



**SCOTTISH**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland

**PUBLIC MEETING - SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE BOARD**

**THURSDAY 26 JUNE 2025 @ 0930 HRS**

**BRAIDWOOD SUITE, SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS,  
WESTBURN DRIVE, CAMBUSLANG, G72 7NA / VIRTUAL (MS TEAMS)**

**PRESENT:**

Kirsty Darwent, Chair (KD)  
Stuart Ballingall (SJB)  
Neil Mapes (NM)  
Malcolm Payton (MP)  
Madeline Smith (MS)

Paul Stollard, Deputy Chair (PS)  
Angiolina Foster (AF)  
Therese O'Donnell (TO'D)  
Andrew Smith (AS)  
Tim Wright (TW)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Stuart Stevens (SS)	Chief Officer
Sarah O'Donnell (SO'D)	Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services)
Jon Henderson (JH)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Prevention, Protection and Preparedness
Craig McGoldrick (CMcG)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Training, Safety and Assurance
Mark McAteer (MMcA)	Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and Communications
Fiona Ross (FR)	Director of People
Deborah Stanfield (DS)	Interim Director of Finance and Contractual Services
Richard Whetton (RW)	Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance
Chris Fitzpatrick (CF)	Business Intelligence and Data Services Manager (Items 11 & 22 only)
Garry Mackay (GM)	Deputy Assistant Chief Officer, Head of Operations (Item 25 only)
Jim Holden (JH)	Head of Safety and Assurance (Item 25 only)
Robert Buchan (RB)	Solicitor (Item 25 only)
Chris Casey (CC)	Group Commander Board Support
Heather Greig (HG)	Executive Officer Board Support
Debbie Hadow (DJH)	Board Support/Minutes

**OBSERVERS:**

Robert Scott, HMFSI  
Liz Humphreys, Scottish Ambulance Service and Public Health Scotland

**1 CHAIR'S WELCOME**

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting welcoming those present and those attending/observing via MS Teams. In particular, the Chair welcomed Liz Humphreys, who would be observing the meeting as part of the Aspiring Chairs Programme.
- 1.2 Attendees were reminded to raise their hands, in accordance with the remote meeting protocol, should they wish to ask a question.

## 2 APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Brian Baverstock, Board Member  
Mhairi Wylie, Board Member  
Andy Watt, Deputy Chief Officer  
David Farries, Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Operational Delivery

## 3 CONSIDERATION OF AND DECISION ON ANY ITEMS TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE

- 3.1 The Board agreed that the following items would be taken in private session and noted the rationale provided:
- *Three-Year Delivery Plan* and the *Performance Management Framework 2025-28*, would be taken in private due to the confidential nature of the issue (Standing Order 9G).
  - *Liability Claim Against SFRS and Outstanding Employer's Liability Claims: SFRS and Legacy* would be taken in private due to matters subject to legal proceedings (Standing Order 9D).
  - *CivTech10 – Pre-Commercial Agreement (PCA) Phase* would be taken in private due to matters involving confidential commercial or financial information (Standing Order 9E).

## 4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- 4.1 For transparency, the following standing declarations of interests were recorded:
- Madeline Smith, Board Member of Scottish Ambulance Service
  - Paul Stollard, Chair of Board of Institute of Fire Engineers
- 4.2 Under Item 21, Angiolina Foster declared her role with Public Health Scotland due to the Delivery Plan's reference to focused work in three localities as part of the Collaboration for Health Equity in Scotland.
- 4.3 There were no other declarations or conflict of interests made.

## 5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

### 5.1 Thursday 24 April 2025

- 5.1.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.
- 5.1.2 **The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2025 were approved as a true record of the meeting.**
- 5.2 **Matters Arising**
- 5.2.1 There were no matters arising.

## 6 ACTION LOG

- 6.1 The Board considered the action log and noted the updates.
- 6.2 **Members noted the updated Action Log and approved the removal of completed actions.**

## 7 DECISION LOG

- 7.1 The Board considered the Decision Log noting the impact assessments provided for decisions made 12 months ago.
- 7.2 **Members noted the updated Decision Log.**

## 8 CHAIR'S REPORT

- 8.1 KD presented the Chair's Update report which noted events that had occurred since the Board meeting held on 24 April 2025 and highlighted the following:
- Launch of Service Delivery Review (SDR) Consultation.
  - Attendance at a series of National Joint Council (NJC) meetings and securing agreement of the pay award for Uniformed personnel. Attendance at several

meetings in the role of Interim Chair, which mainly focused on English fire and rescue services but had implications for SFRS.

- Attendance at Ministerial Advisory Group relating to reform of English fire and rescue services. Update on Task and Finish Group for the College of Fire and Rescue, where the NJC were represented and had a desire for a 4-nations college, which would enhance training and standards across the UK.
- Ongoing Local Authority Chief Executive engagement meetings.
- Annual meeting with Maureen Chalmers, COSLA to discuss challenges and opportunities across the public sector.
- Scheduled meeting with Ivan McKee, Minister of Public Finance and lead for Public Service Reform in Scotland to discuss his priorities for the future and to highlight the work of the Reform Collaboration Group (RCG).

**The Board noted the report and verbal update.**

8.2

## **9 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT**

9.1

SS presented the Chief Officer's report noting events which had occurred since the Board meeting held on 24 April 2025 and highlighted the following:

- SDR Consultation was launched on 25 June 2025 for a 12-week period and had received significant media coverage. The consultation presented 23 options for change. Programme of consultation and engagement events were scheduled.
- ACO David Farries was attending 2 meetings this morning with MSP's and Elected Members to discuss SDR.
- Recent publications by Scottish Government (SG) included Public Service Reform Strategy, Population Health Framework and the Medium Term Financial Strategy. All documents were supportive and enabled each other. SFRS Strategy was in line with these key documents and the desire to do more for prevention and investment in prevention.
- Recent attendance at the Scottish Leaders Forum which focused on whole family support, collaboration, empowerment of working collectively, and prevention activities.

9.2

The Board were reminded that the programme of SDR engagement events would be circulated, and individual Board Members would be afforded the opportunity to attend in an observational capacity. During meetings with Local Authority Chief Executives, SS noted that discussions took place on the approach being undertaken and the next stages.

9.3

The Board commented on the Service's rigour, particularly in the review process and consultation and queried whether there was an opportunity to share insight and approaches with other public bodies. SS noted the development of prevention work undertaken by the Service over the past few decades and acknowledged that this was not recognised wider or publicised. SS further noted that there was a need for the Service to be more overt in sharing learning and experience.

9.4

In relation to the Service's pro-active approach to implementing reform, the Board expressed their hope that SG would continue to offer their support and enable the Service to deliver against the change agenda.

9.5

**The Board noted the report and verbal update.**

## **10 COMMITTEE UPDATES**

10.1

### **Strategic Planning and Change Committee (SPCC)**

10.1.1

SJB reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 1 May 2025 and referred the Board to the attached draft minutes, highlighting the following:

- Intention is to realign the Committee's schedule to better match the planning cycle, improving efficiency and effectiveness.

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- Noticeable improvement in the quality of reporting being presented.
- Request for further clarity on the People, Payroll, Finance and Training (PPFT) programme.

### 10.1.2 **The Board noted the draft minutes and verbal update.**

### 10.2 **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)**

10.2.1 The approved minutes from the Committee's public meeting on 8 April 2025 were included within the papers. A full verbal update had been provided at the previous meeting.

10.2.2 The Committee held a subsequent public meeting on 19 June 2025.

### 10.2.3 **The Board noted the approved minutes and verbal update.**

### 10.3 **People Committee (PC)**

10.3.1 AS reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 5 June 2025 and referred the Board to the attached draft minutes, highlighting the following:

- Approval of the Committee's Statement of Assurance.
- Significant reduction in Operations Control vacancies due to a successful recruitment campaign.
- Detailed scrutiny of learning and development meeting increased demand, particularly for leadership and management skills.
- Update on the reset of the Culture work.
- Informative horizon scan on changes in Employment law.
- Spotlight on fire contamination which highlighted new approaches to prevention and protection, biomonitoring initiatives, new PPE trials, station zoning and PPE decontamination protocols. Following the meeting, a show and tell demonstration was given to the Committee.

10.3.2 Due to the wider interest on the decontamination protocols, it was agreed that this would be taken to a future Strategy Day.

### 10.3.3 **The Board noted the verbal update.**

### 10.4 **Service Delivery Committee (SDC)**

10.4.1 TW reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 28 May 2025 and provided a verbal update, highlighting the following:

- Held at Portlethen Training Centre, which had been significantly developed over the last few years.
- Approval of the Committee's Statement of Assurance.
- Informative verbal report from Local Senior Officer Andy Wright, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray.
- Final review of the Response to the Firestorm report.
- Detailed update on the Electrical Infrastructure Working Group (EWIG) which had been convened to respond to novel energy and fuel solutions being developed.
- Operational Learning Frontline Report relating to a high rise incident was taken in private session. Learning from Grenfell had been applied when attending this incident and internally, the report had been viewed c.3,600 times within a few days of publishing.
- Following the meeting, Committee members had the opportunity to meet personnel and tour the facilities.

10.4.2 It was recommended that the wider Board visit Portlethen to increase their understanding and awareness of the decontamination and training facilities at this location.

**10.4.3 The Board noted the verbal update.**

**10.5 Reform Collaboration Group (RCG)**

10.5.1 KD provide a verbal update on the recent RCG and highlighted the following key points:

- Chairing responsibility had formally been handed over to Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS).
- Update on all programmes of work which continue to be progressed.
- Discussions held on the best way to share information. Previous decision was made to share approved minutes however due to sensitivities, these had not been included on this occasion. It was subsequently agreed that the Integrated Governance Forum would scrutinise the minutes, identify any issues and governance route, if appropriate. Consultation to take place with both Scottish Police Authority and SAS Board's on their intentions to share these minutes and this would be discussed at the next RCG meeting.

**10.5.2 The Board noted the verbal update.**

*(C Fitzpatrick joined the meeting at 1000 hrs)*

**11 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE 2024-25 Q4**

11.1 MMcA introduced CF who presented the Board with the fourth quarter performance for fiscal year 2024-25 for scrutiny. The following key points were highlighted:

- Exception variation reported for KPI40 (Invoices in 30 days) albeit this was minimal, and processes were in place to addresses this.
- Exception variation reported for KPI37 (Data Breaches) due to recent incidents and mitigating actions.
- Ten KPI's presented as deteriorating over the long term.
- Fourteen KPI's presented as improving over the long term.
- Thirty KPI's presented as not changed.
- Twelve KPI's presented as not known due to limited data or unspecified direction. Further explanation for KPI6, 7, 8 was provided within the covering report.

11.2 In relation to the long-term deterioration of KPI15 (Median Call Handling Time for Life Risk Incidents), the Board commented on the setting of and the ability to achieve identified targets. The Board were offered assurance that the Service Delivery Committee routinely scrutinise this KPI and have requested a specific report to be provided to gain a better understanding of the issue.

11.3 In relation to KPI38 (FOI within timescale), MMcA advised that the Service had achieved the Information Commissioner's Office target of 85% and was hopeful that the situation would continue to improve. An approved restructure of the FOI Team would add an additional permanent resource and create capacity for training/raising awareness across the Service. MMcA noted that the pro-active publishing of information relating to the Service Delivery Review consultation may help to limit the number of requests being made.

11.4 In relation to KPI43 (portfolio delays), it was noted that there was no context, ie overall number of projects, etc to support this indicator. It was suggested that this could be addressed within the new Performance Management Framework (PMF).

11.5 In relation to KPI51 (physical attacks on firefighters), it was noted the data was cyclical, peaking around bonfire night, across the year. MMcA briefed the Board on the launch of a national study in partnership with Northumbria University, looking at violence against firefighters and emergency workers. A report would be presented to the Board in due course.

- 11.6 In relation to KPI34 (recycling rates), SO'D advised that the Service Delivery Board routinely scrutinise the Service performance in this area. SO'D noted that the Board's additional attention would help to encourage the Service to support and improve their recycling rates.
- 11.7 The Board commented on the term "*increasing deficiency*" and suggested using clearer language, such as "*reduction in availability*" to improve understanding.
- 11.8 Discussion took place on how data was presented and populated within Power BI, continuity of (manual) data and levels of accessibility.
- 11.9 **The Board scrutinised the performance report.**

*(C Fitzpatrick left the meeting at 1022 hrs)*

**12 ANNUAL OPERATING PLAN PROGRESS REPORT - Q4**

- 12.1 MMcA presented a report providing the Board with a quarterly progress report on how we are performing against the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) 2024/25 for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025. The following key points were highlighted:
- Total of 39 actions of which 19 actions were reporting Blue, 5 actions were Green, and 15 actions were Red.
  - Action SO7.1 engagement and consultation plan had now been completed and launched on 25 June 2025.
- 12.2 The Board, noting the 18-month extension to the due date for prevention targeting, consultation and scrutiny, sought assurance on the interim scrutiny arrangements and risk appetite. JH offered his assurance that the appropriate measures were in place. JH noted that the original action predated the new Prevention Strategy and direction of the Service, and that the Service had since moved beyond the original scope. JH confirmed that he was content with the current position and trajectory.
- 12.3 The Board queried whether the 15-month extension for Portree was realistic and whether other potential sites should be pursued. SO'D advised that the land acquisition was close to completion and the project was included in the 2025-26 capital programme. SO'D offered her assurances that the Service was progressing this as quickly as possible. The Board commented on the importance of delivering this pilot station, particularly in the context of the consultation. SO'D to circulate confirmation on whether the timescale remains realistic outwith the meeting.
- ACTION: SO'D**
- 12.4 In regard to the People, Payroll, Finance and Training (PPFT) programme, the Board sought clarity on whether the July 2025 completion date was achievable. SO'D, noting the complexities within this programme, advised that a specific SPCC workshop had been scheduled for 29 July and SG colleagues would be in attendance. The initial Discovery report had been received, and further conversations were required to progress and recast milestones. It was noted that there were risks and further negotiations required, however, as the programme would contribute to the Public Service Reform agenda, the Service would continue to seek SG's support.
- 12.5 In regard to Outcome 6 (People), the Board commented on the low completion rates and queried the need for a refocusing of priorities. FR reminded the Board that several targets had been impacted by prioritisation of the Health and Wellbeing recovery work. FR advised that work was ongoing to review priorities for this year against the capacity to enable realistic plans and timescales to be identified.
- 12.6 With regard to the extended timescale (2027) for the Culture work, FR advised that this



was appropriate due to the volume and turnover of management and the subsequent delivery of supervisory courses.

- 12.7 Brief discussion took place on the Board's concerns regarding volume of future change, extension of completion dates and potential optimism bias within reporting. SS acknowledged the concerns and advised that the 2025-26 Delivery Plan had been pared back. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) had discussed and categorised actions into 4 areas: priority, non-priority, superseded and carried forward. MMcA outlined the work undertaken across all Directorates to consider interdependencies, prioritisations, resources, etc to ensure that the Service's plans are realistic and deliverable. It was noted that the Plan would also need to remain dynamic to ensure that there was capacity to address any unknown elements that may arise during the year.
- 12.8 SS reminded the Board of the misalignment of the previous Strategic Plan, change ambitions and Delivery Plan, and therefore there was a misrepresentation of the Service's current position and achievements over the last 12 months.
- 12.9 With regards to the delays to BA project, SO'D advised that she was not aware of any issues with the current timescale. SO'D reminded the Board that the BA project, along with other projects would now be captured within the Enabling Infrastructure Programme which would provide greater oversight on interdependencies, timelines, etc.
- 12.10 **The Board scrutinised the Annual Operating Plan Progress Update Q4 Report.**

*(Meeting broke at 1043 hrs and reconvened at 1055 hrs)*

**13 RESOURCE BUDGET MONITORING MAY 2025**

- 13.1 DS presented a report advising the Board of the resource budget position for the period ending 31 May 2025. DS outlined the analysis of the financial position and referred Members to Appendix A of the report, which identified the current resource position showing an overspend of £1.001million and a forecast year-end underspend of £1.573 million. The following key points were highlighted:
- Revised resource budget of £337.162million.
  - Formal request submitted to SG seeking £0.4million to address the shortfall of the higher than budgeted NJC pay award.
  - Overspend in On Call costs due to wildfire activities which remains a material, operational and financial risk.
  - Overspend in Wholetime costs due to overtime linked to vacancies, abstractions and prioritising the health and wellbeing recovery plan.
  - Overspend in Support staff costs due to challenges in achieving a 10% vacancy factor.
  - Underspends within Operational Control costs and Supplies and Services.
  - Acknowledged front loading of Wholetime and On Call costs which was consistent with previous years.
  - High overtime costs due to the health and wellbeing recovery plan and out of pattern roster.
  - Outline of the targeted cost control measures.
  - SG have been made aware of potential sustained overspend on On Call costs, and the Service were exploring the contingency options.
  - Enhanced security of Support staff costs through the Corporate Board.
  - Measures will continue to be taken to manage all risk, control costs and maintain delivery momentum across our change portfolio.
- 13.2 In regard to overtime costs, DS noted that the current abstraction rate was higher than normal and resourcing up to the target operating model has increased costs. SS noted

that clear direction had been provided by the SLT to manage the situation.

- 13.3 With regard to retiral rates, the Board were advised that there was no clear clarity on the situation due to the changes in legislation. However, the Service would continue to forecast and model to the best of their ability.
- 13.4 The Board were reminded that the recruitment of Wholetime personnel does not have an immediate impact on overtime spend. The Service were currently considering options such as migration from On Call to Wholetime and transfers from other fire and rescue services with protected employment.
- 13.5 Within Appendix A, the Board queried the accuracy and detail being provided in the swing charts and requested that this was reviewed in future reports.
- 13.6 **The Board scrutinised the resource budget position for the period ending 31 May 2025.**

14 **CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

- 14.1 SO'D presented a report advising the Board of the actual and committed expenditure against the 2025/26 capital budget position for the period ending 31 May 2025. It was currently anticipated that the budget of £47.00 million would be spent out by 31 March 2026. The following key points were highlighted:
- Total expenditure committed to date (£19.5 million) and total receipted/paid to date (£1.3 million).
  - All projects were currently reporting Green, with the exception of the New Mobilising System (NMS) which was reporting Amber due to external dependencies.
  - Weighting of the property programme towards quarter 4 presented some element of risk. However, this would continue to be actively managed through early procurement contractor engagement, scenario planning and scrutiny by the Capital Monitoring Group.
- 14.2 The Board noted the current position and welcomed the proactive management of the budget and associated risks.
- 14.3 In relation to the NMS project, JH advised that the Digital Assurance Office Gateway process awarded an Amber/Green rating. However, due to the complexities, the RAG rating would remain Amber. JH noted that the project was currently on track for delivery within timescales.
- 14.4 **The Board scrutinised the level of actual and committed capital expenditure for the period ending 31 May 2025.**
- 15 **ARRANGEMENTS AND OUTCOMES OF ANNUAL REVIEW – EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BOARD**
- 15.1 MMcA presented a report to the Board seeking approval of the arrangements for reviewing the effectiveness of the SFRS Board. The following key points were highlighted:
- Ongoing Internal Audit on Corporate Governance. Previously external oversight was undertaken by Deloitte in 2021.
  - Record of strong assurance on the performance of the Board.
  - Potential for a future audit to be conducted by Audit Scotland.
- 15.2 The Board were reminded that a future Strategy Day session was scheduled to consider how other boards review their effectiveness and to discuss alternative approaches. Following this, the Board could then make an informed decision on future approaches and processes. Due to the low risk to the organisation, the Board were keen to explore alternative approaches and avoid any unnecessary external costs.



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- 15.3 The Board, referencing previous discussions, commented on potential use of videos to raise awareness of the Board's role and governance arrangements within the Service. This would be discussed further during the Strategy Day session.
- 15.4 With regard to the upcoming Service Delivery Review Consultation events, it was confirmed that a core brief would be developed and shared with the Board. The Board were reminded that their role was to observe, and not inadvertently influence or undermine the consultation process.
- 15.5 **The Board approved the arrangements for reviewing the effectiveness of the SFRS Board.**
- 16 RISK THEMES**
- 16.1 There were no new or emerging risks identified during this meeting.
- 17 FORWARD PLAN**
- 17.1 The Forward Plan was noted and would be kept under review and subject to change.
- 18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
- 18.1 A special Private Board meeting is scheduled to take place on Thursday 31 July 2025.
- 18.2 The next full public meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Thursday 28 August 2025.
- 18.3 There being no further matters to discuss in public, the meeting closed at 1122 hrs.

*(The meeting broke at 1122 hrs and reconvened in private session at 1130 hrs)*

### **PRIVATE SESSION**

- 19 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PRIVATE MEETING:**
- 19.1 **Thursday 24 April 2025**
- 19.1.1 The minute of the meeting held on 27 April 2025 was approved as a true record of the meeting.
- 19.2 **Thursday 29 May 2025**
- 19.2.1 The minute of the meeting held on 29 May 2025 was approved as a true record of the meeting.
- 19.3 **Matters Arising**
- 19.3.1 There were no matters arising.
- 20 PRIVATE ACTION LOG**
- 20.1 The Board considered the action log and noted the updates.
- 20.2 **Members noted the updated private Action Log and approved the removal of completed actions.**
- 21 SFRS THREE YEAR DELIVERY PLAN**
- 21.1 MMcA presented the Board with the SFRS Three-Year Delivery Plan for approval.
- 21.2 **Subject to the proposed amendments, the Board approved the SFRS Three-Year Delivery Plan.**

*(C Fitzpatrick joined the meeting at 1210 hrs)*

**22 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2025-28 PROGRESS UPDATE**

22.1 RW presented a progress update on the work to develop a new performance framework, a new suite of strategic and functional performance indicators, reporting improvements to meet committee needs, and new strategic reporting for 2025-28. New reports aim to provide a robust overview for the SFRS Board on progress towards the SFRS Strategy 2025-28 encompassing the three-year Delivery Plan actions, performance and risk.

22.2 **The Board noted the update report.**

*(C Fitzpatrick left the meeting at 1218hrs)*

*(J Holden joined the meeting at 1218 hrs)*

**23 LIABILITY CLAIM AGAINST SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

23.1 DS presented the report to the Board seeking approval in relation to an insurance liability claim intimated against the Service. DS provided a brief background of the liability claim, legacy/existing insurance provisions, financial reserves and the proposed economic settlement.

23.2 **The Board approved the recommendation in relation to the claim.**

**24 OUTSTANDING EMPLOYER'S LIABILITY CLAIMS – SFRS AND LEGACY**

24.1 DS presented the report to the Board to provide an overview of the outstanding Employer's Liability claims, incurred from 2013 onwards or in relation to legacy claims, and to identify claims that are likely to require Board settlement authority during 2025/26.

24.2 **The Board noted the information report.**

*(G Mackay and R Buchan joined the meeting at 1230 hrs)*

**25 CIVTECH 10 – PRE-COMMERCIAL AGREEMENT (PCA) PHASE**

25.1 RW presented the report, previously approved by the SLT, to the Board seeking approval to progress to the next stage of the Scottish Government's CivTech (10) Innovation programme. The Board were also asked to approve funding and for SFRS to be part of a joint commercial venture.

25.2 **The Board confirmed their support and approval for Challenge 10.1.**

25.3 **The Board were supportive of Challenge 10.2, however sought further clarification/assurances prior to final approval.**

There being no further matters to discuss in private, the meeting closed at 1320 hrs.