

## NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

***Minutes of a Meeting of the Trust Board held at 1.30pm on Thursday, 4 May 2006 in Boardroom, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, Trust Headquarters, Site 30, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8SG***

**Present:**

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 Sharon McCue	Director of Finance
Mr F Hughes	Non Executive Director
Mrs L Gillespie	Non Executive Director

**In Attendance:**

Miss A Vitty	Corporate Manager
Mrs M Crawford	Personal Assistant

### **1.0 Apologies**

Mrs M Greer, Non Executive Director  
Professor R Perrott, Non Executive Director  
Mr S Mullan, Non Executive Director

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

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming members of the public and Trust Board. He also explained the arrangement for receiving questions from the public attending.

### **3.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting of the Trust Board held on 30 March 2006**

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

### **4.0 Matters Arising**

#### **4.1 Interim Fleet Business Case**

The Chief Executive advised members that no formal confirmation of the Interim Business Case has been received; however he is hopeful that this will be forthcoming within the near future.

## **5.0 Chairman's Business**

### **5.1 Visit to Bridge Ambulance Station**

Members conveyed their thanks to the staff for their warm welcome earlier today. They found the visit to be most informative. In particular, they noted the arrangement to ensure a prompt exit for ambulance from this site. Morale appeared high with staff happy in their new location, which they considered to be excellent with access to the main arterial routes. There was a general exchange of views with staff on a number of issues including possible future service developments.

The Divisional Officer present was asked to relay the Board's views back to his staff.

### **5.2 Visit by Permanent Secretary**

The Chairman advised that the Permanent Secretary, Mr Andrew McCormick was hoping to visit the Board at the next meeting on 29 June 2006.

## **6.0 Trust Delivery Plan Monitoring as at 31 March 2006**

The Chief Executive updated members on the Trust Delivery Plan with particular attention given to the following:

### ***Enhanced Operational Service Delivery***

- 1.1 Mixed performance evident and NIAS is seeking to improve response times. Further measures are required eg additional deployment points. Alternative Care Pathways issues moving slowly.
- 1.2 JRCALC Guidelines have been introduced and issued to staff, with training programme in place to support.

### ***Continuous Business Improvement***

- 1.12 Control and equipment issues are being monitored closely.

### ***Develop and Support our Staff***

- 1.20 Some difficulties have been experienced with Agenda for Change in common with other Trusts. The process is moving forward in partnership with the Unions.
- 1.26 The delivery of the training plan has been extended on clinical training including care and diversity etc.

## ***Contribution to National and Local Policy Agenda***

1.32 NIAS continue to take part in the various groups ie Developing Better Services. Departmental bodies and Commissioners to progress. The Medical Director is taking a major role within these groups.

## ***Resource Utilisation***

3.1 Absenteeism has increased and a new contract has been arranged with Occupational Health. NIAS are engaging with other Trusts in a benchmarking exercise.

## ***Collaborative Working***

3.5.9 A pre-arrival alert system has been installed in the Mater Hospital and it is hoped that Sperrin Lakeland Trust and Altnagelvin Hospital will follow. NIAS provide the link but not the equipment.

3.5.12 Mr Hughes asked regarding the centralisation of pharmacy and was advised that the recommendations of the Clinical Governance Committee are being processed with completed costs forwarded to all four Boards.

## ***Develop Business Case for one off Reconfiguration of Control Centres***

3.6 The East, North and South Control are now centralised at NIAS Headquarters, with the West scheduled for later in the year.

Mr Hughes commented on the value of the report in providing members with an overview of the Trust's business.

## **7.0 Benchmarking**

Members were advised that the Chief Executive and Director of Operations are to visit East Anglia Ambulance Service on a benchmarking exercise. Previous benchmarking activity was presented to members.

East Anglia is viewed as a like comparator and it is hoped that the visit will prove valuable in increasing understanding of how another Service addresses service delivery to the required national standard.

The Board noted that NIAS has the lowest level of investment on both population and area basis and has the lowest population density of the ambulance services surveyed. It was also observed that all of the Services benchmarked have a helicopter funded through charitable means. It was advised that the HEMS report did not recommend development of an air ambulance in Northern Ireland.

Members duly noted.

## **8.0 Finance Position of the Trust as at 31 March 2006**

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

The Trust is currently forecasting a breakeven position.

Mileage reflects longer journey times and work is ongoing at present for more detail in this area. An increase of 6.7% in mileage was noted on the same period last year.

Total hours lost through sickness absence represents 8.17% for the year to 28 February 2006 compared to 7.2% for the same period for last year. The increase was noted. This area continues to be closely monitored and is a key focus for all operational Managers.

Fees for legal claims stand at £301,147 for the twelve months to 31 March 2006. These costs continue to be monitored and managed in an effort to contain costs.

NIAS performance against PSA targets shows an average of 50.7% of Category A calls responded to within 8 minutes.

The Trusts projected capital spend to the end of the 2006/07 financial year is £4,590million.

NIAS is on target to deliver training as planned.

## **9.0 Operations Report as at 31 March 2006**

Director of Operations directed members to the charts contained within the report and advised:

Chart 1 - There has been a 6.4% increase in emergency calls. That is an increase of 5,625 additional emergency calls for 2005/06. Looking at the four Board areas the increase is as follows:

East – 2.4%  
North – 12.6%  
South 8.7%  
West 8.5%

Chart 2 – Category A calls categorisation shows 34.8% for year which has been the average for the past six months.

Chart 3 - This chart shows the Cat A response within the Eastern area showing the best performance at 60.8%.

Chart 4 – A significant improvement noted in the Southern area in Category B & C response.

Director of Operations summarised by saying that this was a particularly busy year for 999 calls and non-urgent calls. The overall average of Category A has been 50.7% for the year. The increase in activity has been absorbed without a fall in performance.

It was noted that 59 vehicles are out of standard which means more time spent in garages ie breakdowns etc.

### **Emergency Planning**

A multi Patient Oxygen Delivery System was delivered to Broadway Ambulance Station and is now in operation.

One airport alert was reported at the Belfast City Airport. The aircraft landed safely and ambulances resources were stood.

### **Control Issues**

The Regional PCS Control is on line for completing mid summer 2006.

### **Fleet Issues**

Fleet management software has been purchased and is currently being configured to NIAS requirement. Full installation and training should be completed by mid July 2006.

### **Estate Issues**

Upgrading of stations is ongoing and new deployment sites are being explored. Valuation and Lands Agency have been helpful in this area.

Members duly noted.

## **10.0 Plans to Improve Response Time Performance**

Response time performance was discussed briefly at the last meeting of the Board and the request by the DHSSPS to develop plans to achieve 75% response to Category A calls within 8 minutes by March 2007. Members were directed to the supporting paper to provide clarity on the issues. With the difficult financial climate and changes in external agencies it is considered that this will be difficult to achieve without extra funding. The case for additional monies will be required and discussions with the Commissioners/DHSSPS are ongoing.

The item was discussed in detail and members fully supported and endorsed.

**11.0 Summary of Complaints/Compliments (Period (01/03/2006 to 31/03/2006))**

The Director of Human Resources advised that there are 26 ongoing complaints and 5 compliments received, samples of which are contained within the report. Members were advised that response times continue to be monitored closely.

Some discussed ensued in relation to Item 5.1 complaint.

It was considered that the user has high expectation of the service and education is required on what the service can and cannot provide.

Members duly noted.

**12.0 Remuneration Committee**

Director of Human Resources advised members that the Remuneration Committee has not met for a number of months due to a delay in guidance from the Department. Senior staff have been made aware of the delay. The latest communications from the Department advised that the Trust is not to proceed until guidance is received. It was noted that senior staff do not receive a cost of living rise and therefore it was imperative that this matter be resolved as soon as possible.

Members to be kept informed of situation.

**13.0 Health & Safety Policy**

The Health & Safety Policy was presented for approval by members. Director of Human Resources advised that the policy has been under review for some time and has been updated and equality screened.

Members approved, subject to any comments being received within seven days.

**14.0 Response to Consultation United Hospitals - Improving Services for Major Trauma**

United Hospitals consulted with NIAS in respect of their proposals for service reconfiguration. NIAS welcomed the opportunity to respond and advised that additional resources would be required to manage the changes effectively. Longer journey times would have implications for NIAS.

Members endorsed the actions of the Board.

**15.0 Application of Trust Seal**

No application of the Trust Seal was reported.

**16.0 Forum for Questions**

No questions were received from the floor.

**17.0 Any Other Business**

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

The next meeting of the Trust Board is to be held on 29 June 2006, venue to confirmed.

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<sup>th</sup> June 2006.