Case was fully developed it would equate to a figure of £16million of capital to be invested over an extended period.

Mrs Gillespie requested that a legend be placed on tables of information provided in the Operations report.

11.0 Emergency Planning – Major Incident Plan Review

Members were advised that the Major Incident Plan was subject to review on an ongoing basis and that a number of amendments were being made to the Plan.

Members endorsed the review process for the Major Incident Plan.

12.0 Financial Position of the Trust as at 17 June 2005

The Director of Finance drew member's attention to the Executive Summary and the projected 'break even' position.

An increase in mileage was noted, this was up by 6.9% on the same period last year.

An increase in sickness absence was noted from 6.28% for April 2004 to 6.63% for April 2005. This area remains closely monitored.

Legal claims and fees stand at £28,698 for the two months to 31 May 2005.

Service performance was running above contract in all 4 Board areas and discussions are ongoing with the Commissioners.

Full details of the planned capital expenditure programme are included in the Trust Delivery Plan, which is presently with the DHSSPS for consideration.

Members duly noted the report.

13.0 Summary of Complaints/Compliments (Period 01/04/2005 to 31/05/2005)

The Director of Human Resources advised that there are 24 complaints (16 Operation/8 Control) ongoing and 10 compliments. There are 3 cases presently with the Ombudsman (supplementary report issued to members). Members discussed some of the complaints contained within the report and considered that members of the public need to be made aware of the systems in place to deal with emergency and non-emergency calls and therefore have a better understanding of what to expect when they access the service.

14.0 Application of Trust Seal

The Trust Seal was applied on five occasions:

- OSNI Licensing Agreement (2 occasions);
- Leasing agreement for water coolers;
- Leasing agreement for Ballymacarret Road (2 occasions).

15.0 Forum for Questions

One question was received from Mr Leslie Ferron.

How are the Local Ambulance Liaison Groups made up?

The Chief Executive advised Mr Ferron that groups are constituted by Health Boards and comprise of representatives from the following: (exact composition determined by sponsoring Health Board).

Health Trusts
General Practitioners
Ambulance Officers
Health Councils
District Councils

16.0 Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

17.0 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Trust Board is to be held on the 29 September 2005 in the Boardroom, Trust Headquarters, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Belfast.

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: 29/09/05