

NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

Minutes of a Meeting of Trust Board held on Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 1.30pm at the Silverbirch Hotel, 5 Gortin Road, Omagh, BT79 7DH

Present:

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

In Attendance:

Mrs M Crawford	Executive Administrator
Ms K Baxter	Senior Secretary

1.0 **Apologies**

None.

2.0 **Welcome and Format of the Meeting**

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

3.0 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting of the Trust Board held on 20 January 2011**

Members accepted the minutes as a true and accurate record of proceedings on the proposal of Prof Hanratty seconded by Mr Shields.

4.0 **Matters Arising**

4.1 **NIAS Response to Draft Budget 2011-15**

This item will be dealt with under Item 8.3

5.0 **Chairman's Business**

5.1 **Visit to Omagh Station**

The Board were impressed with the station which was very clean and tidy, facilities were good if a little cramped.

Training facilities were satisfactory and support is available for staff to develop professionally. The Board were impressed with the staff and the Board were able to see firsthand the operational realities for staff. These visits also give staff an opportunity to speak with Board members. Mr Shields raised an issue in relation to operational management which was addressed by Executive Directors present.

5.2 Chairman's Update

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

5.3 Corporate Planning Workshop

The Corporate Planning Workshop held on the 25 February 2011 was very enjoyable and beneficial as it gave Non-Executive Directors the opportunity to work with Executive Directors in a less formal setting. The Non-Executive Directors would welcome another opportunity to meet. It is hoped that a draft Corporate Plan 2011-14 will be ready for issue to the Board in April 2011.

6.0 Chief Executive's Business

6.1 Chief Executive's Update

Chief Executive advised that he recently met with the Leader of the SDLP regarding Downe Hospital. He was accompanied by the Medical Director and Assistant Director of Operations. The meeting was very useful as the Trust's position was clarified. Ms Ritchie was surprised at the level of investment to NIAS and recognised the work the Trust is doing within the confines of the budget available.

The Chief Executive presented a Belfast Telegraph "Making a Difference" award to a young man who helped to save a life. One of the Trust's staff, Mr Michael McConville was also nominated for the award. The Chief Executive has written to Mr McConville on behalf of the Trust.

The Chief Executive along with the Director of Operations attended the Ambulance Service Four Nations meeting in Scotland. The DHSSPS was also represented at this meeting by Dr Miriam McCarthy. These meetings have been re-established and it gives the opportunity for collaborative working and learning.

The Trust was visited recently by the Medical Director and Assistant Medical Director from the HSE National Ambulance Service. This meeting was about establishing relationships and building bridges. The new Chief Executive is also due to visit shortly. The Board endorsed this example of co-operation.

The Board enquired if there were any issues for NIAS given the recent RQIA report and the C-Difficile Inquiry. The RQIA report was very positive and the Trust was expecting positive feedback. This report was picked up by the media and was reflected in a negative way in relation to hand washing. However cleaning is available and is consistent with best practice.

It was advised that NIAS engaged with the C-Difficile Inquiry and there were no specific actions for NIAS. It was noted that the NIAS Communications Officer will make contact with the Northern Trust to ascertain what lessons were learned particularly in relation to the "Crisis Communication Plan" referenced in the report.

7.0 Assurance Framework as at 30 September 2010

The Chief Executive advised the Board that we are approaching the end of the first year of using the Assurance Framework for reporting performance. He added that there have been no new PFA's received from the Department which may be delayed due to the upcoming elections. The Chief Executive proposed to the Trust Board that the Assurance Framework for 2011/12 should be developed in the same fashion and in a similar format with any revisions necessary being incorporated as they are identified. Trust Board supported this approach, and endorsed the proposal.

Operations Exception Report

- NIAS did not achieve the first element of the PFA target (72.5% Cat A - 8 mins for NI by February 2011). The LCG target of 65% was only achieved in Belfast, Western and South Eastern LCGs. The LCG target was missed by, 3.2% in Northern LCG, 2.5% in Southern LCG. The severe winter and the exceptional growth in activity in December and January 2011 affected the cumulative performance. The focus will now be on continuing to achieve the best possible performance by month regionally and at LCG level and implementing performance improvement measures in an effort to achieve the 75% March 2011 element of the target. Principal concerns in respect of overall category A response are congestion in A&E Departments leading to longer handover times. Winter pressures around flu and severe weather affected performance. The Director of Operations advised that various measures were put in place however it was not possible to achieve the targets set. The HSC Board have been advised of the problems faced by the Trust. He added that consideration has been given by HSC Board to setting up a group to look at possible solutions to these problems. As no confirmation has yet been received of PFA targets the existing target will be rolled over to 2011/12. He wished to commend all staff in their efforts to achieve the targets set.
- The Board questioned the likelihood of Cat A calls being downgraded to B or C. The Board were advised that England is introducing these changes however they do not apply to Northern Ireland.
- The Board also raised the issue of figures for turnaround times at A&E departments and the impact this has on overall performance. It was noted that Hospitals are under considerable pressure however targets are not useful if patients are queuing at A&E Departments.
- The Board considered that when the system was pushed the performance increased for February and March 2011 and questioned why the same performance cannot be achieved every month, asking what is the greatest limiting factor preventing the Trust from achieving the target set. The principal limiting factor in relation to ability to respond is having sufficient response units readily available in the right place. A&E Vehicles are also used for GP urgent and hospital transfers. Managers have been working consistently from April 2010 and some success was experienced. It was noted that every failure to achieve is reviewed as staff are committed to delivering the best service possible.

- The Board further considered that given the implementation of the efficiency savings coupled with the harsh winter that the performance achieved is commendable.
- Cat B target has been achieved in Belfast Area only. The Cat C has been achieved for all areas of Northern Ireland. NIAS needs to realise a 3.5% cumulative improvement to achieve the Cat B target. The focus for the Trust has been on Cat A calls and there are concerns regarding Doctor's urgent calls as there are times when these patients are more acutely ill than some of the 999 calls. The Medical Director and Director of Operations are to meet to discuss this issue.

Finance & ICT Exception Report

- The Trust continues to forecast a breakeven position at year end, subject to, assumptions in relation to Agenda for Change, efficiency savings and investment. These assumptions are regularly discussed with the HSC Board and assessed on an ongoing basis to determine the impact which may significantly affect "break-even". Financial statements for 2010/11 are currently being compiled. There is currently a deficit of £8k.
- Investment and Infrastructure on track to be delivered.
- Value of spend – stock and non stock, increase due to a range of purchases including medical equipment.

Human Resources & Corporate Services Exception Report

- Absence – Members were referred to P.53 where a comparative analysis has been made between NIAS and other HSC Trusts. It was considered that the target for NIAS requires review. Absence figures for Control have increased and a meeting has been arranged with managers to discuss. This increase may be related to changes in shift patterns. A new absence procedure is being developed and it is hoped to get agreement from Trade Unions in May 2011. The main reason for absence remains muscular skeletal injuries and NIAS has introduced an initiative for staff to be fast tracked to physiotherapy at the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) occupational therapy. The Director of Human Resources gave Board members details on absence in the various departments within NIAS. She added that departments within Headquarters are made up of small teams and any absence can have a major impact. Monthly meetings continue with Managers to address. Ongoing discussion continued with the Board who raised concerns regarding the extent of absenteeism which may require more scrutiny by the Board.
- Complaints – on track to achieve. The Board queried why 63% of complaints were responded to after 20 working days and requested a further breakdown of this information to show clearly how long it takes to respond. Prof Hanratty added that all complaints are presented and interrogated at the Assurance Committee.

Action: Director of Human Resources to include a breakdown of information on response times to complaints after 20 days in HR Year End Report due to be presented to the Board in July 2011.

- The Board noted the compliments which were very commendable with some very interesting stories. It was confirmed that staff who receive compliments receive a letter praising their actions from the Chief Executive.

Medical Exception Report

- Stroke – The Trust continues to do well in this area with patients suspected of suffering a stroke transferred within the set timeframes. The measure of blood glucose measurement remains an area for improvement. This will be a focus for the future.
- C-Difficile Inquiry – The Medical Director advised that prior to the Inquiry the Trust had engaged with a regional group and no changes to NIAS practices were required.
- The introduction of controlled drugs commences on 25 March 2011 and all Stations will have access to the drugs by next week. Discussion ensued regarding the use and storing of drugs and it was noted that relevant procedures are in place. A monthly report is required by the Department on this issue.

Action: Monthly report to Department to be shared with Assurance Committee.

8.0 For Noting

8.1 Minutes of Assurance Committee held on the 20 January 2011

The Director of Human Resources wished it to be noted that Ms Linda Gregg, Assistant Director of HR was deputising on her behalf at the meeting held in January 2011.

Noted.

8.2 Minutes of Audit Committee held on the 20 January 2011

Noted.

8.3 NIAS Response to Draft Budget 2011-15

The response to the Draft Budget was issued in time to be considered.

Noted.

8.4 Health Committee/HSC Board Correspondence on Ambulance Response in Rural Areas

Noted.

9.0 Application of Trust Seal

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

10.0 Forum for Questions

No questions received from the floor.

11.0 Any Other Business

11.1 Controls Assurance Standards

Recruitment and Selection Policy has been reviewed and is fit for purpose.

Noted.

11.2 Annual Report Programme

The first draft of the annual report should be ready in April 2011 which will be shared with the Board. Auditors require the report by May 2011.

Noted.

Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Trust Board will be held at NIAS Headquarters, on Thursday, 19 May 2011.

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

Signed: _____
(Chairman)

Date: _____