

**Labour Relations Agency  
Minutes of a Senior Management Team Meeting  
held on Tuesday, 18 February 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>1.</b> | <b>Apologies</b><br><br>There were no apologies.   | <b>Action</b>                |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Minutes of Meeting held on 10 December 2013</b><br><br>Subject to the following amendments the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2013 were agreed.<br><br>Para 4.4 - heading should read 'Launch of LRA Annual Report & Accounts 2012/13'<br>Para 6.1 - heading should read 'Corporate Plan 2014-17'.<br>Para 6.2 - heading should read 'Business Plan 2014-15'.<br>Delete heading at Para 6.3.  | <b>Secretariat</b>           |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>Matters Arising from Previous Minutes</b><br><br>There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.   |                              |
| <b>4.</b> | <b>Innovation in Employment Relations</b><br><br><b>4.1 Review of NI Employment Law</b><br>It was noted that a progress report on the consultation will be provided to the DEL Committee on 19 February. The Agency awaits discussion on the Review with DEL.<br><br>The DCA and an ERM from the Conciliation section will be meeting with Tom Evans, DEL on 26 February to discuss operational matters around early conciliation. It was noted that arrangements were being made for discussions with a senior ACAS representative about the ACAS experience of early conciliation. | <b>CEO</b><br><br><b>DCA</b> |
|           | <b>4.2 Roundtable Discussion on NI ER</b><br>It was noted that the ER Roundtable is currently giving 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>• support for the Roundtable:</li></ul>   |                              |

It was further noted that an independent review of workplace policies in Scotland has been established. The review will see trade unions, businesses and academics working together with the Scottish Government to create better working environments. CEO to circulate information to SMT.

**CEO**

It was also noted that a meeting between the Chairman, the CEO and DEL regarding support for the Roundtable has been organised. The meeting will take place on 4 March 2014.

**CEO**

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

The SMT discussed the structure of the Annual Public Board meeting. Following verification by the DCS of the statutory requirements for the Agency to hold a public Board meeting, the CEO agreed to raise the formalisation of the meeting with the Chairman.

**SMT/  
Secretariat**

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

It was noted that the date for the International Agencies conference 2014 has been confirmed as w/c 6 October in Christchurch, New Zealand.

**SMT**

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

It was noted that the Research Committee will be meeting on Thursday, 3 April 2014.

It was suggested that the Research Committee may wish to discuss the publication of the 2011 WERS survey.

**CEO/DAS**

It was agreed to discuss the McClure Watters research report at the informal SMT on Tuesday, 4 March. Flexible working/partial retirement will also be discussed at the meeting.

**SMT**

#### **4.6 SROI**

It was also agreed to discuss SROI on 4 March.

**SMT**

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

It was noted that the proposed amendments to the Code of Practice on Discipline & Grievance had been issued for consultation on 8 February, with a closing date of 14 March.

**CEO/DAS**

#### **4.8 ECNI Project**

It was noted that the Agency may be invited to take part in an ECNI investigation into gender discrimination.

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

It was noted that the DCA visited ACAS Glasgow and London to discuss the ACAS case management system and the ACAS approach to re-routing and arbitration.

**DCA**

It was noted the pilot project on mediation carried out by BIS was completed in December. BIS is in the process of analysing the results.

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 amendment, the draft plans will be submitted to the Board for approval on 27 February 2014.

The CEO is to ensure that appropriate references to IiP are to be included in the plans.

CEO

## 7. Leadership Organisation and Performance Management

### 7.1 Cross Directorate Working Groups

Following discussion it was agreed that the SMT would examine the Corporate Governance sub-groups to ensure alignment with the new Corporate and Business Plans.

SMT

It was agreed to devise an action plan for promoting the Agency and its services in the 2014/15 year, subject to SMT approval.

DCS

### 7.2 Performance Management

It was noted that annual appraisals will be issued towards the end of March.

DCS

### 7.3 HR Strategy

#### 7.3.1 Stress Risk Assessment

It was noted that the Agency had received the HSE stress risk assessment. The DCS is to forward SMT comments to HSE for consideration and report back to the SMT.

DCS

#### 7.3.2 Staff Recognition & IiP

Following discussion and in light of IiP it was agreed that the SMT would review elements of improvement in order to retain bronze status and achieve silver standard.

DCS

#### 7.3.3 Staff Conference

It was agreed to hold the staff conference on Wednesday, 17 September 2014. The DCS and ERM (HR) to propose an agenda which will focus on IiP related topics.

DCS/RB

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

It was noted that the self-assessment exercise is to be undertaken at the next JNCC meeting 13 March.

DCS

### **7.3.5 Staffing**

It was noted that:

- the Agency Board has re-committed itself to filling established vacancies on a permanent basis for the foreseeable future;
- the successful ERO candidate will commence employment with the Agency on 24 March and will be located in the Conciliation section;
- two vacancies exist – one at EOII grade and one at AA grade;
- the CEO is holding requests for flexible working until after the SMT discussion on flexible working 4 March.

**CEO**

It was agreed that the DCS investigate the ‘Women and Power in Public Leadership’ course run by the Civil Service College.

**DCS**

## **8. ICT**

### **8.1 IS Managed Services**

The new IS Managed Services Contract with Kelway has been effective since 2 September 2013. An enhanced hardware infrastructure has been implemented at Gordon Street with all existing ICT services now migrated onto new environment. Bandwidth for internet access has been upgraded to 10Mbit.

**DCS**

### **8.2 Security Accreditation**

IS/IT security related policies and procedures have been prioritised and are currently being reviewed by MS and TUS secretaries.

**DCS**

### **8.3 ICMS**

DEL business case approval was obtained 23 October 2013. It was noted that both the steering group and project group have continued to hold meetings; recent steering committee meetings were held on 5 December, 18 December and 13 February. A draft specification is with CPD for quality checking and to allow identification of a GPS framework agreement. CPD will carry out a secondary tender within this agreement. A supplier should be in place by May 2014. Implementation is expected to be fast tracked with a basic system available for testing by end 2014.

**SMT**

### **8.4 Website Security Accreditation**

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

**DCS**

## **9. Evaluation**

### **9.1 PPEs**

It was noted that PPEs were being progressed – a Mediation PPE is pending; the SROI PPE has been cleared by the CEO. The DCS is to forward the PPE for SROI to the SMT for information purposes on content etc.

**SMT**

## **9.2 Value for Money**

It was noted that the CEO will be preparing a Board paper on vfm following the ASM VFM audit. It was further noted that ASM Horwath wish to meet with the CEO and DCS to discuss the vfm audit. The DCS awaits comment from the SMT on the unit costing report.

**CEO/DCS**

## **10. Governance and Accountability**

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

It was noted that funding for 2014/15 was set out in the draft Business Plan 2014/15. At this point in time there was no indication of additional funding for the Agency other than £100K (capital) set aside for ICMS.

**CEO/DCS**

The Board has been informed of the budget situation which will require very tight management during the 2014/15 financial year.

**SMT**

### **10.2 Statutory Compliance**

It was noted that the draft Internal Audit Report raised the issue of the statutory responsibilities of the Agency in respect of the Certification Office. The draft report recommended that the LRA/CO MoU be reviewed.

**CEO/DCS**

### **10.3 Environmental Review**

It was agreed that the formation of a sub-group to focus on the environmental issues should wait until the Agency has resolved current higher priority premises issues e.g. the installation of a new lift in HQ.

**SMT**

### **10.4 Corporate Social Responsibility**

It was agreed to issue the draft policy on CSR to TUS for consultation.

**DCS**

## **11. JNCC**

### **11.1 Redundancy Procedure**




It was agreed that further discussion was required with TUS; dates to be agreed.

**CEO/DCS**

## **12. Any Other Business**

There was no other business to report.

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

-  Informal Meetings: Tuesday, 25 February @ 10.00 am
-  Tuesday, 4, 11, 18, 25 March @ 10.00am
-  Formal Meeting: - Tuesday, 1 April 2014 @ 10.00 am