

NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

*Minutes of a Meeting of Trust Board/AGM held on Thursday, 23 September 2010
at 1.30pm at the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Headquarters,
Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast. BT8 8SG*

Present:

Mr P Archer	Chairman
Mr L McIvor	Chief Executive
Mr Frank Hughes	Non-Executive Director
Mr N McKinley	Non-Executive Director
Mr S Shields	Non- Executive Director
Prof M Hanratty	Non- Executive Director
Mrs S McCue	Director of Finance & ICT
Dr D McManus	Medical Director
Mr B McNeill	Director of Operations
Ms R O'Hara	Director of Human Resources & Corporate Services

In Attendance:

Mrs M Crawford	Executive Administrator
Miss K Baxter	Senior Secretary

Welcome and Format of the Meeting

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming members of the public and Trust Board and advised that this year the Annual General Meeting would be incorporated within the public Board meeting. He advised that Mr Dixon, Patient & Client Council is unable to attend the meeting today.

1.0 Apologies

None.

2.0 Procedure: Declaration of potential Conflict of Interest Quorum

No potential conflicts of interest were declared and the Board was confirmed as Quorate.

3.0 Suspension of Standing Orders

The Chairman suspended Standing Orders to allow the Annual General Meeting to take place.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

i. Presentation of Annual Report 2009/10

The Chief Executive presented the Annual Report by giving a presentation which showed the activity for the past year and the challenges for the year ahead.

ii. Presentation of Annual Accounts 2009/10

The Finance Director presented the Annual Accounts by giving a presentation which summed up the financial performance for the past year.

iii. Question & Answer Session

Mr Hughes wished to congratulate the Finance Team and Budget Holders on breaking even during a very difficult period. He congratulated the Chief Executive on his presentation which clearly shows that he has a firm grip on the business of the Service and congratulations were also extended to the Senior Team for their openness and frankness. He added that the Annual Report was in a different format this year which was very pleasing. He wished to praise all those involved in the development of the Report.

Mr Shields commented that he recognised the improvement in response times across all regions which is highly commendable given the particularly severe winter and hoped that this trend continues.

Prof Hanratty remarked that the financial process is very open and transparent. She also wished to reassure the public that the Board are kept fully apprised through the Audit Committee.

The Chief Executive commented that he considered it a privilege to serve the public of Northern Ireland. He advised that changes are required given the financial climate, however the focus will remain on the patient with particular attention on performance, quality and safety.

Mr Ferran, a member of the public commented that the team have always been very open and are happy to answer any questions he may have.

The Chairman stated that the Service is under a lot of scrutiny particularly from MLA's, Councils and the Press. The Executive Team are required to attend meetings with Councils across all regions. He wished to add his congratulations to the Chief Executive and his team for the sterling work during the year.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING CONCLUDED

4.0 Reinstate Standing Orders

The Chairman advised that the business of the public meeting would now continue and reminded members of the public on the arrangements for receiving questions.

5.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of the Trust Board held on 1 July 2010

An amendment is required to Item 10 regarding membership of Committees which has now been confirmed. Members accepted the minutes as a true and accurate record of proceedings, subject to these amendments on the proposal of Mr McKinley, seconded by Mr Shields.

6.0 Matters Arising

6.1 Financial Stability

The Chief Executive advised that he is a member of the Financial Stability Programme Board initiated by the Regional Health & Social Care Board (HSC Board) led by Mr John Compton, Chief Executive. This will involve the assessments of plans by all Trusts for savings to ensure they are achievable. He added that he welcomed this involvement and will keep the Board apprised of any developments.

He highlighted issues for the future as follows:

- Budget Statement to be announced in October 2010
- Key points from a recent Hansard report of DHSSPS attendance at Assembly Health Committee, indicating potential scale of funding issues and that Northern Ireland funding is now lower than the UK.

He advised that specific implications for NIAS are yet to be determined, however, there are clearly very challenging times ahead.

7.0 Chairman's Business

7.1 Chairman's Update

The Chairman gave a brief outline of his diary commitments since the last Board meeting:

- Occasional meetings with Non Executive Directors and Senior Staff
- Meeting with Chairs from the other Health Trusts.
- Meeting with the new Director (Mrs Heather Moorhead) of the Northern Ireland Confederation (NICON)
- Attended a NICON meeting
- Attended a Chairs Forum
- Short listing for two new Non Executive Directors
- Met with Diane Taylor, Director of Human Resources, DHSSPS

- Debriefing meetings with the Chairs of Audit and Assurance
- Continues weekly meetings with the Chief Executive.

7.2 Recruitment of Non Executive Directors

The Chairman advised that short listing has been completed and candidates have been selected for interview which will take place over 2 days later in the month. Information on successful candidates will be passed to the Minister for his final decision.

8.0 Chief Executive's Business

8.1 Chief Executive's Update

The Chief Executive gave a brief outline of some of his activities since the last Board meeting:

- Met the Scottish Labour party at NIAS Headquarters and the issue of NIAS handling 999 calls for the Scottish Control Centre for a number of hours was discussed. It was advised that contingency arrangements worked very effectively and the Director of Operations managed the situation within the Control Room.
- Met with Margaret Ritchie, MLA regarding her concerns about the acute changes in Down Hospital.
- Met with Down District Council in relation to this issue and gave reassurance regarding the processes NIAS follow to enable a robust service to continue to be provided to the people of Downpatrick. It was also advised that a recent media report about this matter misrepresented the NIAS position. The Chief Executive plans to progress this issue.

The Board wished to commend the Control staff for managing the 999 calls for Scotland and were pleased that contingency arrangements worked so well.

9.0 Assurance Framework as at 31 July 2010

The Chief Executive advised that this document, while remaining subject to ongoing development, has been endorsed by the Trust Board as a key statement of performance and assurance.

Operations

The Director of Operations updated members as follows:

- Cat A Performance – Currently sitting at 71.5% with 75% required by March 2011 and no less than 67.5% in each Local Commissioning Group (LCG) area. Some actions are still required to achieve this target. Performance for June 2010 indicates that this is achievable.

- With the commencement of efficiency saving plans, conveying response times have been difficult to maintain outside the Belfast area. Work is ongoing with the Director of Human Resources and the Equality Manager and a review of the CSR monitoring arrangements is underway.
- The question of conveying was raised by the Board and whether NIAS will achieve this target. It was advised that current financial constraints are an added pressure which will reduce the ability to be flexible with our plans.
- Non life-threatening calls - Cat B. Internal target of 95% responded to within 21 minutes. Currently falling short of this target with an increase in demand and conflict in deploying resources.
- It was considered that the target of 95% for response within 21 minutes for Cat B calls appears to be unrealistic. Director of Operations advised that the target is being met in the Belfast area however NIAS are realising the full impact of efficiency savings and there is a lot of work still to do to achieve this target. There is also the delay in hand over at A&E departments which is causing problems as this reduces the amount of hours available in the shift to convey again. It was noted that NIAS Managers work with A&E departments to help relieve congestion.
- The issue of whether clinical outcomes are any less effective by not meeting targets set was raised and the Board were advised that the current audit systems cannot measure this level of detail. Medical Director advised that evidence would suggest that a response within 8 minutes for Cat A calls does make a difference. He did say however that although there is no evidence to suggest that a quicker response for Cat B & C calls would make a difference to clinical outcomes, it is important to respond to these calls as soon as possible as the situation may be distressing for patients. Concern was expressed that some targets appear irrational and unachievable. It was further acknowledged that the Service has changed from the days when a patient was simply transported to hospital and clinical interventions are very significant.
- Doctor's Urgent calls – Medical Director and Director of Operations to carry out a review and it is hoped this will be completed by the end of October 2010.

Finance

Director of Finance updated members highlighting the following:

- The Trust continues to forecast a breakeven position as at the end of July 2010 with a small deficit of £33k. This is based on a number of assumptions which are assessed on an ongoing basis. The Trust is currently working with the HSC Board and the DHSSPS for support with investment.
- The cumulative total for year to end July 2010 for invoices paid within 30 days is 90.4%. This remains a focus for the team.
- Work is ongoing with the Financial Stability Programme of which the Chief Executive is a member. NIAS is co-operating with ongoing financial assessment of the Trust's ability to achieve the expected level of cash releasing savings.
- The Trust has received £1m capital investment and continues to work with the DHSSPS on a business case for the fleet replacement programme.
- In response to a question, the Board was advised that depreciation charges will not impact on the breakeven position.
- Work continues with the Business Service Organisation in relation to purchasing and supplies.

- 18 Freedom of Information Requests were processed in July 2010 and 19 Assembly Questions were received in June 2010.

Human Resources

Director of Human Resources updated members highlighting the following:

- The target of 5.2% for absenteeism is unlikely to be achieved. Absenteeism continues to reduce and is at its lowest for 10 years. Meetings are ongoing with Occupational Health. The Team continue working with Operational Managers to achieve the target.
- Training is on track to achieve. NIAS has recently successfully completed its HPC annual monitoring process. EDEXCEL/IHCD have completed their annual external accreditation visit and confirmed that the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service are meeting its requirements in relation to Paramedic In Training, BTEC for ACA and Driving. The Training Team were acknowledged for all their work.
- Complaints/Compliments – Members were referred to the Annual Report of Complaints contained within the End of Year HR Activity Report. Advanced training on complaint handling has been arranged for Senior Managers and training is being given to all NIAS staff as part of their continuous personal development.
- The Board remarked that there are lessons to be learned from complaints and noted the compliment from a GP which is very rewarding for staff to receive.

Medical

Medical Director updated members highlighting the following:

- Emergency Preparedness. Details of all exercises can be found in the attached Emergency Planning Report. The Major Incident Plan has been reviewed in 2009 and is due for further review in 2011. Emergency Planning Team is engaging in emergency planning developments with all emergency services both regionally and nationally. The Development of HART continues with training ongoing in a number of areas.
- Business Continuity Plan. Work continues in this area. Business Continuity Management arrangements have been subject to peer review by representatives from the East Midland and Scottish Ambulance Services in June 2010. NIAS Emergency Planning Officer was involved in review of Business Continuity arrangements in the Yorkshire and London Ambulance Services. NIAS also participated in a national Ambulance Services Fuel Resilience Benchmarking Exercise in May 2010. Some recommendations have arisen and an action plan is now being developed.
- A Regional Escalation Action Plan (REAP) developed during the recent surge in swine flu remains in place should a further surge in flu occur.
- Stroke Services. NIAS has participated in the regional development and implementation of stroke care pathways. Patients are tested using “FAST” and patients are brought to the appropriate hospital to be assessed quickly and treated as time is critical for a good recovery. Clinical Data shows 100% target has been achieved using the “FAST” test. Focus is required to improve compliance with, for example, blood glucose monitoring.
- Healthcare Associated Infections. No healthcare associated infections within the Trust have been reported.

A review of hygiene and cleanliness within the Trust was undertaken by RQIA in May 2010 and NIAS are awaiting this report. NIAS have been invited to participate in a regional forum for infection control.

- Patient Experience & Involvement. NIAS is engaged at regional level and an action plan is being developed.
- Service Frameworks. NIAS is involved in the implementation of end of life care strategies across a number of condition-specific workstreams.
- The Board asked if staff were trained to pronounce death and were advised that there is a nationally agreed procedure for this which is included in the "Recognition of Life Extinct" protocol.
- Clinical Quality. There are a number of conditions being monitored for national and regional audits eg stroke and acute cardiac care. Benchmarking performance against UK Ambulance services is ongoing. Activity in cardiac arrest has been monitored and has shown an increase in return of spontaneous circulation, attributed to improved response times and training of staff.
- Pharmacy arrangements have been rolled out and are working well. Pain packs have been introduced in advance of the introduction of controlled drugs which will allow procedures to be tested in advance of their introduction. This has been well received by staff and had resolved stock level issues.
- Pathway management. The Trust is engaged in the development of a number of care pathways. The review of the pilot involving GPs in Control has been completed and it is anticipated that this will be fully integrated within the call handling process.
- The Board asked how the Trust can respond to comments received in the patient satisfaction questionnaires. As these are anonymous, they cannot be pursued with individual patients. However these issues are highlighted elsewhere, e.g. through complaints and Untoward Incidents when any learning or actions are identified.

10.0 Policies/Procedures

- 10.1** Health & Wellbeing Strategy (including Health & Wellbeing Attendance Management Action Plan 2010/11)
- 10.2** Attendance Management Policy
- 10.3** Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy
- 10.4** Overtime Policy
- 10.5** Voluntary Transfer Policy

The above Strategy and Policies were presented for approval. After some discussion all of the above were approved on the proposal of Mr Shields and seconded by Prof Hanratty subject to one amendment to the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

Action: Director of Human Resources to add one sentence regarding the Trust's duty of care to staff.

11.0 For Noting

11.1 HR & Corporate Services End of Year Activity Report 2009/10

Noted.

11.2 Stress Management Procedure

The Trust has consulted with Managers and Trade Unions in regard to this procedure and it has been presented to the Health & Safety Committee.

Noted.

11.3 Programme for Cohesion Sharing and Integration

The Trust was commended within this document for good practice in diversity and good relations.

Noted.

11.4 Minutes of Audit Committee held 16 June 2010

Noted.

11.5 Long Service Medal Ceremonies – 19 November and 6 December 2010

The Board were advised of the plans to hold 2 ceremonies to acknowledge long service and good conduct. The Queen's Lord Lieutenant will present the medals. The Board were encouraged to attend at least one of the ceremonies.

Noted.

11.6 Trust Delivery Plan (TDP)

Correspondence has been received from the Regional Health & Social Care Board (HSC Board) advising that they are content with the TDP and have written to the DHSSPS recommending its approval.

Noted.

11.7 Response to Consultation "Proposals for a Safe & Sustainable Urgent Care Network in the South Eastern Trust"

The Trust's response to the South Eastern Trust proposals is contained within the papers. NIAS has been engaged at an early stage in this process.

Noted.

11.8 Regional Health & Social Care Board Invitation – February/March 2011

Members of the Board have been invited to a meeting of the HSC Board due to be held in February 2011. The HSC Board also intend to visit Omagh Ambulance Station in March 2011.

Noted.

11.9 Correspondence from Chief Constable, PSNI

Correspondence has been received from the Chief Constable praising staff for their support during public disorder incidents over the July period.

Noted.

11.10 Correspondence from the Scottish Parliament

Correspondence has been received from the Scottish Labour Party thanking NIAS for its hospitality during their recent visit in August 2010.

Noted.

12.0 Application of Trust Seal

The Trust Seal has not been used since the last Trust Board meeting.

13.0 FORUM FOR QUESTIONS

No questions received from the floor.

14.0 Any Other Business

None.

Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Trust Board will be held on Thursday, 25 November 2010 in the Eastern Division. Venue to be confirmed.

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

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairman