

NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

Minutes of a Meeting of Trust Board held on Thursday, 20 January 2011 at 1.30pm at the Seagoe Hotel, Upper Church Lane, Portadown, Co Armagh, BT63 5JE

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
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
Mrs P McAllister	Senior Secretary

1.0 Apologies

Mr N McKinley, 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 and explained the arrangements for receiving questions from the public attending. The Chairman formally welcomed the two new Non-Executive Directors, Mr Sean McKeever and Ms Angela Paisley, who were appointed by the Minister on 1 December 2010 to replace Mr Seamus Mullan and Mr Frank Hughes who had both completed their terms of appointment.

3.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of the Trust Board held on 25 November 2010

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

4.0 Matters Arising

4.1 Financial Stability 2010/11

The Chief Executive reminded the Board that the Financial Stability Programme Board which is led by John Compton, Chief Executive of the Health & Social Care Board (HSCB) is still in operation. He advised that further assessments of the Trust's financial position have been carried out by HSCB which confirms that NIAS are still on target to deliver savings and achieve breakeven.

For the benefit of the new members the Chief Executive explained that NIAS is committed to a three year programme of efficiency savings, of which this is Year 3, where £4.4m has been removed from the base-line. He stated that NIAS developed a programme to link both investment and efficiency savings. Response times have been improved in spite of efficiency savings, GP's have been introduced into Control and thrombolysis has been rolled out.

The Chief Executive went on to address the budget proposals for 2011-2015 and stated that NIAS concerns will be highlighted in a formal response referring to the reduction in both revenue and capital and recognising that early decisions will need to be taken to address financial profiling.

The Chief Executive outlined potential impact on NIAS due to reduction in budgets across all Trusts as referenced in DHSSPS Consultation document:

- Closure of A&E Departments
- Increase in diverts
- Delays in handover at A&E Departments
- Loss of other services on Hospital sites
- Demands for services elsewhere
- Unable to use agency or locum staff.
- Reduced capabilities.
- Currently dealing with one airport alert per week

The Executive Team will be meeting to look at scenarios and develop proposals. Totality of spend will be considered with the focus on continuing to provide safe, high quality care.

The Board raised the issue of closures of A&E departments and the protocols that are in place to deal with this situation. NIAS has protocols in place to deal with closures and patients are transferred to the nearest appropriate hospital. It was noted that sporadic short notice of closures can affect planning however the Control Centre can respond quickly.

The Chief Executive expressed concern around continuing capacity to deal effectively with major incidents and outlined as an example the Mourne Helicopter incident which coincided with a significant RTA in Belfast.

The Board raised concern about cost reduction being placed on all Trusts and its impact and pressures on NIAS. The Chief Executive stated that the HSC Board recognise the Trust's position. He added that being involved in the Financial Stability Programme Board may give some protection.

He stated that uncertainty around the impact of the budget review will have to be addressed. He added that the Trust will need to adopt a prudent approach and make assumptions in line with other Trusts.

5.0 Chairman's Business

5.1 Visit to Craigavon Station

The Chairman commented that although physical conditions in this station were in need of attention staff morale was high. He added that this was a very busy ambulance station operating in a cramped building He extended thanks to the Area Manager and staff for their hospitality.

Mr McKeever apologised for not attending the Station visit.

The Board expressed their thanks to the staff for their warm welcome and openness despite the working conditions. Concerns were also expressed about the safe storage of drugs, the condition of the building and problems with access and egress at the site.

The Director of Operations highlighted the following:-

- NIAS is complying with statutory responsibilities in terms of storage of drugs.
- The current station is meeting basic requirements.
- Work is progressing with the Southern Trust to identify a new location which does not necessarily have to be on hospital grounds.

The Chief Executive stated that in the past ambulance stations tended to be located to the rear of hospitals which no longer reflect the needs of the ambulance service. The intention is to develop fit for purpose stations based on NIAS requirements and ideally placed to meet response targets. He thanked the staff for their tolerance in relation to the working conditions of the Station.

5.2 Chairman's Update

The Chairman advised the Board of the retirement of Mr Kenny McMahon, Area Manager of the Southern Division after 38 years of service. On behalf of members he wished Kenny well for the future.

The Chairman gave a brief outline of his diary commitments since the last Board meeting which included induction meetings with the new Non Executive Directors.

6.0 Chief Executive's Business

6.1 Chief Executive's Update

Chief Executive advised that the recent cold spell added to the pressures of NIAS. He advised that a debriefing meeting is scheduled for Monday, 31 January 2011 to look at lessons learned. NIAS was engaged with other agencies throughout this period with frequent meetings taking place.

7.0 Assurance Framework as at 30 September 2010

Operations

- Category A performance target for the 2010/11 year regrettably will not be achieved and the focus now will be on continuing to achieve the best possible performance and implementing performance improvement measures to achieve the 75% response within 8 minutes March 2011 element of the target. NIAS had very significant challenges to deal with over Christmas and New Year compounded this year with prolonged snow and ice. A lot of NIAS vehicles are not parked under cover and problems were experienced with air bags freezing. Staff were under pressure covering the holiday period and pressures were made worse by the prolonged, inclement weather. The Resource Centre staff also worked particularly hard during this time. Some non essential services were cancelled which alleviated some of the pressures. Officers also worked with A&E departments and the Doctors in Control contributed to managing pressures. He added that there were no reports of any serious adverse incidents during this period. The Director of Operations wished to commend all staff who worked very hard during this time and in particularly difficult conditions. The Chief Executive advised that voluntary agencies, St John and the Red Cross assisted during these pressures.
- The Board commented that it was remarkable that the Trust were able to continue to deliver a service in these extreme weather conditions over the Christmas and New Year period. Staff should be commended for a job well done. It was added that climatic conditions are not taken into account when targets are set. The media coverage of the cancellation of non emergency cover was considered to be the best way of communicating this information to members of the public.

Concerns regarding Category A response are: winter pressures around flu, delays at A&E departments and predications for severe weather.

Medical

- The development of HART continues and the Trust is on target to provide capability.
- An Assistant Emergency Planning Officer has been tasked to work full time on the Business Continuity Planning development.
- At a recent meeting with Medical Directors in the other five Trusts it was agreed in principle that NIAS could have access to their expertise in Healthcare Associated Infections and formal arrangements for this will be progressed. There have been no reports of healthcare associated infections within NIAS within this current year.
- The Trust is engaging with the Patient Client Council in establishing a "Patient Reference Group". A number of staff have been trained to observe practice and obtain patient stories in keeping with the regional developments.
- The Trust has engaged with a number of regional groups such as Regional Cancer Network and primary care group of NICAN regarding end of life care pathways. A presentation was made by the NIAS Medical Director to a regional cardiology meeting in relation to the ambulance contribution to the development of paramedic

- administered thrombolysis and PCI which was very well received.
- Quarterly meetings are taking place to facilitate appropriate Trust action and learning from untoward incidents, complaints and disciplinaries.
 - A number of draft Clinical Quality Indicators have been proposed in England and their introduction will be closely monitored by NIAS. The Medical Director and Director of Operations will continue to participate in these developments nationally.
 - Formal and robust protocols are being developed for a number of condition-specific treat and leave and treat and refer protocols to be introduced within year.

Finance & ICT

The Trust is showing a deficit of £132k at the end of November 2010. This included a movement of provisions of £98k, which leaves a small deficit of £34k. The Trust continues to predict a breakeven position at year end. The forecasted breakeven position is entirely dependent on a range of assumptions. There are some uncertainties for the Trust one of which is the eventual outcome of Agenda for Change. Possible outcomes have been and continue to be discussed with the HSC Board.

- The Trust is complying with Key Performance Indicators set by the Business Service Organisation for purchasing and supplies management.
- 10 Assembly questions were received for November 2010.

Human Resources & Corporate Services

- The target for absence is unlikely to be achieved by year end even though considerable progress on absence management has been made this year. A comparative analysis of HSC absence showing absence for professional grades in HSC Trusts has been included within the papers. An action plan has been developed; however, a delay in implementing the Attendance Management Procedure was highlighted. This issue remains a priority for all Managers.
- The Board requested that the total of staff in each department is shown along with the percentages of absence which will show clearly the amount of staff involved.
- They also raised the question of response performance in areas where absenteeism is high. They were advised that response performance is not necessarily affected as areas are covered through overtime therefore when the target of absenteeism is not being achieved, service delivery is not necessarily adversely affected.

8.0 Policies/Procedures/Business Cases

8.1 Communication Strategy

The Communications Strategy was discussed at the last Board meeting and it was agreed to strengthen the areas of external communication.

The Board enquired why Control is not covered within this document in the event that the control centre would be overwhelmed with calls.

The procedure for the Control room was explained as relating more to business continuity and relevant arrangements in place for control business continuity were outlined.

8.2 Business Case – Ballymena

Members were advised that the current station is housed on the Braidvalley site which is owned by the Northern Trust. The site is undergoing redevelopment and the ambulance station site is required as part of the redevelopment. The new location should improve response times and will have garages to house vehicles. Divisional Headquarters will also be based at the new site. It was added that the Trust has to ensure staff are provided with a safe and secure working environment. The reduction in capital funds to DHSSPS was noted but it was felt important to progress to securing approval for this and other business cases. Trust Board sought and received assurance that internal capacity in business case development had been enhanced through this process.

The business case was approved on the proposal of Prof Hanratty and seconded by Ms Paisley.

9.0 For Noting

9.1 Minutes of Assurance Committee held on the 22 September 2010

Noted.

9.2 Minutes of Audit Committee held on the 22 September 2010

Noted.

9.3 Equality Scheme

Noted.

12.0 Application of Trust Seal

The Trust Seal has been used on one occasion since the last Board meeting. This was for a land exchange at Mourne Hospital site.

13.0 Forum for Questions

No questions received from the floor.

14.0 Any Other Business

14.1 Whistleblowing

The Chairman advised members that the Whistleblowing phone will be held by Ms Paisley until a review of the policy takes place.

Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Trust Board will be held in the Western Division on Thursday, 24 March 2011, venue to be confirmed.

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

Signed: _____
(Chairman)

Date: _____