

NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

Minutes of a Meeting of Trust Board held at 1.30pm on Thursday, 8 May 2008 in the 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
	Mr B McNeill	Director of Operations
	Dr D McManus	Medical Director
	Mrs S McCue	Director of Finance
	Ms Roisin O'Hara	Director of Human Resources
	Mr F Hughes	Non Executive Director
	Professor R Perrott	Non Executive Director
	Mrs M Greer	Non Executive Director
	Mr S Mullan	Non Executive Director
	Professor M Hanratty CBE	Non Executive Director
In Attendance:	Miss A Vitty	Corporate Manager
	Ms Rose Jane Peck	Personal Assistant

1.0 Apologies

None noted.

2.0 Welcome and Format of the Meeting

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

3.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting of the Trust Board Held on 13 March 2008

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

4.0 Matters Arising

4.1 Violence to Staff/Zero Tolerance Workshop, 14 March 2008

The Director of Human Resources reported that the Workshop took place on 14 March 2008 and that Professor Hanratty attended.

She further advised presentations on training, community education, risk and Health and Safety were given by Senior Managers.

Professor Hanratty commented that she was very satisfied with the training programmes and the way the matter was being dealt with by the Trust and thanked the staff involved for their time.

4.2 Emergency Services Investment Programme Update

Mr McIvor advised that work continued with the Department and the Strategic Investment Board to secure funding for the Business Case re: fleet and that a draft report was due by the end of May 2008. It was hoped that funding would be secured for the replacement of ambulances and defibrillators in the first instance during 2008/9.

Members noted.

4.3 Regulation Quality and Improvement Authority 2008

Mr McIvor advised that preliminary feedback from the audit showed the ambulance service was regarded as an accessible, flexible and responsive service. The final report was still awaited after which an action plan would be developed to progress. RQIA had commented that in some ambulance stations staff had shown little or no awareness of RQIA although the team felt well received and that the staff were passionate about the work.

Mr McIvor advised it was his intention to arrange a meeting with author of the preliminary report to ask for evidence to support his observations for a more balanced view than was shown in the report. He commented that RQAI had a hospital orientated approach and the assessment did not necessarily transfer well to specialist services such as the Ambulance Service.

Professor Perrott enquired as to whether this was an annual audit and was advised that it operated yearly and assessed different "themes" within the organisation.

Members noted.

5.0 Chairman's Business

5.1 Board Chairman Vacancy

Mr Smyth informed members that interviews for the post, which had been advertised in the Belfast Telegraph, would take place in late June 2008 for appointment in October 2008.

In the interim his term in post had been extended to 30 September 2008.

5.2 Professor Ron Perrott, Non-Executive – End of Term

Mr Smyth advised members that Professor Perrott's term with the Board would end with the Trust on 17 May 2008. He further advised that the Non-Executive post would remain vacant until the new Chair was in place.

5.3 Stormont Health Committee Visit, 1 May 2008

Mr Smyth reported that the visit had been very successful and expressed hope that it would result in the formation of new and beneficial relationships between the Trust and the Health Committee.

Members had visited the Regional Emergency Medical Dispatch Centre, Regional Ambulance Training Centre and also viewed a vehicle display outside the Headquarters building.

5.4 Permanent Secretary Correspondence 14 April 2008

Members were referred to Item TB/2/08/05/08 which related to the Trust Performance and Year-End Accountability Meeting and were also issued with a letter dated 28 April 2008 entitled – "Performance Against Targets" regarding same.

Mr Smyth noted that both letters were complimentary about the performance of the Trust and had acknowledged the efforts of the staff at all levels. He also remarked there had been specific references by the Minister of Health to ambulance performance and improved response times during a presentation held recently at the Ulster Hospital attended by Mr McIvor and Mr John McPoland, Communications Officer.

5.5 Executive Remuneration 2006/07

Mr Smyth informed members that correspondence had been received from the Department which allowed the pay awards for 2006/07 for Executive members to be acted upon as determined by the Remuneration Committee on 8 March 2007. Members noted.

6.0 Performance Reporting

Operations Directorate

Mr McNeill firstly highlighted the target OP01 with the key issue that the target of response to 70% of Category A calls within 8 minutes was not met by the end of the year, when the percentage figure was 67.5%.

He pointed out that although the report was an important monitoring tool it did not reflect the real impact of the work during the year when Category A performance improved by 6.5% which meant that 582 additional calls were met within eight minutes. It was also noted that year-on demand had increased by 12.9%, equivalent to 4,500 calls.

Mr Hughes commented the figures were remarkable and a credit to all.

Mr McNeill then updated members on Operations targets as follows:

OP09 - Although the Ambulance Service did not meet the target of response to 95% of emergency calls within 18-21 minutes he was pleased to report that the percentage reached remained around 90%.

OP10 - Response to 95% of urgent calls within 15 minutes of the clinician requesting transport. Mr McNeill noted increased demand and said that they were working hard to agree realistic time frames for response in relation to the pressures involved.

OP11 – NIAS seeks recurring investment for rolling fleet replacement. Mr McNeill reported it was still difficult to make significant changes in renewal of fleet vehicles owing to lack of funds, the release of which depended on the agreement of a fleet strategy. Consultants were at present developing outline business cases for fleet replacement. Nine vehicles (pcs) had been bought by the year end though they were not yet equipped. Funding had also been provided to RRV vehicles while there was still pressure on frontline A&E vehicles. Mr McNeill also pointed out the long lead time between the order of a new vehicle in September or October and delivery the following March.

OP12 – Additional deployment locations have been introduced successfully, such as at Bangor, while at Balnahinch, a key deployment point progress was delayed due to renegotiation of a lease. No suitable re-deployment sites had yet been found at Randalstown or Coalisland. Progress had been made at Comber where a fire service property had been found which would be ready the following month and at Carrickfergus, a key location, facilities still had to be finalised.

Finance Directorate

Mrs McCue referred members to the report, stating that the accounts are still in draft form as they are still in the process of producing figures. Although not confirmed there appeared to be a surplus of £166k, caused by the failure to deliver a number of minor schemes before the end of year cut off point.

Mrs McCue said the figures would also show a reduced income level from about £50m to £46m reflecting changes in accounting procedures introduced by DHSSPS.

Mrs McCue then updated members on Finance targets as follows:

- FN 02 – Mrs McCue informed members that NIAS was on target for achievement of saving £506,000
- FN 03 – Members were informed that there would be a projected disposal of £43,000 worth of fixed assets from vehicles.
- FN 04 – Members were informed that 96% of invoices were paid within 30 days, volume of 92.3%.
- FN 05 – NIAS had received approval to spend £2,979k which showed the capital allocation had increased by £120k since reporting to the Board in March 2008. Approval had been received to retain £42k receipts for asset disposal. The final capital resource level is £3021k. £333k was spent on estate and £748k on the fleet.

Mr Hughes commented it was a credit to the Financial Management Team and Senior Managers to have broken even once again.

Medical Directorate

Dr McManus referred members to the Medical Directorate report and commented on the following:

- MD 01 - The Trust continued to be active in the field of infection control and that work continued with other Trusts in relation to monitoring healthcare acquired infection.
- MD02 - The Trust has complied with recommendations from the RQIA governance reports.
- MD 03 - A pilot scheme for the administration of thrombolysis has been successfully completed. Although the pilot is finished officially thrombolysis administration continues to be provided.
- MD 04 – NIAS continues with move towards using a single pharmaceutical supplier.
- MD 05 – The Department’s Safety First Framework Action Plan has been addressed through the Risk Management Committee.
- MD 07 – Dr McManus explained there had been some difficulty in compliance with the Civil Contingencies Framework Document due to circumstances outside the control of NIAS, particularly the delays in the implementation of the RPA.

MD 09 - A pilot for Cat C calls referral to primary care out of hours organisation continues. Although numbers were lower than expected evaluation shows that implementation is satisfactory.

Human Resources Directorate

Ms O'Hara referred members to the report and drew attention to the following:

HR 01 and HR 06 are not directly relevant to NIAS

HR 02 - Ms O'Hara has been appointed as Trust lead for the management of Health and Safety. Violence to Staff had peaked in December but the figures now showed a downward trend. Many of the incidents related to alcohol and drug use around city areas.

HR 03 – Training in infection control targets had been met throughout the year.

HR 04 – The target for meeting staff vacancy numbers was minimal.

HR 05 – Sickness absence figures were 1% out of target by the end of the year, with an absenteeism rate of 8.4%. Within these figures over 4% related to long term sickness, 2% were on half pay or no pay, and 1% had applied for retirement on grounds of ill health.

Ms O'Hara also commented on the difference between absence reporting mechanisms used by other Trusts. Those used by NIAS had drawn positive comments from KPMG for honesty and accuracy as they highlighted days lost due to sickness whereas other Trusts counted days lost. A lot of time and energy has been expended in addressing sickness absence among staff either through their full recuperation or if necessary leaving the Trust.

HR 07 – In relation to training, the Trust had experienced a busy and challenging year. A paramedic in training course had been delayed, while at present there were 34 paramedics in training.

HR 08 – With regard to complaints reports, reasonable progress continued to be made.

Referring to the attached complaints reports, Mr Smyth asked for clarification on the issues in the first case quoted, which concerned a breakdown in communication between an ambulance crew and staff at a nursing home.

Mr McNeill explained that the crew had agreed to move the patient to another floor, but during the call nursing staff had changed shift and misunderstanding arose over who should be doing what. Since then the communications issue had been resolved and it was hoped that a good working relationship between Care Home staff and ambulance personnel could be revived.

Professor Hanratty commented that it raised questions over protocol with regard to private nursing homes. Mr McNeill replied that this was an ongoing issue as traditionally ambulance crew would have moved a patient but new legislation on manual handling and equipment required the completion of a risk assessment or on occasion such questions are resolved at the time. In an emergency, the crew would immediately move a patient to the vehicle. Most Care Homes had lifting aids but occasionally a situation could present a problem. Professor Hanratty stated the Trust needed guidance on liability in this situation.

Members noted.

7.0 Trust Delivery Plan 2008/11 (Draft)

Mr McIvor advised members that the Trust Delivery Plan 2008/11 was required to be with the Department by 23 May 2008. He further advised the draft Plan had been shared "In-Committee" with members and the Trust would now be consulting relevant key stakeholders.

Members noted.

8.0 Meeting with Newry and Mourne Council, 22 April 2008

Mr McIvor advised that himself and Mr McNeill had been invited to attend a meeting by local Council representatives. The meeting related to the provision of ambulance services in the South Armagh area in particular.

Mr McIvor reported that the meeting had generated vigorous debate, however, he was pleased to see a good turnout at the Council and a lot of interest in the subject. Once the roles, responsibilities and extent of the ambulance were clarified and the fact that Trust does not have its own budget but is funded by the Department the Council members indicated they would press the Department and Minister regarding the South Armagh area while the Trust would help by providing information and support. The meeting proved to be useful and constructive even though it was difficult at first.

Mr McIvor commented that it was good to show that NIAS was content to meet public representatives and hear their views.

He informed members that Council had organised a petition in the South Armagh area for additional ambulance resources and this was to be presented to the Minister of Health in a bid to secure more funding.

Professor Hanratty asked to what the key concern in the area was. Mr McIvor stated it was the fact that South Armagh was very remote from the nearest ambulance base which Council members believe presents a need for a dedicated ambulance base in the area.

This had been presented by the Council to the previous Minister for Health and he had advised that demand levels did not warrant the investment.

Members noted.

9.0 Minister Announces New Investment to Improve Emergency Response Times in the South West

Mr McIvor referred members to Item TB/4/08/05/08 and welcomed the Department's commitment to extra resources for the South West as announced in the press statement released in April 2008.

10.0 Custodial Sentence for Attempted Assault of Ambulance Crew

Members endorsed the sentiments expressed by Mr McIvor in the attached Press Release.

11.0 Opening of St John Ambulance Belfast HQ Transport Division, 29 April 2008

Mr McIvor commented on the high standard of this facility and that it had been great privilege and honour for him to be asked to open the facility.

He further remarked that the occasion provided an opportunity for him to meet the Paramedic who had been assaulted by a member of the public (previous agenda item), who also volunteered for St John Ambulance.

12.0 Minutes of the Risk Management Meeting held on 6 December 2008

Mr McIvor advised members that the Committee was fully operational and the new Risk Manager, Mr Tom McGarey was now settling into the role. A review of the Risk Register management information is currently being undertaken.

Trust Board members unanimously accepted the minutes as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

13.0 Minutes of the Clinical Governance Committee held on 6 December 2008

Trust Board members unanimously accepted the minutes as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

14.0 Policies (for approval)

14.1 Medicines Management Policy

Dr McManus informed members that the amendments to the policy were now complete.

Members approved the Medicines Management Policy.

15.0 Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 22 June 2007 (for approval)

Mr Smyth commented on the timing of the Audit Committee meetings. As they take place so infrequently a long gap was left between the meeting and presentation to the Board. He suggested that if necessary a special meeting could be built in between. Professor Perrott remarked that the situation had occurred because of the nature of the work. Mr Smyth added that the issue could arise in relation to any Committee and was therefore a matter to look out for. Mr Hughes asked what was meant by the term "environmental cleanliness". Mr McNeill said it related to guidance on hospital facilities, which was difficult to translate to pre-hospital environment but that the Trust has an Infection Control Committee to address cleanliness in vehicles. Mr Hughes further commented on the lack of detail provided in the minutes on some occasions.

Trust Board members unanimously accepted the minutes as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

With regard to Professor Perrott's end of term as Chair of the Audit Committee, Mrs McCue passed on the thanks of the Audit Committee for his invaluable service and contribution over the years and that his colleagues on the Committee would be very sorry that they had not had a chance to say goodbye.

16.0 Application of Trust Seal

None made.

17.0 FORUM FOR QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

18.0 Any Other Business

18.1 Presentation to Professor Ron Perrott

Members thanked Professor Ron Perrott, who was leaving the Trust Board after seven years of service to NIAS, with a small presentation expressing

their high regard to him and gratitude for his work.

Mr Smyth commented that during his time on the Board, Professor Perrot had been a constant source of knowledge particularly in the area of his own specific field and offered wise counsel and sound judgement in addressing major challenges the Trust had faced during his time as a Board member. He further added "the high regard in which Ron is held is well illustrated in the posts he has held whilst serving on the Board – as a long standing Chair of the Audit Committee, a member of the Risk Management Committee, the Trust "Whistleblower" champion and also served on various ad hoc Working Groups".

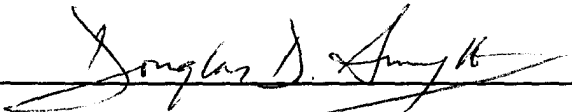
Mr McIvor also added his thanks and appreciation to Professor Perrott and presented him with a plaque.

Professor Perrott thanked all his friends and colleagues for their kind words and thoughtfulness.

16.0 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Trust Board will be held on Thursday, 26 June 2008 in the Northern Division area. Venue to be confirmed.

Mr Smyth thanked those present for attending and for their hard work and called proceedings to a close.

Signed 
(Chairman)

Date 26/06/08