

**Labour Relations Agency
Minutes of a Senior Management Team Meeting
held on Monday, 7 October 2013 in Room 2, Gordon Street**

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

In Attendance: Alison Wolfe (Minute Secretary)

- | | Minute | |
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| 1. | Apologies

No apologies were received. | Action |
| 2. | Minutes of Meeting held on 28 August 2013

Subject to agreed amendments the minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2013 were agreed. | |
| 3. | Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

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

4.1 Review of NI Employment Law
Following comments received at the Board meeting on 26 Sept the SMT has undertaken a preliminary review of a draft response from the Agency. The CEO will discuss the response with the Chairman prior to submitting it to the Board in October. The SMT agreed that there were a number of important issues which required further discussion. | SMT |
| | 4.2 Roundtable Discussion on NI ER
It was noted that the ER Roundtable 10 September had decided to hold a 2-day residential on 7 & 8 November to discuss issues arising out of the DEL Consultation on Employment Law Review. The Roundtable is scheduled to meet again on 18 October. | CEO |
| | 4.3 Employee Relations Institute – Founder Membership
It was noted that the CEO had been invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the ER Institute. However as the meeting clashed with the Board meeting on 26 Sept the DCA represented the Agency at the Institute. Discussion had centred on the need for a more collectivist approach to ER and examined how the Institute should be formulating its plan for the next 12 months. There was a common view that the term ‘engagement’ was not particularly meaningful. It was agreed that it was important for the Agency to be represented so long as the aims and work of the Institute were considered conducive | |

to good ER. Membership of the Institute would provide a platform for learning and allow for an exchange of information. It was noted that the Institute would also be looking at the issue of a subscription for members.

CEO

4.4 LRA Seminar – 5 September 2013

It was noted that LRA Seminar had been well received. The Chairman has written to Maxine Murphy-Higgins, on behalf of the Board, expressing their appreciation of her presentation at the seminar.

4.5 International Agencies Meeting 2013

It was noted that the International Agencies conference had been well attended. Speakers had provided the audience with information on the issues faced internationally while the panel discussion provided a platform for the audience to raise questions about any unique aspects of dispute resolution and employment relations in other countries.

4.6 Employment Relations Research

It was agreed that the SMT will discuss the McClure Watters report in more detail as part of the DEL review and the corporate planning process.

SMT

4.7 SROI

It was noted that the SMT met to discuss and will be further reviewing SROI in terms of a) the report itself and b) how it is incorporated into the Corporate Plan 2014-17.

SMT

5. NI & GB Employment Relations Systems

It was agreed that this item would be considered at the next SMT informal meeting.

SMT

It was noted that an Agency briefing on the differences in employment law between NI and GB was now part of the Agency's Events programme.

DAS

6. Agency Strategy and Services

6.1 Corporate Plan 2011-14

6.2 Business Plan 2012-13 – Performance Review Report

6.3 Corporate Planning Process 2014-17 Business Plan 2014-15

At the Board meeting on 26 September the SMT gave presentations that informed the Board's discussion on the determination of the strategic direction to be taken by the Agency 2014-2017. The SMT outlined the work undertaken since 2011 setting out potential strategic themes for 2014-2017. It was agreed that the CEO prepare a first draft Corporate Plan to be discussed at the October Board meeting.

CEO

It was noted that corporate planning workshops with staff would take place on Wednesday, 9 October. Staff would be examining the process from both SWOT and PEST perspectives Findings will inform the drafting of the Corporate Plan 2014-17.

7. Leadership Organisation and Performance Management

7.1 SMT Development Programme

It was noted that CEO and Directors have completed their appraisals. PLDPs will be taken forward subject to the budget 2013-14.

It was agreed to remove this item from the agenda.

Secretariat

7.2 Cross Directorate Working Groups

Meetings of the Corporate Governance and Engagement groups were currently being organised. It was noted that the Cross Directorate Group on Service improvement was awaiting SMT comments on the SROI report.

SMT

7.3 Performance Management

It was noted that half year appraisals had been issued to staff for completion.

7.4 HR Strategy

7.4.1 Stress Risk Assessment

A stress risk assessment was due to commence at the beginning of November.

DCS

7.4.2 Staff Recognition & IiP

It was noted that work was continuing on aspects of the HR Strategy particularly recognition, internal communications and a staff suggestion scheme.

Work was being undertaken in developing an Agency Intranet.

DCS

It was suggested that some form of benchmarking or framework would be required when setting categories and guidelines for staff recognition. The system as it currently stood was too structured.

7.4.3 Staff Conference

It was agreed that a staff conference will be held in early spring 2014. The SMT will consider topics. Consideration will be given to the new Agency Chairman addressing the conference.

SMT

7.4.4 Evaluation/self assessment of JNCC

It was noted that evaluation/self - assessment forms had been issued to the JNCC members in September with a view to discussions at the December meeting. The SMT agreed to discuss the forms at an informal meeting.

SMT

7.4.5 Staffing

It was agreed that a member of the IC Admin staff should deputise for the EOII in her absence.

DCA

It was noted that when the new ICMS system became operational additional resources would be required to test the system and train staff. It was agreed that the DCA submit a business case to the CEO.

DCA/CEO

It was noted that the filling of the current ERO vacancy was being progressed.

DCS

8. ICT

8.1 IS Managed Services

It was noted that the new IS Managed Services contract with Kelway began on 2 September. It was agreed to inform staff of contact details for Kelway.

DCS

8.2 Security Accreditation

It was noted that the MS and TUS secretaries were currently reviewing HR policies and procedures. The Agency would be reviewing security accreditation again next year.

DCS

8.3 ICMS

It was reported that the ICMS business plan was with DEL for approval. The ICMS steering group held their first meeting on Thursday, 19 September. The second meeting, which was due to take place today, was postponed due to illness of the IT Manager. The project team would be meeting on Friday, 4 October.

CEO

8.4 Website Security Accreditation

It was noted that a risk assessment of the website was currently underway. The meeting was made aware of the financial and logistical consequences associated with website security accreditation. Whilst the website is considered low risk the DCS undertook to check the status of the website with DEL should accreditation be withdrawn.

DCS

It was agreed that there was a need to outline the role of the IT Manager and Kelway with respect to IT responsibilities.

DCS

9. Evaluation

9.1 PPEs

It was noted that PPEs were being progressed for the evaluation of mediation, collective conciliation and SROI.

SMT

9.2 SROI

See 9.1 above.

9.3 NISRA Report

It was agreed that the findings of the NISRA report will be taken account of when drafting the Corporate Plan. It was agreed to remove this item from the standing agenda.

CEO

9.4 Value for Money

It was noted that the CEO will be preparing a paper on vfm for the year end.

CEO

It was noted that the DCA would be carrying out an evaluation of IC and the independent appeals procedure before the year end.

DCA

An assessment of the Agency website was outstanding.

DAS

DCS will be issuing a Corporate Services customer survey to staff before the year end.

DCS

Unit Costs – it was agreed that the DCS would brief the CEO on the current status of unit costs.

DCS

10. Governance and Accountability

10.1 LRA Funding 2012/13

It was noted that the Agency continued to run a very tight budget and was currently 3% overspent. The Agency was currently reporting a £48K overspend to DEL. Every effort would be made to cut back and manage the budget to break even by 31 March 2014.

CEO/DCS

It was noted that the Agency was currently in negotiations with the landlord regarding sharing costs for a replacement lift in Gordon Street.

DCS

10.2 Statutory Compliance

It was noted that Paul Oakes, Equality Commission has agreed to provide equality training for Agency staff.

It was noted that equality papers were discussed by the F&P Committee on 26 September. Matters arising will be progressed by the SMT.

SMT

10.3 Environmental Review

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

SMT

10.4 Corporate Social Responsibility

It was noted that a charity event for Macmillan Cancer was underway.

11. JNCC

11.1 Redundancy Procedure

The SMT discussed the Recruitment & Selection Procedure and the TUS proposal that both parties sign the agreement but with a caveat that TUS do not agree with a certain paragraph. Following extensive discussion the SMT decided that it would be better to record a 'failure to agree' but that every effort should be made to reach agreement..

CEO/DCS

11.2 The Black Book

With regard to the 'Black Book', management will raise the outstanding documentation with the TUSS to identify any policies which can be removed.

CEO/DCS

12. Any Other Business


12.1 Staff Long Service Presentations


It was noted that three staff would be receiving long service presentations at the October Board. Two members of staff will have completed 35 years service and one member 25 years service.

12.2 Premises Officer

It was noted that the DCS, the Compliance Officer and the Security Guard received emails regarding premises queries.


13. Date of Next Meetings

 SMT Corporate Planning Day –
Tuesday, 15 October 10.00 am

 Informal Meetings: Tuesday, 22, 29
October at 10.00 am

Tuesday, 5, 12, 19, 26 November at 10.00
am

Tuesday, 3, 17 December at 10.00 am

 Formal Meeting: - Tuesday, 10 December
at 10.00 am

It was agreed to prepare dates for SMT meetings in 2014 to be circulated to the SMT.