



STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE (SPF)

Date: 5 February 2026
Time: 9.30 am
Location: Board Room, NIAS HQ

Attendance	
Chair:	Paul Corrigan
Attendees:	Phelim Quinn (Non-Executive Director) Jim Dennison (Non-Executive Director) <i>Joined via MS Teams</i>
In Attendance:	Leahann Donnelly (Interim Director of Finance) Seamus Mullen (Interim Director of PPCS) Neil Sinclair (Interim Director of Operations)
Apologies:	

Minutes of Meeting		
Agenda Item	Summary of the discussion	Actions Agreed
1.	<u>Apologies & Remarks</u> The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted there were no apologies.	
2.	<u>Procedure: Declaration of potential conflict/pecuniary interest/confidentiality of information/quorum</u> 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.	
3.	<u>Previous Minutes – 27/11/25</u> The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 November 2025 were APPROVED on a proposal from Mr Quinn and seconded by Mr Dennison.	
4.	<u>Matters Arising</u> The Committee NOTED the updates to the attached matters arising (Appendix One).	



	<p>(Action 2) hasn't been completed and is to be carried forward - Business case SOP / flowchart to be created to assist business case owners.</p> <p>(Action 3) Ms Donnelly to provide further detail of full figure of GRS</p> <p>(Action 5) Ms Donnelly suggested bringing this back as an agenda item and Mr Corrigan said to ensure there are metrics and costs developed for fleet, and suggested this is reported twice a year. Mr Mullen said it would be helpful to include graphs that Mr Flannagan previously presented and Mr Corrigan agreed and said these need to be presented as a full picture with the finance information.</p> <p>Mr Mullen advised the team are progressing with a new fleet expenditure management system which will provide improved metrics on costs and maintenance.</p> <p>Mr Dennison referred to page four of the previous minutes regarding 0.3% of sites being functionally suitable and that he recalled they would flag this issue with the Board and GARAC to consider if it should be put on the risk register. Mr Quinn recalled there was an explanation provided by Mr Harrison at the meeting, however Mr Mullen agreed to follow up and provide up to date assurance. Mr Corrigan suggested providing this explanation with a view to consider escalating to GARAC as a Directorate or Corporate Risk Register.</p>	<p>Ms Donnelly / Mr Mullen</p> <p>Ms Donnelly</p> <p>Mr Mullen/Ms Donnelly</p> <p>Mr Mullen</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><u>Standing Items</u></p> <p><u>5.1 Performance Report</u> The Committee NOTED the Performance Report(s). Mr Corrigan met with Mr Mullen and Ms Donnelly to review future reports and Mr Mullen has provided an alternative Performance Reporting structure for consideration.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the Cat 1 mean has increased during a period of significant and sustained pressure, as well as Cat 2 and 3's. NIAS remain around a quarter of capacity lost which is significantly impacting on all other areas of service delivery, which is also impacted by ambulance handovers and ASOS.</p>	



<p>The Committee noted that staff sickness is currently 9.9% which is still high and that the main risk is patient safety in the community due to delays. NIAS are engaging with colleagues regarding a regional handover protocol and have met with Directors across Trusts, and there is another meeting on 17 February with SPPG and Trusts to agree a protocol by the end of March.</p> <p>Mr Corrigan conveyed his frustration that there is little progress with the handover protocol whilst performance continues to deteriorate.</p> <p>Mr Quinn agreed and is concerned with the deterioration demonstrated in the report and the impact on public and staff.</p> <p>The Committee queried if NED's within other Trusts are aware of the impact on NIAS and the public and Mr Quinn agreed to speak to the Chief Executive and Chair in advance of the next CiC meeting regarding the concerns.</p> <p>Mr Sinclair agreed it's a very challenging situation and suggested seeking legal advice as NIAS are questioned under oath at Coroners court regarding ambulance delays and NIAS need to be clear on the legal responsibility.</p> <p>Mr Dennison agreed with colleagues' frustrations and acknowledged this is most likely amplified by staff and agreed for NIAS to query the contractual and statutory obligation. Mr Dennison agreed it is reasonable for NIAS to ask the DoH to provide a clear direction on whether NIAS keep the patient or leave them due to the risks to patient harm. He suggested that the NIAS Board escalate the serious concerns of patient safety.</p> <p>Mr Corrigan suggested seeking escalation from Trust Board on 19 February, once they receive an update from the CiC meeting on 17 February.</p> <p>Mr Mullen returned to the Performance report and referred to the executive summary for paper three which is a new format as a result of helpful suggestions from NED's. NIAS also reviewed reports from five other ambulance trusts for good practice examples and created a proposal. Within the proposed summary, there is a range of KPI's and members can see a quick snapshot on whether NIAS are failing or on target.</p>	<p>Mr Quinn</p>
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	<p>Mr Quinn is pleased with the layout which is more helpful and understanding. He suggested keeping the first slide (statistical flow chart) to help members understand what they mean.</p> <p>Mr Dennison pointed out that the summaries are contained throughout the new format and prefers the executive summary at the front with further detail behind it. Mr Quinn and Mr Corrigan agreed with this.</p> <p>Mr Corrigan suggested submitting the current format and new format to Trust Board to consider as they also receive this report.</p> <p>Mr Corrigan referred to the current report (slide 3) referred to earlier re: handover and the chart at the bottom which provides quarter by quarter trust performance against the two-hour delay, and requested that this remains.</p> <p>Mr Quinn advised he will discuss culture at PCOD next week in terms of the concerning trend in relation to sick absence. He elaborated that the figures demonstrate a continual frustration from staff which is having an impact on NIAS.</p> <p><u>5.2 Finance Report – Month 7</u></p> <p>The Committee NOTED the Month 7 Finance Report.</p> <p>Mr Corrigan pointed out that any scrutiny and challenge is to NIAS as an Organisation and not the Interim Finance Director.</p> <p>The Chair of the Board has asked this Committee to increase the level of scrutiny of finance to provide assurance to the Board due to a very challenging financial position. An extraordinary Board meeting took place in December which clearly raised the profile and importance for this Committee to understand the finances to give a review and direction at Trust Board.</p> <p>Ms Corrigan thanked the Finance Team for the improved level of financial reporting and transparency, but there are issues regarding the organisations financial grip, ownership and budgeting performance effectively.</p>	<p>Mr Mullen</p> <p>Mr Mullen</p>
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Mr Corrigan had agreed with Ms Donnelly for the Finance report to be delayed to ensure they are getting the most up to date information.

Mr Corrigan sought clarity on the status of the £14 million and what NIAS will use this money for and Ms Donnelly confirmed this is still to be confirmed and that NIAS (Ms Donnelly, Mr Mullen and Mr Arandia) are responding to the KPI's and metrics for SPPG.

The Committee noted that the pay award funding is being regarded separately due to insufficient funds and NIAS have to comply with the Minister's direction, and therefore have permission to go into deficit of that value. Ms Donnelly confirmed for Mr Quinn that in terms of end of year figures, it will show as an overspend but will be an allowed overspend. NIAS are unsure how it will work next year and there are ongoing discussions with SPPG and DoH to confirm this.

Mr Corrigan referred to the acceptance of overspend, however NIAS are instructed to break even and have done everything they can to achieve. Ms Donnelly confirmed that auditors and NIAO are aware of this and the outcome in the audit report will be the same for all Trusts, and will make reference to aspects out of the Organisation's control, which will be a form of words agreed by the DOH.

Mr Corrigan referred to NIAS' performance in terms of actual vs forecasted budget month on month as inconsistent and is concerned there is a lack of financial grip. Ms Donnelly shared the concerns and advised the budget holders and finance team are on a journey to gain more financial grip and control on plans. NIAS have learned a lot this year which will help improve the plans for next year.

Mr Corrigan acknowledged that some Directors are new to their role and his concerns are that NIAS as an Organisation seem to be immature in terms of setting budgets and financial grip which should already be embedded.

Mr Sinclair agreed with the Committee Chair's feedback and thanked Ms Donnelly for the clear reporting and assistance. Mr Sinclair has gained a lot of understanding within the last 8-12 months and that controls that should have been there were not. The team

are now focusing on the significant spends and provide assurance to the Committee.

Mr Mullen added that ADs are now involved in budget setting to identify significant efficiencies across directorates to provide another level of assurance.

Mr Quinn referred to Mr Sinclair's comments which illustrates that the former culture has impacted the 25/26 operational grip and NIAS need to ensure those responsible for signing off various usage are aware of the limits. In terms of a recovery plan, NIAS need to gain better control and confidence to stick to projections. Ms Donnelly made the Committee aware that the finance team require stabilisation as a lot of the Financial Management staff are agency.

Ms Donnelly referred to income being recharged from other Trusts in relation to ambulance work NIAS are doing on their behalf, and she has confirmation from Directors of Finance in 2 Trusts that that they will pay these costs.

The biggest concern is TOIL and leave accrued and if NIAS remain at the same level, particularly as NIAS have more staff. Mr Corrigan pointed out that it may be difficult to encourage staff to use their leave and cut overtime at the same time, however the Committee noted that the Demand and Capacity Review will help to manage this, and there are tighter controls to avoid the legacy of carrying over significant leave.

Overall NIAS continues to endeavour to break even and continues to review to make timely decisions.

Ms Donnelly confirmed for the Committee that 'CP' is an abbreviation for Collaborative Planning.

Mr Corrigan was surprised at the level of patient taxis and queried in what circumstances NIAS book patient taxis and Mr Sinclair confirmed it is predominantly renal patients early in the morning and they need to recruit more ACA's and change shifts as part of the rota review. Mr Sinclair has submitted a proposal to SLT to address.

Capital

Ms Donnelly confirmed that £110k has been secured for backlog maintenance and provided the Committee with



assurance that no risks have been identified at present and NIAS plans to break even for capital.

Overall, Mr Corrigan is pleased with the reporting which provided more detail and transparency but unfortunately prompts questions and points for clarification. The Committee will convey their frustrations at Trust Board which are questioning the credibility of NIAS as an Organisation and the wider HSC, whilst supporting the Interim Finance Director to confirm that these queries have been surfaced and explained.

Mr Quinn agreed with Mr Corrigan and is reassured that there is a plan to ensure NIAS have firmly embedded the management of budgets. He commended Ms Donnelly and the team for all their efforts to ensure NIAS break even.

26/27

Ms Donnelly advised that NIAS have received an indicative allocation similar to this year and assumed income will remain the same. NIAS are engaging early with SPPG to understand the pressures at an earlier stage and making an assessment on that allocation in terms of what they can translate into services. Based on data, if SPPG wish NIAS to continue, there will be pressures and NIAS will outline what they can deliver i.e. commissioned hours and performance implications.

During conversations with the wider HSC there is potential planning guidance of a 6 or 12% cut which will have serious implications.

Ms Donnelly agreed to provide a separate Finance Report for the Public Trust Board Meeting.

Ms Donnelly

5.3 Business Case Register

The Committee **NOTED** the business case register as of 26 January.

Committee Forward Work Plan 26-27

A pre meeting took place with the Committee Chair to agree the plan going forward and space has been left for evolving issues to be tabled at meetings. Mr Corrigan has agreed for meetings to take place at the early part of the month to ensure the Committee receives the most recent information from finance.



	<p>Mr Quinn is mindful of the Committee not becoming too operational but suggested they receive an insight of how a greater financial discipline is embedded in Ops and other directorates. Mr Corrigan added that the main spend is operational and it may be worthwhile for one or two AD's to attend and provide assurance of that grip.</p> <p>Mr Sinclair agreed to consider and discuss with Mr Mullen and suggested that a representative from the Performance Cell Group attend as this group was set up to ensure there is control and efficiency primarily with ADs across all directorates.</p> <p>Mr Corrigan agreed it would be beneficial for the Committee to receive an overview from an AD in Operations perspective to articulate what they now do and the processes they have put in place, particularly out to station managers to demonstrate control and how the legacy issues have shifted.</p> <p>Mr Quinn suggested this could be something transitional within the next year.</p> <p>Ms Donnelly referred to the Control and Efficiency Group and agreed to share the 26/27 assessment via correspondence with the SPF Committee, which is a set of principles issued to staff to manage a budget.</p> <p><u>Strategy Development Update</u> The Committee NOTED the progress report to highlight the current status of the ongoing work to support the development of the new NIAS 10-Year Corporate Strategy as of the end of Jan 2026.</p> <p>The second paper explains that timelines have been extended as anticipated and the team are working through dates for external engagement.</p> <p>Mr Corrigan recalled a previous conversation suggesting that the timing of this launch coincides with the appointment of the new Chief Executive, and Mr Mullen advised that it should align with the recruitment as it will not be launched before April. The Steering Group is meeting next week and will focus on dates and external meetings.</p>	<p>Mr Sinclair</p> <p>Ms Donnelly</p>
6.	<u>Overview of Sustainability</u>	



	<p>SPF NOTED the update on climate and sustainability and the proposed direction required to put measures in place to mitigate impact on climate change and improve sustainability. NIAS have appointed a Manager of Climate and Sustainability (Derek Hamilton) within the Estates Team</p> <p>NIAS are working alongside other Trusts and Organisations to maximise the potential in car fleet but don't have the practical infrastructure or geographical requirements for electric vehicles.</p> <p>NIAS is primarily a fleet organisation and are aware that the air quality in NI is worst and contributes to premature deaths. NIAS therefore need to ensure they are not contributing to issues they are trying to address. Mr Corrigan appreciate this is the start of a journey and welcomes a wider scope to do more in terms of sustainability.</p> <p>The Committee agreed for the new post holder to settle into their role and attend later in the financial year.</p> <p>Mr Mullen confirmed for Mr Quinn that the Sustainability Plan will tie in with the new Strategic Plan.</p>	<p>Mr Mullen</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><u>2026-27 Draft Financial Plan</u></p> <p>No update provided under this section; however, an update was provided under Item 5.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p><u>Corporate Plan Year End Update</u></p> <p>Members noted a Corporate Plan progress was reported to SPF at the October 2025 meeting and the status remains as reported at the October meeting.</p> <p>A full progress report will be brought to the appropriate SPF meeting when end of year has been concluded, which is anticipated to be at the meeting in June.</p>	<p>Mr Mullen</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><u>Budget and expenditure on IAS, Taxis and Voluntary Drivers</u></p> <p>No discussion took place for this item.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p><u>SPF Terms of Reference (ToR) Review</u></p>	



	The Committee APPROVED the revised ToR which proposes two minor changes.	
11.	<u>Any Other Business</u> No matters discussed.	
12.	<u>Next Meeting</u> Additional Meeting – Monday 16 March 2025 2 April 2026	

SIGNED:



DATE:

2/4/26