



**MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE & FINANCE
COMMITTEE HELD AT 9.30AM ON
THURSDAY 10 APRIL 2025 IN THE BOARDROOM, NIAS HQ**

PRESENT: Mr P Corrigan Committee Chair
Mr J Dennison Non-Executive Director
Mr P Quinn Non-Executive Director

IN

ATTENDANCE: Mr N Henry Assistant Director of Governance,
Risk and Assurance
Ms L Donnelly Interim Director of Finance
Ms S Beggs Manager of Chair and Chief
Executive Office
Mr S Mullen Interim Director of Planning,
Performance and Corporate
Services
Mr N Walker Head of Performance, Planning
and Corporate Services
Mr W Abernethy Management Accountant
Mr N Sinclair Chief Paramedic Officer

1 Apologies & Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

2 Procedure

2.1 Declaration of Potential Conflicts of Interest

The Chair asked those present to declare any potential conflicts of interest now or as the meeting progressed.

No declarations of conflict of interest were made.

2.2 Quorum

The Chair confirmed the Committee as quorate.

2.3 Confidentiality of Information

The Chair emphasised the confidentiality of information.

2.4 Terms of Reference (ToR)

The Chair referred to section six of the terms of reference and reminded members of the remit of the Committee which is to review the Trust Financial strategy, major strategic initiatives, and financial and operational performance, and provide the Board with a level of assurance.

The Committee discussed its role in terms of the approval of business cases and its responsibility in this regard compared to Trust Board. Mr Corrigan and Mr Dennison noted that there have been conversations about this in the past and that it would be useful to confirm what, if anything, is documented in the Standing Orders. Ms Donnelly suggested that business cases relating to substantive capital expenditure should be brought to the Committee, such as the Fleet Business Case which is being prepared at present.

Mr Quinn suggested the Committee oversee items that are strategically relevant and provide governance oversight for large business cases involving sizeable expenditure.

Mr Corrigan requested a paper at the next meeting outlining the current standing orders for delegated authority, the big investments, and a proposal from the Finance team on how it best works. He suggested that the Committee review the proposal to be considered at Trust Board.

ACTION: Ms Donnelly

The Chair referred to the performance element of the terms of reference and noted that the Committee needs to prioritise its focus on strategic and high-level matters e.g. high level strategic objectives, transformation projects and programmes. It will be important for the Committee to work out how the Committee can provide assurance to Trust Board without duplicating and that the Committee will need to consider the level of detail required at Committee level to raise matters in a meaningful way to Trust Board.

Mr Quinn highlighted that the Committee are reviewing papers and discussing strategy development, but it is ultimately the Board's responsibility to develop transformation. It seems appropriate for the Committee to monitor strategy development, and this may need to be included within the Terms of Reference. Mr Corrigan agreed with the importance of the Committee receiving regular updates on strategy development and noted that the terms of reference will be reviewed annually however, they can be tweaked in advance if required.

2 Performance Report March 2025 (SPF10/04/25/01)

Mr Corrigan noted that the tabled performance report is the same one that was reviewed at Trust Board recently and therefore there is little value in focusing Committee time to it today. Going forward, the Committee will review performance metrics and Trust Board will also be provided with oversight of performance from an assurance perspective, but not to the same level of detail.

Mr Walker gave an overview of the current format of the performance report and the included metrics. The Committee discussed its role and responsibility relevant to other Committees in terms of appraising performance. Mr Henry noted that one of the intended purposes of the Committee was to facilitate sufficient time to scrutinise performance at Committee level, given that performance discussions at Trust Board can be limited to busy agendas. The Committee may wish to escalate particular performance issues to Trust Board after reviewing the performance report in its entirety.

Mr Corrigan added that there has been a disconnect up until now as the performance report has been a monthly report, submitted to SMT and then the most recent one submitted to Trust Board, therefore the Committee need to think through how that would work better.

Mr Sinclair said focus is required on how response times are improved, it's not about hitting targets, its about doing the right thing for patients. Mr Sinclair noted the update at Trust Board needs to be a more succinct executive summary of key highlights, highlighting the synergy between response times and clinical outcomes.

Mr Dennison suggested that the performance report could be amended to have an executive summary setting out the key issues: the main areas of underperformance and any ongoing priority areas to try and improve. The underlying detail is important and provides really rich information, but the Committee might struggle to extract the information they need to focus on. Mr Dennison acknowledged the amount of work that goes into this report and reiterated that the feedback is not in a critical manner, but the report needs to be reviewed in order for NEDs to deliver their duties.

Mr Walker responded that it has been really helpful to have the discussion, to understand what is required.

Mr Mullan noted that the performance report will have to be amended over time to adapt to the new commissioning metrics which NIAS will be held to account for by SPPG as part of the Strategic Outcomes Framework. Mr Mullen confirmed for Mr Corrigan that NIAS are still reporting on the previous framework, but there are regional discussions with SPPG about transitioning into one reporting process but is unsure yet what that key metrics will be. Mr Corrigan suggested realigning this to the NIAS Strategic Plan, which Mr Mullen agreed with.

Mr Dennison said that coming to the end of the strategic plan, and developing the new plan, the Committee need to know what needs progressed longer term in the future and suggested picking out a subject area to focus on at each Committee.

Mr Quinn suggested raising the commissioning plan with Mr Farrar which was discussed at a committee a while ago. Mr Quinn noted that there are system pressures and commented on the poor Category 2 performance and the translation of this into delayed responses and increased patient harm/SAls being reported. Mr Quinn emphasized that it is important that poor performance and long ED handovers do not become normalized and there is a need to highlight these performance pressures.

Mr Corrigan emphasised that he doesn't want to create extra work in relation to the report, but it is important that it includes the right level of detail required in an Executive summary including narrative with key issues or areas of concerns to be highlighted at Trust Board.

Mr Quinn suggested keeping the report as it is but highlighting a couple of key aspects to focus on i.e. what underpins or underlies what this report tells the Committee. Cat 1 and 2 response times are very important to look at. Mr Dennison added the Executive Summary should bring the items required to their attention.

The Committee **AGREED** that the performance report should be amended to have an Executive Summary upfront highlighting key areas of performance and improvement action, with the underlying detail provided in the papers. The Committee further **AGREED** that it would be useful to focus on particular areas of performance through a “Deep Dive” at each Committee meeting.

ACTION: Mr Mullen/Mr Walker

4 **Finance Report (Month 11) (SPF10/04/25/02)**

Ms Donnelly presented the Month 11 Report (Jan 25) and explained the key highlights.

In relation to RRL, as at Month 11, the Trust was reporting YTD expenditure of £110.396m, with an underspend of £ 0.168m when compared to YTD profiled budgets. (£10.381m monthly spend). The main change from the Month 10 position was the allocation of £5.103m of the pay award funding, increasing the Trust allocation from SPPG from £119.116m to £124.270m. In Month 11, the savings plan to deliver £2.475m of savings was also on track to be achieved in full.

Month 12 expenditure is expected to increase in line with expenditure profiles and for reasons including the 2024-25 pay award. Ms Donnelly noted that, at the time of the Committee meeting, NIAS remains on track to deliver a break-even position at year-end.

The Committee discussed the processes put in place to fund the 2024-25 pay award and whether this would affect the year end position. Ms Donnelly advised that the finance team is actively working on that issue and does not expect this to be a risk.

Ms Donnelly further noted that for financial year 2025-26, NIAS will be reviewing the funding requirement and associated evidence to support the funding position going forward. In addition, the finance

team will be seeking to optimise resources for NIAS's use and will engage with SPPG on any potential shortfalls.

Mr Corrigan highlighted the discrepancy that arose last financial year with investment being provided and misalignment with workforce availability and recruitment timescales, and that it was important to ensure that a similar issue did not arise this year. Mr Corrigan noted the importance of demonstrating credibility to SPPG.

Mr Sinclair said that the clear focus 10 days into the new financial year should be to proactively recruit to vacant and new posts as early as possible. The team are trying to piece together and be on the front foot with lead times and challenges with delays regarding recruitment. Mr Sinclair noted that there is a degree of certainty around cohorts of NQPs coming out of university and there is a need to focus on recruitment activities for Advanced Paramedics and EMTs.

Ms Donnelly advised that plans are developed this year to work with directorates and budget holders to project the financial requirements for next year to ensure there is evidence for next year's funding. Ms Donnelly said there is an indicative allocation of £122 million but this didn't take into account the £5m for the pay award - the actual allocation will be notified at the end of May.

Mr Quinn pointed out there is a revenue consequence due to the restructuring of staff and sought clarification that NIAS are being dynamic with the budget, recognising there is a resource need there. Mr Abernethy responded that they are looking at the position and considering new starts. There is a new cohort of EMT staff in the current month, 48 new staff from university and they are working out the budget number for next year. Ms Donnelly added that they are identifying the contingencies so NIAS can benefit from them.

Ms Donnelly confirmed that there was significant provision for the historic holiday pay dispute, which DoH are leading on. Ms McAuley is leading on this within NIAS and Ms Donnelly agreed to get an update on figures.

ACTION: Ms Donnelly

In relation to CRL, as at Month 11, the Trust has received a CRL of £8.837m. (This includes the additional £1.1m to support pressures.) The year end capital work is progressing well and, the forecast is a break-even position at year-end.

Ms Donnelly advised the Committee that in terms of the indicative budget they are basing this on the rolling initial allocation and the team are reaching out to directorates to see what their funding requirements are.

Ms Donnelly has met with the DoH to discuss the consequences of higher inflationary costs for example for fleet. Ms Donnelly noted that there is anticipated to be significant budgetary constraints within HSC this financial year, but that she will continue to liaise with DoH to communicate any pressures and try to secure any funds that may be available.

Mr Quinn referred to the agenda for change regarding job evaluations and asked if there is a delay in getting jobs evaluated for the Ops Restructure. Mr Quinn is considering raising the issue with Mr Farrar if required, however, Mr Sinclair advised it is an internal process.

5 Overview of finance reporting & suggested priorities for future SPF Meetings.

There are five meetings of SPF scheduled for 2025/26: April, June, September, November, and February 2026.

Ms Donnelly outlined the intention to provide the Committee with more granular information, reports, and updates than are currently received by the Trust Board or the previous PFOD Committee. This will give further additional assurance to the Board that there is a satisfactory level of ongoing and detailed scrutiny regarding the Trusts financial position, financial forecasting, and forward financial plans. Ms Donnelly provided the Committee with a table of proposed reports that the Committee will be presented with through the year and welcomed the members feedback on any changes required.

The Chair said that he would like this Committee to have an oversight of the savings plan, which is reported in the current monthly finance report.

ACTION: Ms Donnelly

Mr Corrigan would also like some narrative on Fleet and queried where issues pertaining to Fleet are currently reported. It was confirmed that fleet expenditure would fall under Capital and the Chair requested further detail to be included in relation to Fleet and Ms Donnelly said she would be happy to share this information. Mr

Henry added that it was a recommendation from Internal Audit last year for Committees to have more visibility of fleet matters and it would be built in this year for fleet to come to the SPF Committee in relation to the spend side with an opportunity to have a deep dive into fleet.

ACTION: Ms Donnelly / Mr Mullen

Mr Henry confirmed for Mr Quinn that the sustainability for fleet was another recommendation for this Committee to have sight of. Mr Quinn suggested it would be useful for the Committee to receive more information on this.

ACTION: Mr Mullen

Mr Dennison alluded to reforecasting and Ms Donnelly confirmed she has implemented a more robust process to ensure accurate reforecasting. There is an initial budget allocation for each Directorate and the Finance team meet with teams each month to update their reforecasting profiles, with a formal exercise taking place in October and before Christmas. Mr Corrigan would expect to see a forecast with a degree of accuracy by month four and Ms Donnelly said she would advise the Committee of the plan in due course.

ACTION: Ms Donnelly

6 Overview of strategic transformation initiatives & suggested priorities for future SPF meetings (SPF10/04/25/03)

Mr Mullan presented a paper outlining the proposed meeting structure, schedule and exemplar of papers for the Committee.

He referred to the earlier discussion regarding the performance report and that the team plans to make it easier to digest highlighting the key priorities.

The plan includes a proposal of agreed areas of focus in addition to Ms Donnelly's information so the Committee can see in advance what items are being discussed to ensure papers are ready in advance.

Mr Corrigan said that the plan looks good as a starter and all the main areas are covered. It will be an ongoing developing process and as some meeting dates don't have the CTF Committee after, there will be more time to focus on areas at this Committee.

Mr Corrigan offered Directors to email him papers in advance of the June meeting if it is helpful.

7 NIAS 2026-36 Strategy Development Process (SPF10/04/25/04)

Mr Mullen explained that Trust Board has previously discussed the NIAS Corporate strategy development process and timeline at a meeting in September 2024. It was subsequently agreed that a task and finish steering group be established to oversee the strategy development process and ensure ownership across directorates. Trust Board endorsed this approach and tasked a NED to chair the process, which Mr Quinn has agreed to do.

Mr Mullen noted that two members of staff with public health experience will shortly be joining NIAS to begin the detailed work to establish a draft strategy by the end of this calendar year.

Mr Quinn suggested that due to the work involved, the strategy should be for a period of 10 years, 2026-36 and Mr Mullen said it is within NIAS' gift to decide how long it is. Mr Corrigan agreed it is beneficial to look forward but suspects in terms of getting into the detail, they might only be able to look at two or three years ahead. Mr Quinn said it will be challenging to project far ahead, but they are trying to envision what an ambulance service could look like in five to six years, which he thinks is the approach that needs to be taken. The team have brought in two critical skills sets for data and project management.

Mr Dennison reminded the Committee that initially, a decision was taken to proceed with the strategy development and to not wait on a new Chief Executive. However, he suggested looking at the process again in Autumn after the background work had been undertaken, and review whether or not to proceed if there is no permanent Chief Executive by that stage.

Mr Quinn noted that engagement with service users and stakeholders is a key element and Mr Mullen confirmed that there is already an existing patient forum which Mr Neil Gillan supports and has established strong relationships with. The plan is to ask two members of that forum to join the Strategy Development group.

Mr Corrigan noted in terms of governance that this Committee is the natural place for oversight and progress of the workplan but ultimate

sign off is with the Board. He suggested tabling this as a standing item at each Committee for a progress update, depending on how often the steering group is and doing a deeper dive once a year.

ACTION: Ms Beggs/Mr Mullen

Mr. Quinn discussed the need for a detailed timeline and the importance of having a strategic away day with Mr. Mike Farrar. He mentioned that it can be beneficial to step back from day-to-day duties and work with an experienced facilitator, especially after the team has gathered a variety of perspectives.

8 Any other business

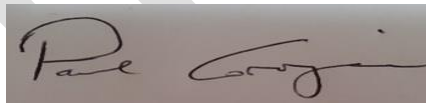
There were no matters discussed.

9 Next meeting:

19 June, 18 September, 27 November and 5 February

THIS BEING ALL THE BUSINESS, THE CHAIR DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 11:15AM

SIGNED:



DATE: 19/6/25