

**Labour Relations Agency
Minutes of a Senior Management Team Meeting
held on Monday, 19 December 2011 in Room 2, Gordon Street**

Present: William Patterson
David McGrath
Gerry O'Neill

In Attendance: Alison Wolfe (Minute Secretary)

- | Minute | Action |
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| 1. Apologies

An apology was received from Penny Holloway. | |
| 2. Minutes of Meeting held on 17 October 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2011 were agreed. | Secretariat |
| 3. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes. | |
| 4. Innovation in Employment Relations

4.1 Promotion of Pre-Claim Conciliation
It was noted that the promotion of PCC continues to be reported through the monthly Board performance reports. | DCA |
| 4.2 Generic Arbitration Scheme
It was noted that the effective date for the launch of the Generic Arbitration Scheme is 11 April 2012. As this date falls within the Easter week the Board and SMT will be discussing the possibility of launching the scheme w/c 2 April. The Board have been informed that work is on-going in respect of developing and reviewing future documentation for the Scheme. | Board/SMT |
| 4.3 Code of Practice on Time Off
DEL has indicated that approval of the Code of Practice on Time Off is likely to be forthcoming in March/April 2012 with an effective date anticipated in April 2012. | DAS |
| 4.4 Reform of Employment Relations

It was noted that Vince Cable, GB Business Secretary, in a recent speech (23 November 2011), set out a preliminary agenda for consultation with respect to the reform of employment law in GB. It was agreed that this agenda may inform the development of a strategic approach to improving employment relations in NI. It was also agreed to insert a strategic objective in the Agency Business Plan 2012/13 in | CEO |

relation to the development of a strategic approach to employment relations for NI.

It was noted that the Board has agreed to hold a seminar on the proposals set out by the Business Secretary. The following speakers are proposed –

Sarah Veale Head of Equality and Employment Rights TUC; Guy Bailie, Head of Group CBI; Peter Bunting Assistant General Secretary NIC-ICTU and Wilfred Mitchell FSB (NI).

Secretariat

Proposed date - Thursday, 16 February 2012

Venue – to be arranged

It was noted that the CEO has circulated a CBI research paper on ‘Employer Attitudes to Employment Law’ to Directors. The DAS is to circulate a paper by BIS.

DAS

CEO

CEO is to contact Peter Bunting to see if NIC-ICTU have published or intend to publish a similar paper setting out trade union views.

SMT

The SMT also noted forthcoming changes to the (1) qualifying period and (2) fees for Tribunals.

SMT/Secretariat

It was agreed that the above proposals on the reform agenda would form discussions at the next SMT/ERM meeting.

4.5 Programme for Government

At their December meeting the Board discussed the draft response to the Programme for Government. Following minor amendments suggested by the Board the LRA response will be issued today.

CEO

4.6 Reform of Tribunals

The SMT gave consideration to the DoJ consultation on the reform of tribunals. A Board paper will be submitted in January with a response due to the DoJ by 31 January 2012.

SMT

5. Agency Strategy and Services

5.1 Corporate Plan 2011-14

5.2 Business Plan 2011-12

It was noted that reporting against the Business Plan 2011/12 remained very positive on all objectives.

It was noted that the DCS will be progressing unit costing. This follows on from the recent compilation of job roles and responsibilities within the Agency.

DCS

<p>The annual schedule of SMT formal and informal meetings and quarterly CEO/DIRs meetings were agreed.</p>	<p>SMT</p>
<p>The CEO will be drafting the Business Plan 2012/13 with a view to seeking Director comment early January 2012.</p>	<p>CEO/Dir</p>
<p>5.2.1 ICMS</p>	
<p>It was noted that the ICMS upgrade project is underway and is expected to be complete by the end of 2011. The SMT are sensitive to the risk highlighted by the Audit Committee on ICMS. The ICMS and parallel running are immediate priorities to be followed by IS Managed Services and, next year, a formal review of the IS Strategy.</p>	<p>DCS/IT Mgr</p>
<p>It was noted that the business case for IS Managed Services is currently with DEL for approval.</p>	<p>CEO/DCS</p>
<p>Security accreditation is on target for completion by May 2012.</p>	<p>DCS</p>
<p>6. Leadership Organisation and Performance Management</p>	
<p>6.1 SMT Development Programme</p>	
<p>After some discussion it was agreed that the SMT would examine corporate governance training for senior staff and Board members.</p>	<p>DCS</p>
<p>6.2 Performance Appraisal</p>	
<p>It was noted that only a small number of appraisals remain outstanding. DCS to advise Directors of those outstanding in their section – Directors will follow up on these.</p>	<p>Dir</p>
<p>6.3 IiP</p>	
<p>It was noted that the Board was informed at their December meeting that the recommendation is to award the Agency bronze status for IiP. Consideration will be given in the near year to holding a recognition event for staff.</p>	<p>SMT</p>
<p>It was also noted that the Agency expects to carry out a revamp of the HR Strategy in line with the Business Plan.</p>	<p>DCS</p>
<p>7. Evaluation</p>	
<p>7.1 PPEs</p>	
<p>It was noted that, following the completion of IiP work, the DCS will be drawing up an agenda for PPEs.</p>	<p>DCS</p>
<p>7.2 SROI</p>	
<p>It was noted that the revised business case is with DEL for approval.</p>	<p>DCS</p>
<p>It was also noted that the DCA had presented a means of evaluating collective conciliation by way of using the ACAS methodology and questionnaire. Given that this would be a competitive issue it would be</p>	

subject to specification, business case and ultimately tender.

7.3 Value for Money

It was noted that the CEO will be drafting a value for money strategy for the Agency. The draft will initially be circulated to the SMT for comment and discussion.

CEO

8. Governance and Accountability

8.1 LRA Funding 2011-12

In terms of the bi-monthly reports indications are that the Agency is heading towards full spend (£3.5m). An end of year programme was also in place.

CEO/DCS

DCS to follow up on issues with Property Services.

DCS

It was noted that the policy remained to fill all permanent vacancies on a permanent basis and, subject to budget, to cover for absence such as maternity leave.

Arrangements are to be put in place early 2012 to fill the forthcoming vacancy at ERO grade (Advisory).

DCS/DAS

It was noted that a Job Description for the above vacancy was currently being prepared.

DCS

It was noted that in the current climate indications are that austerity measures will continue well into and beyond 2014/15 and as such the Agency budget may remain static.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 Redundancy Procedure

It was agreed that the Redundancy Procedure should be progressed and finalised.

SMT

9.2 JNCC

It was noted that the next JNCC will take place tomorrow, 20 December.

SMT

9.3 Evaluation of Staff Conference

The DCS is to follow up evaluation of the recent staff conference.

DCS

9.4 SMT Agenda

It was agreed the current agenda is working well; however SMT agreed to reflect on the agenda for the new year.

SMT

9.5 Recognition & Reward Strategy

It was noted that the CEO has responded to the DCS; comment is awaited from Directors.

Dir

