

# NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

<p><b>Minutes of a Meeting of the Trust Board held at 1.30pm on Thursday, 30 March 2006 in the Fir Trees Hotel, Dublin Road, Strabane, Tyrone, BT82 9EA</b></p>
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**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
Mr F Hughes	Non Executive Director
Prof R Perrott	Non Executive Director
Mr S Mullan	Non Executive Director

**In Attendance:**

Miss A Vitty	Corporate Manager
Mrs M Crawford	Personal Assistant

## **1.0 Apologies**

Mrs S McCue, Director of Finance  
Mrs M Greer, Non Executive Director  
Mrs L Gillespie, 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.

## **3.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting of the Trust Board held on 2 February 2006**

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

## **4.0 Matters Arising**

### **4.1 Fleet Business Case**

Members were advised that no formal confirmation has been received in respect of the fleet business case.

Mr Seamus Mullan stated that on numerous occasions at Board meetings, he had raised his concerns regarding delays in getting approval for Annual Plans, Business Cases and Capital Developments Schemes.

He went on to question, whether those charged with giving approval to Trust's submission have a full understanding of the size of the task the Trust faces, in seeking to meet the various national standards, which the public have a right to expect and on which the service is ultimately judged. Furthermore, he commented, whether there is a full understanding of the need to sequence developments and to match them to the Trust's legislative, manpower and financial obligations.

As a way of addressing these issues, he wondered if the Trust could engage in a series of comparative benchmarking studies with two or three like services on the Mainland eg in Scotland, England or Wales. He further advised, that the services selected, would of course have to be carefully chosen to match our own, by way of population, urban and rural mix etc.

He advised that he put forward this suggestion in the belief that if armed with the strategic, operational and financial outcome of such an exercise the Trust would be in a stronger position to put cases more forcefully, ensuring our proposals are informed by the experience of others and are based upon current best practice elsewhere. With this additional information, the Trust might expedite the decision making at Departmental and Board levels and ensure a quicker response to the Trust's proposals than we are currently getting.

Further, he hoped that if the Trust adopts this approach, that some of the output would be available for discussion with the Permanent Secretary when we meet with him in June 2006.

The Chairman and Chief Executive thanked Mr Mullan for his input. Discussion ensued regarding benchmarking issues and suitable Service comparators in terms of geography, topography and demographics, however, some locations have been identified as very suitable comparators eg East Anglia, Scotland. For the Trust to compare like with like would help our case with best practice and might strengthen our argument and case by demonstrating our awareness of what is happening in other UK services.

The Executive Directors advised that some work has already begun in this area and the Chief Executive advised that the Trust can undertake this benchmarking exercise, however, Non-Executive input may be required.

The Chief Executive advised that he had received a verbal indication from DHSSPS Public Safety Unit that they were interested in having such comparative data to inform their decision-making. It was not clear if the DHSSPS enquiry was consistent with the approach proposed. Chief Executive indicated he would explore further with DHSSPS on receipt of formal confirmation of their request.

Members fully endorsed the approach suggested by Mr. McMullan and ask the Chief Executive to develop it as soon as possible.

## **5.0 Chairman's Business**

### **5.1 Visit to Strabane Ambulance Station**

Members conveyed their thanks to the staff for their warm welcome earlier today and found the visit to be very fruitful. While speaking to staff the problem of communication was raised. It is hoped that this matter will be resolved through Digital Trunk Radio. Members noted the warm happy atmosphere within the Station and the short-term improvements that have been made.

The Chief Executive reaffirmed the commitment of the Trust to rebuild the station.

## **6.0 Financial Position of the Trust as at 28 February 2006**

**6.1** The Chief Executive presented the Finance report in the absence of the Director of Finance.

The Trust is currently forecasting a breakeven position. Costs associated with Agenda for Change are based on the most recent estimates.

An increase of 6.5% in mileage was noted on the same period last year.

Total hours lost through sickness absence represents 8.3% for the period April 2005– January 2006 compared to 7.34% for the same period for last year. This area continues to be closely monitored and is a key focus for all operational Managers.

Fees for legal claims stand at £265,834 for the ten months to 31 January 2006. These costs continue to be monitored and managed in an effort to contain costs.

NIAS performance against PSA targets. A new chart has been used to demonstrate targets. 50.7% of calls were responded to within 8 minutes.

Specific documents agreed by Audit Committee (13 March 2006) and benchmarked through External and Internal Audit were discussed at length and suggested changes noted. These will be directed to the Assistant Director of Finance for amendment.

Chairman recommended adoption of reports and members fully endorsed.

## **7.0 Operations Report as at 28 February 2006**

Director of Operations reminded members that at the last Trust Board he had advised that there was a fall off in performance against the targets. This was due in part to a technical problem with ICCS in the new Regional Emergency Dispatch Centre and the rationalisation of control centres. Now although some technical problems continued into early February overall performance has improved. It was further noted that cumulative activity has increased from February 2005.

There has been a 4.8% increase in emergency and 1.6% increase in urgent calls. For the month of February 2006 emergency activity has increased by 6.8%.

Members were directed to Charts 1, 2 and 3 and were advised as follows.

Chart 1 - Performance for Category A calls has increased to 52.5% for Northern Ireland as a whole. This is up 6.8% from the last quarter 3.

Cat B & C calls have also improved slightly to 91.2%.

AMPDS is still triaging calls to Cat A status in the 34% range.

Chart 2 - It was noted that this chart provides more detail for Cat A performance for each Board area. East showed the best performance at 63%. West showed significant improvement and was up by 8%. This was due to investment in additional cover for Sperrin Lakeland Trust and some winter pressures monies.

Chart 3 - This chart shows the Cat B & C trends with a 1.8% improvement from the last report.

Director of Operations advised that there is a lot of work still to be done to achieve the PSA target of 75% A8 standard.

Key areas for performance improvement identified are:

- Reduce/minimise non-emergency activity.
- Enhance call prioritisation.
- Reduce activation times.
- Introduce additional deployment locations.
- Additional Rapid Response Vehicles.
- Carefully targeting additional A&E.

Members were advised that additional cover has been provided in Lagan Valley and Sperrin Lakeland Trusts.

Members were further updated on the following items.

### **Update on Westlink**

The Director of Operations advised the Board that major disruption is expected from September 2006. Planning continues in relation to dealing with the changes.

### **Emergency Planning**

During January 2006 one airport alert was reported at the Belfast City Airport. The aircraft landed safely and no ambulances resources were required.

It was noted that 2 Assistant Emergency Planning Officers took up temporary posts in January 2006.

### **Control Issues**

Director of Operations advised that North and South Control moved to Headquarters in February 2006.

### **Fleet Issues**

It was reported that inspections of chassis problems have been completed and 2 vehicles were reported to have substantial corrosion. Estimates are presently being prepared.

### **Estate Issues**

Director of Operations advised that South and East Trust have ordered work to give a permanent solution to the power supply on site from the Northern Ireland Electricity Service. The Trust has requested an upgrade to our power supply when this work has been completed

Members duly noted.

## **8.0 Summary of Complaints/Compliments (Period (01/01/2006 to 28/02/2006))**

The Director of Human Resources advised that there are 27 ongoing complaints and 6 compliments received, samples of which are contained within the report. Members were advised that response times continue to be monitored closely.

Members duly noted and were pleased to see an improvement in the response times.

## **9.0 Human Resources Strategic Plan**

Director of Human Resources advised members that the Human Resources Strategic Plan has been fully incorporated with the Trusts Strategic Plan. She advised that the Human Resources Department has carried out benchmarking with other Trusts. It was noted that the Action Plans are more detailed and will be presented on an annual basis. Mr Mullan questioned whether all staff had been surveyed in the recent Staff Survey and was advised that this was the case.

The Board fully endorsed the report.

**10.0 Application of Trust Seal**

No application of the Trust Seal was reported.

**11.0 Forum for Questions**


No questions were received from the floor.

**12.0 Any Other Business**

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

The next meeting of the Trust Board is to be held on 4 May 2006  
NIAS Headquarters.

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: \_\_\_\_\_