

**MINUTES OF THE 417<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT  
10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 23<sup>rd</sup> JUNE 2016  
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

**Present:** Marie Mallon (Chair)  
Deirdre Fitzpatrick  
Michelle McGinley  
Alison Millar  
Albert Mills  
Jill Minne  
Daire Murphy  
Pauline Shepherd

**In Attendance:** Tom Evans Chief Executive, (CEO)  
Penny Holloway (Director, Conciliation & Arbitration, (DCA))  
Gerry O'Neill (Director, Corporate Services, (DCS))  
David McGrath (Director, Advisory Services, (DAS))  
Alison Wolfe (Minutes Secretary)

**Action**

<p><b>1. Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Louise Crilly and Gary McMichael.</p>	
<p><b>2. Conflicts of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no interests declared.</p>	
<p><b>3. Chair's Opening Remarks</b></p> <p>The Chair highlighted a number of critical agenda items; clearance of the draft 2015-16 Annual Report &amp; Accounts; receipt of the latest Finance &amp; Personnel Sub-Committee report and the Chair of the Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committee's Annual Report.</p> <p>The Chair informed members that following the Board meeting there would be a presentation from the Belfast Met placement students on their project to develop a mobile application that will provide a link to the Agency's website.</p> <p>The Chair also advised that there would also be a presentation to Patricia McQuillan to mark her retirement.</p> <p>The Chair informed the Board that Gerry O'Neill, Director (Corporate Services) will retire at the end of September 2016. It was agreed that the selection panel will comprise the Chair, another Board member and the CEO. Board members interested in being a panel member to liaise with the CEO.</p> <p>The Chair reported on correspondence received from the Chair and Clerk to the Committee for the Economy.</p>	<p><b>BMs</b></p>

<p><b>4. Minutes of 19 May 2016 Meeting</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2016 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	<p><b>Secretary</b></p>
<p><b>5. Matters Arising from 19 May 2016 Minutes</b></p> <p><b>5.1 CIPFA Governance Standard</b></p> <p>The CEO indicated that he would contact some of the organisations involved in the CIPFA pilot scheme and report back to the Board in August. Other potential governance models had been identified and will be investigated by the CEO. The CEO will also discuss his findings with the Chair of the Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committee.</p> <p><b>5.2 CMRS – Phase 2 Update</b></p> <p>The DCS reported that the Phase 2 CMRS project will focus on the residual Advisory Services not covered by Phase 1 and that the work to develop the specification is well advanced.</p> <p><b>5.3 Programme for Government (PfG)</b></p> <p>The CEO advised the Board that the Executive had launched a consultation on the draft PfG with a closing date of 22 July. The CEO tabled a document setting out the PfG outcomes, measures and indicators. The Board suggested that the findings from the 2012 SROI study commissioned by the Agency are consistent with an outcome-based approach. It was agreed that the CEO would prepare a response to be cleared by the Chair on behalf of the Board.</p> <p><b>5.4 Early Conciliation Business Case</b></p> <p>The Board noted that the Finance &amp; Personnel Sub-Committee had discussed the Early Conciliation business case at its meeting on 20 June. The Board acknowledged the significant amount of time invested by SMT in preparing the business case and responding to follow up queries. A further update will be provided at the August Board meeting.</p> <p><b>5.5 2016-17 Business Plan</b></p> <p>The CEO confirmed that the 2016/17 Business Plan has been submitted to DfE and will be discussed at the July accountability review meeting.</p>	<p><b>CEO</b></p> <p><b>SMT</b></p> <p><b>CEO</b></p> <p><b>SMT</b></p> <p><b>CEO/DCS</b></p>
<p><b>6. Board Member Training/Appraisals</b></p> <p>The Chair thanked Board members for their time and input to the appraisal process. A number of important issues were raised which will be discussed at the corporate planning day later in the year.</p> <p>The Chair reported that she and the CEO will be attending the International Agencies Conference in Chicago in August.</p> <p>Expressions of interest were sought from Board members and senior management for the upcoming TUC, CIPD &amp; CBI conferences.</p> <p>Board members recognised the importance of Agency representation at external conferences and welcomed the fact that the Chair and CEO will be representing the Agency and taking part in the International Agencies Conference.</p> <p>The CEO confirmed that no further information had been received regarding the Boardroom Apprentice programme and will come back to the Board when information becomes available.</p>	<p><b>Chair/CEO</b></p> <p><b>BMs/SMT/ Sec</b></p> <p><b>CEO</b></p>

<p>The Chair reported on her recent meeting with NIAO to discuss measures to increase Board effectiveness. The NIAO are supportive of the Agency Board's proposal to source collective training on Board leadership and agreed that it would be appropriate to discuss at the Chairs' Forum. The NI Audit Office will be issuing guidance on leadership and governance in the Autumn</p>	<p><b>Chair</b></p>
<p><b>7. Update on Roundtable/other stakeholder meetings</b></p> <p>The Chair and CEO reported on the range of stakeholder meetings/events attended since the last Board meeting, which provided excellent opportunities for networking and to promote the Agency's services.</p> <p>The CEO indicated that there was a potential to develop some projects with the education sector around strengthening employment and industrial relations.</p> <p>The Chair and CEO reported on the Roundtable planning workshop on 27 May and the positive follow-up meeting on 16 June. The CEO tabled a paper setting out the outcomes of the planning workshop including agreement on its core purpose, objectives, membership and an action plan. The Chair also advised that the Roundtable had also agreed to establish two working groups; to examine employment relations skills training and to progress the Joint Declaration of Protection.</p> <p>Board members were positive about the Agency's continued facilitation of the work of the Roundtable in promoting good employment/industrial relations. The Chair and CEO undertook to update the Board on the work of the Roundtable.</p>	<p><b>Chair/CEO</b></p>
<p><b>8. Finance &amp; Personnel Sub-Committee</b></p> <p>The Chair of the Finance &amp; Personnel Sub-Committee presented a report on the matters discussed at the 20 June 2016 meeting and thanked the CEO and DCS for their advice and direction. The following issues were highlighted;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An excellent presentation from the Belfast Met placement students on the mobile application project;</li> <li>• A very detailed report on the Agency's current financial position finance which has taken account of the impact of current recruitment exercises;</li> <li>• Considered terms of reference for an Accommodation Review group which is to be established to develop a specification of the Agency accommodation and facilities requirements;</li> <li>• Informative updates on HR and IS/IT issues;</li> </ul> <p>The Chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee also reported that a statistical report on absenteeism is being developed for consideration at each meeting of the Sub-Committee and the Board. The Chair also confirmed that he had written to the previous Committee Chair, Sally McKee, thanking her for her positive contribution to the work of the Sub-Committee.</p>	<p><b>SMT</b></p> <p><b>ERM (HR)</b></p>
<p><b>9. Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)</b></p> <p><b>9.1 Draft report to Those Charged With Governance</b></p> <p>The Board noted the positive NIAO Draft Report to Those Charged With Governance.</p> <p><b>9.2 Annual Report from the Chair of the ARAC</b></p> <p>The Chair of the ARAC presented the Committee's Annual Report for 2015/16 covering the following issues;</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency’s control ethos and scrutiny of the corporate risk register;</li> <li>• ARAC membership, attendance and pattern of meetings;</li> <li>• Outcomes from self-assessment;</li> <li>• Review of audit arrangements;</li> <li>• Implementation of audit recommendations.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair of the ARAC confirmed that it had been a very positive year. External audit had complimented the Agency on the presentation of the accounts under the new format. Internal audit had also commended the Agency’s approach to implementing recommendations from the programme of audits with all Directors being involved on a collective basis.</p> <p>The DCS undertook to check that policies are updated on the Agency website.</p> <p>Reference was made to a recent breach of security regarding the Agency telephony system. A report will be provided for the Board at the August meeting.</p> <p>The Chair of the ARAC expressed her appreciation for the work carried out by the previous Committee Chair, Gordon Parkes, and by the current members.</p> <p>The Agency Chair congratulated both Committee Chairs and members for their work throughout the year.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DCS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>DCS</b></p>
<p><b>10. Finance Issues</b></p> <p><b>10.1 Budget update</b></p> <p>The DCS presented the finance report which provided an overview of the budget position to date. The Board noted that early indications on budget spend were positive. The Board will be kept informed of budget progress.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DCS</b></p>
<p><b>11. HR Issues</b></p> <p><b>11.1 HR Update</b></p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the HR Update. The People Strategy was being progressed in line with previous Board comments and would feed into the corporate planning process.</p> <p>Plans were also being made to hold an internal workshop with the liP Assessor to explore the requirements of the new liP standard.</p> <p><b>11.2 Draft Health &amp; Well-being Strategy</b></p> <p>The DCS reported that a Health and Well-being action plan is being progressed. A meeting has been arranged with Business in the Community to discuss using their Workwell Model as a benchmarking tool for the Agency.</p> <p>The SMT will be discussing the formation of a sub-group to progress a staff conference in the Autumn. There may be an opportunity to align the staff conference to the annual public meeting/40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Agency. It was agreed that this would provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the work of the Agency.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ERM (HR)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>DCS/ERM (HR)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SMT</b></p>

<p><b>12. Business Plan Performance Report for 2016/17</b></p> <p>The CEO reported on the current status of all business plan targets;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• only two months into the financial year and therefore only minimal progress on some end year targets;</li> <li>• good progress on many of the service delivery targets;</li> <li>• there are a number of targets directly related to Early Conciliation, good progress on recruitment and substantial work completed on the EC business case;</li> <li>• there are a small number of targets where there is potentially a significant risk because of dependency on third party input.</li> </ul> <p>The Director (Advisory Services) tabled a paper highlighting the Agency's partnership with Invest NI, particularly through the NIBusiness.co.uk portal. In relation to NI Business Info the Agency supplies the employment and skills updates to the site where 60% of the interface has been through the use of mobile 'apps'. Similar information was supplied to NI Direct but no figures are currently available on the uptake of this information. Board members requested that the Agency explore the possibility of obtaining information on the use of the NI Direct site. Board members expressed their disappointment that the Agency input to both sites was largely unrecognised. The CEO undertook to raise the issue at the next quarterly liaison meeting.</p>	<p><b>CEO/DAS</b></p>
<p><b>13. Draft Annual Report &amp; Accounts 2015-16</b></p> <p>The CEO in presenting the draft Annual Report &amp; Accounts 2015-16 highlighted some of the changes required under revised DFP reporting arrangements. The CEO provided the Board with a detailed overview of the content of following sections of the draft Annual Report; the Strategic Report, the Corporate Risks, the Corporate Governance Report and the Accounting Officer's Governance Statement. Board members were asked to provide final comments on the draft Annual Report by Friday, 1 July.</p>	<p><b>BMs</b></p>
<p><b>14. Employment Law Update</b></p> <p>Board members noted the content of the update.</p>	
<p><b>15. Any Other Business</b></p> <p>Board members were advised that arrangements for a joint meeting with ECNI were being progressed.</p> <p>The CEO undertook to contact Kieran Mulvey, Workplace Relations Commission, regarding a joint meeting.</p> <p>Board members agreed that it would be useful to have name plates at meetings, particularly when there were external visitors to the Board.</p>	<p><b>CEO</b></p> <p><b>CEO</b></p> <p><b>Sec</b></p>
<p><b>16. Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting of the <b>Agency Board</b> will take place on <b>Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2016 at 10.00 am in the Agency's offices, 2-16 Gordon Street, Belfast.</b></p>	<p><b>Secretariat</b></p>