

**Labour Relations Agency  
Minutes of a Senior Management Team Meeting  
held on Tuesday, 1 April 2014 in Room 2, Gordon Street**

**Present:** William Patterson  
Gerry O'Neill  
David McGrath  
Penny Holloway

**In Attendance:** Alison Wolfe (Minute Secretary)

	<b>Minute</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1. Apologies</b>	There were no apologies.	
<b>2. Minutes of Meeting held on 18 February 2014</b>	The minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2014 were agreed.	<b>Secretariat</b>
<b>3. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes</b>	There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.	
<b>4. Innovation in Employment Relations</b>		
<b>4.1 Review of NI Employment Law</b>	It was noted that the DEL Committee has not, as yet, discussed the findings of the Review. The Agency awaits discussion on the Review with DEL.	<b>CEO</b>
	The DCA reported that Noel Lambert, Head of Individual Dispute Resolution Policy, Acas, visited the Agency on 21 March to provide a general overview of early conciliation to Agency staff.	<b>DCA</b>
	The CEO has written to Tom Evans and will be meeting Tom on Monday, 7 April with respect to preliminary discussions on Agency resources.	<b>CEO</b>
	The Agency is monitoring, and will be reporting to the Board, on the impact of the introduction of Tribunal fees in GB.	<b>CEO</b>
<b>4.2 Roundtable Discussion on NI ER</b>	It was noted that the ER Roundtable continued to give consideration to:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the revision of the joint declaration on protection/harmonious workplace;</li><li>• protected conversations and</li><li>• resource support for the Roundtable.</li></ul>	<b>CEO</b>

It was further noted that members of the Roundtable, Agency Board and senior staff had attended a presentation on 'Engaging for Success' provided by Nita Clarke, Director IPA.

Arrangements were being made to hold an open seminar on the NIE experience of employee engagement. The seminar may also examine the evaluation of the implementation of 'Engaging for Success' in NI.

CEO

#### **4.3 LRA Annual Report & Accounts 2013/14**

The SMT are to begin preparations for the Annual Report & Accounts 2013/14. This will take the form of submissions of 500 word commentaries on annual operational performance, along with statistical returns. It was agreed that the Secretariat will co-ordinate and proof-read submissions for the Annual Report.

SMT/  
Secretariat

#### **4.4 International Agencies Meeting 2014**

The SMT discussed the request from Judith Scott, NZ for feedback with respect to aspects of the 2013 Conference. It was agreed to suggest:

- ✚ having a smaller forum rather than a large panel of international representatives;
- ✚ that workshops were topical and generally well received;
- ✚ that the focus should be on key international issues.

CEO

#### **4.5 Employment Relations Research**

Nothing further to report.

#### **4.6 SROI**

It was agreed to discuss SROI at the informal SMT meeting on 8 April with a view to preparing a paper for Board approval in June.

SMT

#### **4.7 Consultation on the LRA Code of Practice on Discipline & Grievance – proposed amendment to paragraphs 103 & 104**

It was noted that the Board, at their meeting on 28 March, approved the proposed amendments to the Code of Practice on Discipline & Grievance. The Code has now been forwarded to DEL for approval.

DAS

#### **4.8 ECNI Project**

Nothing further to report.

### **5. NI & GB Employment Relations Systems**

It was noted that the Agency continued to progress early conciliation issues.

DCA

The CEO indicated that he intended to meet with the new Acas CEO, Anne Sharpe, and Professor Linda Dickens, Warwick University in relation to innovation and change in employment relations.

CEO

## **6. Agency Strategy and Services**

### **6.1 Corporate Plan 2014-17**

### **6.2 Business Plan 2014-15**

It was noted that, following Board approval on 27 February 2014, both Plans have been submitted to DEL for approval. The Agency awaits a response from DEL.

**CEO**

The CEO has circulated the strategic objectives from the Business Plan 2014-17 relevant to each member of the SMT for discussion and to progress.

**CEO/Dir**

It was agreed that the CEO will action the promotional aspects of the Business Plan 2014-17 with the new Chair, when appointed.

**CEO**

## **7. Leadership Organisation and Performance Management**

### **7.1 Cross Directorate Working Groups**

Following discussion it was agreed that the SMT would examine the cross directorate working groups to ensure alignment with the new Corporate and Business Plans.

**SMT**

The SMT will give further consideration, informally, to cross directorate working which it was agreed was useful.

**SMT**

### **7.2 Performance Management**

It was noted that the annual appraisal documentation was currently with TUS. The DCS anticipates issuing the paperwork this week.

**DCS**

### **7.3 HR Strategy**

#### **7.3.1 Stress Risk Assessment**

The DCS sought SMT approval to reconfigure the HSE report into a similar format to that of the Agency risk register. The SMT subsequently agreed the format of the risk assessment which will be taken forward through the JNCC and H&S sub-committee.

**DCS**

#### **7.3.2 HR Strategy**

It is anticipated that the intranet will be up and running within the next few months. A training provider has been identified; the provider will supply a proposal for upgrading the system and for training staff. The DCS is to submit a business case to the CEO for approval.

**DCS/CEO**

It was noted that the DCS and ERM (HR) are proposing to attend an liP seminar being organised for those applying for re-assessment.

**DCS/ERM**

#### **7.3.3 Staff Conference**

Preparations are continuing for the staff conference to be held on Wednesday, 17 September 2014.

**HR/Secretariat**

#### **7.3.4 Evaluation/self-assessment of JNCC**

The DCS is preparing a report on the self-assessment exercise carried

out by the JNCC in March 2014. He will report back to the JNCC at their next meeting on 5 June 2014.

**DCS**

### **7.3.5 Staffing**

At their meeting on 25 March the SMT discussed and agreed to take forward:

- ✚ staffing arrangements for the Certification Office, and
- ✚ forthcoming vacancies within the Agency.

**CEO**

It was agreed that:

- the DCA submits a staff requisition form for the forthcoming EOII vacancy in Individual Conciliation, and
- it was noted that there were two other vacancies 1xEOII and 1xAA on which action was stayed pending the outcome of other staffing matters.

**DCA/DCS**

## **8. ICT**

### **8.1 IS Managed Services**

It was noted that the upgrade to Windows 8 was pending. Staff training will be provided before the system is installed.

**DCS**

### **8.2 Security Accreditation**

No matters to report.

**Secretariat**

### **8.3 ICMS**

The ICMS Steering Group met on 27 March. The ICMS specification is being finalised. On completion the specification will be forwarded to CPD.

**DCS/PH**

### **8.4 Website Security Accreditation**

It was noted that the specification for the above will be progressed as soon as possible.

**DCS/PH**

## **9. Evaluation**

### **9.1 PPEs**

It was noted that PPEs were being progressed. Following a query from DEL the Agency was reviewing the independent completion of PPEs.

**SMT**

### **9.2 Value for Money**

It was noted that the CEO met with the Internal Auditors on 24 February in relation to a vfm audit. The terms of reference have been agreed. Following completion of the audit an update paper will be prepared for the Board.

**CEO/DCS**

## **10. Governance and Accountability**

### **10.1 LRA Funding 2014/15**

DEL has confirmed that there is no additional funding for the Agency for the 2014/15 year and that the budget will remain at £3,545,000

plus £100K (capital) for ICMS. The SMT expressed their concern with respect to the on-going annual diminution of the capacity to run the organisation with a reducing budget in real terms. The Agency Board, at their March meeting, had expressed similar concerns. **CEO**

### **10.2 Statutory Compliance**

It was noted that, following receipt of the Internal Audit report for the Certification Office, the CEO will review the LRA/CO MoU. **CEO**

### **10.3 Environmental Review**

[Merge with CSR] **Secretariat**

### **10.3 Corporate Social Responsibility**

It was noted that the Board approved the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) paper at their meeting on 27 March 2014.

Following Board approval the policy will now be forwarded to TUS for information. **DCS**

In furtherance of CSR, the Agency expects in due course to establish an Environmental Improvement Team and/or environmental champions as recommended in the Environmental Audit Review. **SMT**

The SMT approved a proposal for the Agency to sponsor a group of staff who wish to take part in the 2014 Belfast Marathon on the understanding that this would be a promotional opportunity for the Agency. The amount of sponsorship agreed was £200. **SMT**

## **11. JNCC**

### **11.1 Redundancy Procedure**

It was agreed that the DCS forward the revised wording to the CEO for comment. **DCS/CEO**

## **12. Any Other Business**

There was no other business to report.

## **13. Date of Next Meetings**

- ✚ Informal Meetings: Tuesday, 8, 15, 29 April @ 10.00 am
- ✚ Tuesday, 6, 13, 20, 27 May @ 10.00am
- ✚ Formal Meeting: - Tuesday, 3 June 2014 @ 10.00 am

The DCA gave an apology for the formal June meeting. **Secretariat**

It was agreed to amend future meetings as follows:

- ✚ Tuesday, 5 August – cancelled
  - ✚ Tuesday, 19 August – formal meeting
  - ✚ Tuesday, 30 September – formal meeting
  - ✚ Tuesday, 7 October – informal meeting
- Secretariat**