

NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

Minutes of a Meeting of Trust Board held on Thursday, 27 November 2008 at 1.30pm in the Boardroom, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, Trust Headquarters, Site 30, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8SG

Present:

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

In attendance:

Miss A Vitty	Corporate Manager
Mrs P McAllister	Personal Assistant (Acting)

1.0 Apologies

There were no apologies.

2.0 Welcome and Format of the Meeting

Mr Archer opened the meeting by welcoming members of the public and Trust Board members and explained the arrangements for receiving questions from the public attending.

3.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting of the Trust Board held on 16 September 2008

The Trust Board members unanimously accepted the minutes as a true and accurate record of proceedings. The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Mrs Greer, seconded by Mr Hughes.

4.0 Matters Arising

4.1 Board Chairman Appointment

Mr Archer introduced himself confirming his appointment on 16 October 2008. He gave a brief history of his background and stressed that he was looking forward to working with the Ambulance Service.

Mr Hughes welcomed Mr Archer to the Ambulance Service on behalf of the other members.

4.2 Regulation Quality and Improvement Authority 2008

Mr McIvor advised that the report has been received and reviewed by NIAS and will be considered by the Risk Committee and an action plan drawn up. He assured members that they will be made aware of any issues requiring Trust Board attention.

Members noted the process outlined.

4.3 Emergency Services Investment Programme (ESIP)

Mr McIvor informed members that the Minister has announced funding of £100m over the next ten years for NIAS. He advised that NIAS had received their full requirement of funding. The announcement was subject to business case approval. Conditional approval has since been received. Mr McIvor advised that NIAS could now proceed with orders to replace vehicles and purchase defibrillator monitors and equipment. He stated that delivery was expected by end of March 2009. He stated that the intention was to equip all emergency response vehicles with 12 lead defibrillators and also anticipated introducing vital sign monitoring capability within them.

Professor Hanratty referred to the recent tragic incident where four policemen lost the lives in a road traffic collision. Professor Hanratty asked if NIAS had considered the incident in relation to its own Rapid Response Vehicles and the staff who drive them. The Chief Executive informed Members that he had written to the Chief Constable on behalf of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service expressing condolences. He went on to advise that the matter had been raised with the Risk Manager by the Rapid Response Manager and considered in the context of NIAS. It was noted that NIAS did not use the particular vehicle involved in this incident and that there were significant differences between the two vehicles not least in relation to the PSNI vehicles having armour cladding and various security measures.

Nonetheless NIAS would engage with PSNI in relation to their assessment of the incident to enable further analysis to take place to inform our utilisation of rapid response vehicles.

Members welcomed the funding allocation and the assurance provided in relation to the PSNI incident.

5.0 Chairman's Business

5.1 Mr Archer updated members on the meetings attended. He informed members that he was undertaking a training induction programme and had met with the Executive Directors. It was his intention to visit Divisions by early 2009. Mr Archer advised that he had attended a Review of Assurance to the Department Accounting Officer Workshop on 7 November 2008, and also a Modernisation and Improvement Programme Board Workshop on 20 November 2008.

Members noted.

5.2 Visit to Knockbracken Ambulance Station

Mr Archer commented that this was the first Station he had visited and was very impressed. He found the visit extremely interesting and wished to record his appreciation to the staff involved.

Mr Hughes stated that the station is small and basic but noted that staff were content. He commented that although four of the 35 staff were female there were no female toilets and access to the main road was tight.

Mrs Greer commented that although it had been seven years since the last visit, there was not much change at the site but despite that there was a very positive atmosphere about it.

Mr Mullan asked if there were plans to improve the access or install toilets.

Mr McIvor clarified that the funding announcement by the Minister included a sum for Estates Management. He stated that funding of £40m will be available to plan for the whole of the estates over the next 8-9 years.

Mr Archer conveyed his appreciation and thanks to Mr Gary Richardson, Ambulance Service Area Manager, and his staff for the visit.

5.3 Proposed Meeting Dates 2009

Mr Archer referred to the paper detailing the proposed dates for Trust Board meeting for 2009. After discussion it was agreed that members contact the Miss Vitty if dates do not suit.

Members to notify the Miss Vitty of unsuitable dates.

5.4 Corporate Identity – HSC Logo

Mr McIvor referred to the examples of the new Corporate Logo. He stated that one of the main issues for NIAS was to retain the crest with the logo. Agreement has now been reached. He commented that the new logo will reinforce the fact that NIAS is one of six Trusts delivering Health Care in Northern Ireland.

Members noted.

6.0 Performance Reporting as at 31 October 2008

OPERATIONS

OP01 - Mr McNeill reported that regrettably performance has suffered a downturn in category A 8 minute response. He highlighted principal reasons and the actions taken to address these issues. Mr McNeill advised that one of the reasons for the downturn was the difficulties experienced with the introduction of the Mobile Data System and the fact that staff had to be retrained due to the delay in implementing the system. He stated that the majority of these issues have now been addressed.

Mr McNeill stated that a short term target to achieve a 6.4% improvement has been set where focus will be on three main areas of Control, Technology and Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs). In performance terms this will mean 225 calls a month moving out of standard into standard. Measures have been identified to achieve this including:

Regional Emergency Medical Dispatch Centre

Key areas:

- Staff vacancies evident including key positions of Duty Managers. This will be filled in early December 2008.
- Retraining regarding AMPDS system, protocols and performance.
- Working with staffside regarding shift patterns and benefits modernisation.

Review of Technology and Application

Key areas:

- Continue development work with software/hardware suppliers with specific attention on reporting faults, applying fixes and monitoring of same.

Roll Out of Rapid Response Vehicles

Key areas:

- Working towards increased hours of Rapid Response Vehicle coverage and extending current coverage.
- Recruitment plan underway.

Mr McNeill further stated that in terms of delivery RRV are currently achieving 75% response to Category A calls with 85% of calls first on scene. He advised that reviews are currently taking place on deployment protocols. He continued that it was a combination of issues and factors which were resulting in the poor performance but that as stated above measures have been identified and plans have been developed to improve performance and with the support of all staff this can be turned around. However, he did advise that there were concerns regarding performance and the impact of Christmas and the New Year and suggested that improvements may not be evident until January 2009.

OP03 – Mr McNeill stated that additional vehicles running from 9.00pm to midnight have been introduced under the control of the Emergency Control Room and in Omagh.

OP05 – Mr McNeill confirmed that the fleet strategy has been approved. Mr McIvor confirmed that approximately 17-18% of fleet will be replaced by end of March 2009.

OP06 – Mr McNeill confirmed that plans are now being made for a deployment location for Ballynahinch. A potential new site has been identified in Finaghy and it is hoped to have a feasibility study completed by the end of the month.

FINANCE

Mrs McCue updated members on the financial position of the Trust as follows:-

FN01 – The financial position at 30 September 2008 indicates a deficit of £182k. This deficit is largely due to delays in implementing efficiency savings. The majority of expenditure within the Trust is in the area of wages and salaries. NIAS are working with Commissioners and the Department to identify ways of addressing the issues with a view to achieving breakeven at the year end.

FN02 – Departmental approval has been received to outline plans to deliver saving of £1,235m in 2008/09, £2,719m in 2009/10 and £4,449m by 2010/11, for which there is a public consultation under way at present.

FN03 – NIAS disposals relate to 'out of standard' vehicles which amounts to £3,000. With the approval of the Business Case for fleet replacement plans are now being developed to introduce new vehicles later in the year.

FN04 – With regard to the prompt payment of invoices there have been improvements in the achievement of this target which is now achieved by value.

FN05 – NIAS has received a CRL allocation for 2008/09 of £5.344m. Replacement ambulance vehicles and medical equipment will be the main priorities.

FN06 – Mrs McCue highlighted that responsibility for FOI has been assigned to the Finance and IT Directorate. She presented the FOI report and highlighted that the number of requests does not reflect the extent of the work involved as each question could require up to 15-20 formal responses. Efficient completion of these requests within statutory timeframes often requires information from across the service. NIAS are responding to the vast majority within the 20 days target. The Trust continues to work towards implementing a new Publication Scheme by the target date of 1 January 2009.

MEDICAL DIRECTORATE

Doctor McManus updated members on a number of issues including the following:

MD01 – Training of current RRV Paramedics is now complete. The business case for 12-lead monitor defibrillators has been submitted and finalised and is now out to tender. A revised thrombolysis protocol will be presented to the December meeting of the Clinical Governance Committee.

MD02 – Arrangements for cleaning of vehicles are currently under review. Reports will continue to be provided to the Clinical Governance Committee. There have been no healthcare acquired infections arising within the Trust reported for this current year. In response to Mr Mullan Dr McManus informed members that although NIAS have no specific concerns regarding the cleaning of vehicles, it was important to review arrangements and develop monitoring systems to provide assurance. Infection control group has met with Officers from each division and introduced an updated region-wide process for cleaning vehicles. Dr McManus stated there would be more robust monthly reporting to ensure procedures were being carried out.

MD03 – The final RQIA report has now been received and an Action Plan developed.

MD05 – The new policy and procedures for Pharmacy have been finalised and are in place. NIAS has introduced new arrangements in East City which will be extended to the other divisions during early 2009. Dr McManus advised that a delay in the provision of morphine has arisen which is due to a worldwide manufacturing problem which should be resolved by January 2009.

MD06 – The Trust has established a multi-disciplinary group to take forward a personal and public involvement and an action plan has been developed.

MD07 – The Category C pilot with Dalriada has now been completed and preliminary indications are that the pilot was successful and provides a platform for further development.

Work continues to progress on the pilot for secondary triage of Category C calls by Doctors in Ambulance Control with approximately 20 doctors agreeing to participate so far. Training will commence within the next few weeks. NIAS continues to engage with other Healthcare providers and organisations regarding the pilot and the development.

Professor Hanratty welcomed the extension of pharmacy arrangements to other divisions.

Members noted report from Dr McManus.

HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORATE

Ms Roisin O'Hara updated members on the Human Resources (HR) Directorate. She drew members' attention to the report and highlighted the following areas.

HR01 – Management of absence continues to be a priority for HR staff and Managers. A personnel officer has now been dedicated to supporting Managers in managing this aspect. A "Management of Attendance Performance" tool has been designed and implemented. HR Managers are working closely with Occupational Health, particularly in relation to long term absence. HR staff are continuing to benchmark other organisations in this regard.

HR04 – The action plan has been devised. The new Complaints Manager has now been appointed and should take up position soon.

HR05 – On target training continues to be provided according to the Training Plan.

HR06 - Complaints within the Trust continue to be managed in line with complaints policy. Eight complaints were received in October.

Report was noted.

7.0 Efficiency Savings and Comprehensive Spending Review Investment – Equality Impact Assessment

Mr McIvor drew members' attention to the Equality Impact Assessment document contained within the papers. This document was a public consultation by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service on proposals for efficiency savings and comprehensive spending review investment. Mr McIvor reminded members that NIAS is required to deliver an average 3% per annum cash releasing efficiency saving over the next three years.

The document outlines the background to this position and the proposals developed by NIAS and presented to DHSSPS which were now the subject of consultation.

Mr McIvor indicated that he welcomed comment from the public and other key stakeholders and ambulance services and that the Trust would carefully consider submissions and provide a final report on this consultation outlining the way forward.

Mr Mullan expressed concern regarding the capacity of NIAS to continue to improve the service delivery to patients including response times in clinical care within the context of a 3% reduction in its income.

Mr McIvor acknowledged the concern and indicated that this presented a significant challenge for the organisation while also stating that it was the responsibility of the service to deliver care in the most effective and efficient way within the resource constraints outlined.

Further discussion took place in relation to the publication of the equality impact assessment and it was agreed that consideration would be given to inclusion in print media such as local newspapers. Mr Lesley Ferran, attending the meeting as a member of the public, indicated that he found the document very accessible, easy to read and targeted appropriately at a public audience who should be able to grasp the issues and the proposals. He also went on to suggest that there may be merit in contacting local Road Safety Committees to advise them of the proposals.

Members noted the report and the positive comments on its presentation.

8.0 The Health & Social Services Trusts (Establishment) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2008

Mr McIvor referred members to the revised establishment order for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service which was in their papers. The key changes highlighted were the removal of references to specific locations of ambulance control facilities and the revision of the description of the Trust functions making reference to the provision and management of ambulance and associated services which is a broader brief than that of the previous establishment order but one entirely in keeping with the direction of travel within the Northern Ireland and other UK ambulance services that legislation has now been put through and the Order for NIAS is now amended with the key changes being the provision of Ambulance Control.

9.0 Terms of Reference

Mr McIvor referred members to the documentation provided on the proposed revisions to Terms of Reference of Board Committees. Following considerable discussion on items such as the extent to which committees could provide assurance to the Board or whether they were there to provide an opinion and make recommendations to the Board.

Particular concern was raised in relation to the use of the word “ensure” rather than “provide assurance” with Mr Mullan indicating that in his view it was the responsibility of operational managers and Directors to ensure that particular things happened, whereas it was the role of the Board Member to seek assurance that issues were in place and being complied with. Further discussion also arose in relation to the role of Executive Directors on committees of the Trust Board and whether the Committees should be formed exclusively of the Non-Executive Directors to provide the relevant assurance to the Board and challenge to the Executive Directors in the fulfilment of their functions.

It was agreed that members would review the Terms of Reference and provide Miss Vitty with any views, opinions or amendments. The Terms of Reference would then be revised to take account of the written submissions of Board members to enable them to be considered at the next Trust Board meeting.

10.0 Policies

10.1 Uniform Policy

Mr McNeill presented a draft copy of the Uniform Policy and requested approval to adopt. Members agreed to adopt the Uniform Policy, subject to some minor grammatical changes, on the proposal of Mr Hughes, seconded by Mrs Greer.

10.2 Education, Training and Development Guidance Policy

Ms O’Hara tabled a copy of the draft Education, Training and Development Guidance policy. She stated that this policy had been benchmarked against other Ambulance Services and has been equality screened. She requested that the Board give their approval for the policy to be ratified.

Approved subject to the following amendment being included “consistent with the requirement of the relevant assessment bodies”.

11.0 Application of Trust Seal

The Director of Finance advised that the Trust seal had been applied on 6 occasions during the period and stated the following:

- 2 x Coleraine Ambulance Station (office and garage)
- 1 x Carrickfergus Ambulance Station
- 1 x Irvinestown Business Centre (Ambulance Outpost)
- 1 x Bangor Marina adjacent to Coastguard Station (Ambulance Outpost)
- 1 x Mourne Country Hotel, Newry (Ambulance Outpost)

12.0 Forum for Questions

12.1 No questions were tabled for the Board.

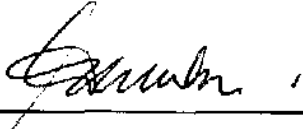
13.0 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Time and Venue of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

Mr Archer thanked those present for attending and called proceedings to a close.

Signed: 

(Chairman)

Date: 22.01.09