

NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

***Minutes of a Meeting of Trust Board held at 1.30pm on Thursday,
15 March 2007 in the Fort Lodge Hotel, Forthill Street,
Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh***

Present:

Mr D Smyth OBE	Chairman
Mr L McIvor	Chief Executive
Mr B McNeill	Director of Operations
Dr D McManus	Medical Director
Ms R O'Hara	Director of Human Resources
Mrs S McCue	Director of Finance
Mr F Hughes	Non Executive Director
Professor R Perrott	Non Executive Director
Mr S Mullan	Non Executive Director
Mrs M Greer	Non Executive Director

In Attendance:

Miss A Vitty	Corporate Manager
Mrs M Crawford	PA to Chief Executive

1.0 Apologies

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 members. He apologised for the late start and advised that Mrs Lily Kerr, UNISON had withdrawn her request of speaking rights. He further advised of some changes to the agenda relating to the removal of Item 9.0.

The arrangements for receiving questions from the public attending were also explained.

3.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting of the Trust Board held on 18 January 2007

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

4.0 Matters Arising

No matters arising.

5.0 Chairman's Business

5.1 Visit to Enniskillen Ambulance Station

The Chairman conveyed the Board's thanks to Mr Alan Cahill, Divisional Officer for the warm welcome received by members earlier today and wished their thanks to be passed to all staff. The Chairman further thanked Mr Cahill for his hard work in the area. Members welcomed the opportunity to chat frankly with staff and noted the warm atmosphere within the station; they also considered that the location of the station within the hospital grounds was very beneficial.

5.2 Change in Reporting Format

Discussion around consolidating Directors reports to Board took place and it was suggested that incorporating service information within one report, would show a more holistic view of the organisation, and avoid duplication. These reports could then be used to service other reports to eg DHSSPS. It was agreed that the new format be trialed and presented at the next meeting of the Trust Board due to be held on 3 May 2007.

6.0 Priorities for Action 2007/08

Members discussed the Minister's Paper in detail. Particular attention being given to the NIAS targets of delivering response times of 65% average and 70% peak in March 2008. This will be a challenge for the Trust. Members were advised that a range of performance improvement measures had been identified all of which would have a revenue consequence, but it is unlikely that the Trust will receive any additional monies. Some monies may be available for technological advances, satellite navigation etc. Discussions are ongoing in-house in relation to what measures can be taken which will not require additional revenue. The Trust is determined to improve response times and will continue to develop proposals to deliver targets.

The Chairman emphasised that the increase in size of the target (10%) should not be underestimated. Its achievement will require not only additional technology but staff also.

The Chief Executive further advised that the 2nd Phase of the Strategic Review was not yet funded and that investment is required to enable the Trust to achieve and maintain the targets set.

Some discussion ensued with members raising the question of investment for fleet and it was advised that a rolling programme of monies was required for fleet. Members duly noted position and voiced their concerns for achieving the target set with the current resources.

7.0 Financial Position of the Trust as at 31/01/2007

The Director of Finance referred members to the Finance Report and advised on the following key areas:

The Trust is forecasting a breakeven position at year-end.

Mileage - Overall mileage for the ten months to 31 January 2007 shows an increase of 9% from the same period last year. It was noted that the increase in mileage coupled with rises in fuel costs generated a cost pressure to NIAS.

Sickness Absence - Total hours lost for the month of January 2007 represents 10.28% of contracted hours compared to 9.25% for the month of January 2006. Director of Finance further stated that this issue continues to be monitored and managed on an ongoing basis.

Legal Claims and Fees – These costs continue to be monitored and stand at £249,647 for the 10 months to 31 January 2007.

Service Performance – Performance of NIAS against PSA target for the year April 2006 – February 2007 is 55.4% of Cat A calls responded to within 8 minutes.

Mr Mullan commented on the need to reduce sickness absence and that the challenge will not only be in managing sickness absence but also looking at work patterns eg shifts. The Director of Human Resources advised that a lot of work is ongoing in this area. The Chairman stated that the breakeven financial forecast is good news taking into account the lack of additional resources in year for the Trust and the 5% increase in performance.

Members duly noted.

8.0 Operations Report as at 28/02/2007

The Director of Operations directed members to Charts 1, 2 and 3 of the report and advised as follows.

A downward trend has been noted from December 2006, this has been due to a number of factors ie increase in calls, busy at set times eg lunch to tea and sickness absence. The Medical Director has been helping to alleviate the situation by triaging calls in the Control Centre.

Chart 1 – Category A is holding at 53.3% with an overall increase in activity of 16.5% on last year.

Chart 2 – This chart provides more detail for Category A performance for each Board area. Discussion ensued around some of the trends and it was noted that figures are down for Mid-Ulster, East City and Altnagelvin.

This is due in part to A&E Departments closing which requires more transfers in some very large geographic areas. It was advised that tactical deployment plans are to be reviewed in an effort to improve these areas.

Chart 3 – This chart shows trends for Cat B & C calls. It was advised that a new PFA target has been set which will be a challenge for the Trust in trying to anticipate where the demands will be, again the review of the tactical deployment will help with this.

Members asked if advance notice is given of any roadworks etc. It was advised that notice is given in some instances, however it is not always possible to bypass these areas.

The question of Flu Vaccines being made available to staff was raised and it was advised that the vaccine is offered each year to staff, however the uptake has unfortunately been low. However, the Trust would not be aware of personnel who may have made alternative arrangements to receive this vaccine.

Members were also updated on the following items.

Emergency Planning

2 alerts at the George Best City Airport and the Belfast International Airport were reported.

Members were informed that 2 permanent Assistant Emergency Planning Officers have been appointed.

Control Issues

Some problems are being encountered in Control with new staff being trained and new technology being introduced. The situation is improving and members were advised that this is no threat to the service.

Digital Trunk Radio

DTR is on target with installation and testing completed. A trial on the RRV vehicles took place in January and training is in progress in the Eastern Division.

It was advised that some black spots are still being encountered in terms of signal however it is much improved with better sound quality.

Fleet

The new A&E ambulances are in place with a further 2 on order. 5 new PCS vehicles with Bariatric capabilities have been received and will be in operation in March 2007. Members were advised that 1 bariatric vehicle will be available in each Division.

Estate Issues

NIAS are working closely with the DHSSPS and are availing of any opportunities presented which will help improve our service. A lot of work is ongoing in finding suitable locations. Links are also being forged with NIFRS and Coastguard.

Members duly noted.

9.0 Human Resources Report 01/10/2006 to 28/02/07

The above item was withdrawn from the agenda prior to the meeting having been included in error.

10.0 Summary of Complaints/Compliments (01-10-06 to 28-02-07)

Members were advised that there are 5 ongoing complaints and 9 compliments received, samples of which are contained within the report. Members were advised that response times to complaints continues to be monitored closely.

Members duly noted the report.

11.0 Minutes of Clinical Governance Committee held on 23/02/07

The Medical Director referred members to the minutes and highlighted the following areas:

Pharmacy Review – A specification for central pharmacy provision is currently being drawn up. Once agreed it will be circulated for expressions of interest. It was commented that this was both challenging and rewarding for staff and would be a huge step forward in terms of pre-hospital care coronary care.

Clinical Incident Reporting – Clinical incidents continue to be reported and dealt with promptly.

New JRCALC Guidelines – The new guidelines will be incorporated in the next cycle of training and will be issued to all operational staff.

It was noted by members in Item 6.4 that the Clinical Audit function within NIAS was better developed than other UK trusts. The question of electronic reporting was raised and whether there were risks attached, however it was explained that a digital pen would record information digitally and manually. The costs are not known at this time.

Members duly approved the minutes.

12.0 Policies for Approval

12.1 Lone Workers Policy

This policy was developed in consultation with Trade Unions and presented to the Health and Safety Committee for approval. Members considered that some staff may feel the policy to be intrusive, however, it is about personal safety and well-being and the Trust had a duty of care to discharge.

Members approved the policy.

12.2 Complaints Policy

A review of the complaints policy was undertaken after a report was received from the Ombudsman.

Members approved the policy subject to the following amendments:

Item 4.1 – Complaints Champion: Director of Human Resources.

12.3 Records Management Strategy 2006-09

It was considered that a strong strategy was required for records management to facilitate legislative principles of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998. It was reported that a disposal schedule is currently being developed.

Members approved the policy subject to the following amendment:

Appendix 1.1 – Sentence should read ... "the health records of deceased individuals for their personal representatives ... "

12.4 Smokefree Workplace Policy

A draft policy, which had been consulted on with Trade Unions and other stakeholders has been presented previously to both Trust Board and the Department for comments. The policy has been amended to incorporate all comments received.

Members approved the policy.

13.0 Application of Trust Seal

The Trust Seal was used on one occasion for the lease of a new deployment point at Derriaghy, which will be operational from the 26 March 2007.

14.0 Forum for Questions

No questions were received from the floor.

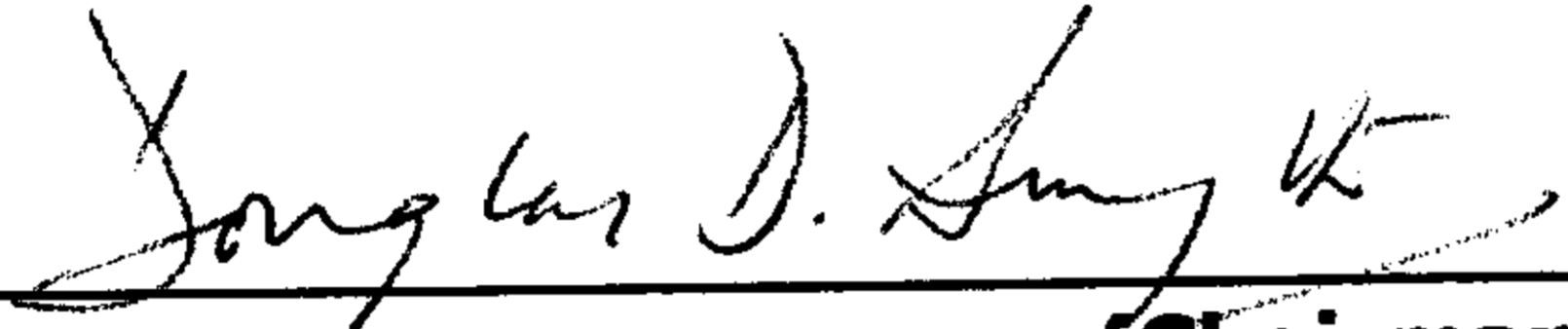
15.0 Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

16.0 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Trust Board will be held on the 3 May 2007. Venue to be confirmed.

The Chairman thanked those present for attending and called proceedings to a close.

Signed 
(Chairman)

Date 03/05/07