

**MINUTES OF THE THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY SEVENTH MEETING OF  
THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT 10.00 AM  
ON THURSDAY, 28 AUGUST 2008  
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, 2-8 GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

**Present:** Jim McCusker (Chair)  
Norma Heaton  
Patricia O'Farrell  
Peter Williamson  
Rodan Ward  
Brenda Maitland

**In Attendance:** William Patterson (Chief Executive)  
Gerry O'Neill (Director, Corporate Services)  
Penny Holloway (Director, Conciliation & Arbitration)  
David McGrath (Director, Advisory Services)  
Anne Gunning (Minutes Secretary)

**1. Apologies**

**Action**

There were apologies from Boyd Black, Julie Anne Clarke and Gordon Milligan.

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 26 June 2008**

There was one change noted to the list of those present at the meeting.

**Secretariat**

Subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2008 were then proposed by Peter Williamson, seconded by Norma Heaton, and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

It was decided that agreed Board Minutes will in future be published on the LRA website.

**DCS**

**3. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes not listed on this Agenda**

**3.1 Invitation to President of Tribunals**

It was noted that the President of OITFET will be attending the Board Meeting on Thursday, 27 November 2008. The CEO had suggested topics which the President could address:

- The current issues facing OITFET
- The DEL Review of dispute resolution in NI
- The pros and cons of establishing an EAT in NI

Members were asked to forward any further suggestions.

**Board  
Members**

### **3.2 LRA/EC Meeting w/c 10 November 2008**

It was noted that the date of the meeting has been tentatively agreed as Tuesday, 4 November which is part of Anti-Racism Week. The theme of the meeting is Migrant Workers. The CEO to confirm the date with members.

**CEO**

### **3.3 Board Meetings September – November 2008**

It was noted that the CEO had contacted Board Members on 19 August with a Board meetings timetable September to December 2008. It was agreed to hold the September Board Meeting in Derry. The September meeting is also to be the annual Public Board meeting. It was agreed that Tom Evans, DEL, should attend the September Board meeting to update the Board on the Review of Dispute Resolution process. It was agreed that the September business meeting should start at 10.00 am. The venue for the September meeting is to be confirmed.

**CEO**

It was agreed that Kieran Mulvey CEO LRC should attend the Board Meeting on 16 October to outline the role of the ROI Rights Commissioners.

**CEO**

## **4. Chairman's Business**

### **4.1 LRA Board Vacancies**

It was noted that the sifting panel had met the previous week and has shortlisted 20 candidates for interview during the first week in October.

**Chairman**

### **4.2 Chairman/CEO Stakeholder Meetings**

It was noted that the Chairman and CEO had met with June Ingram, Jim Hanna and Tom Evans at DEL on 27 June. They had discussed the Gibbons report and the DEL Review of Dispute resolution in NI.

### **4.3 LRA/DEL Audit Committee Exchange**

There was discussion on the correspondence between the Chairman and Aideen McGinley, Permanent Secretary DEL, regarding the issue of the Chair of LRA Audit Committee, Roden Ward, attending the DEL Audit Committee. Aideen McGinley had indicated in her letter that she was content that sufficient arrangements are in place to ensure

good governance of the Agency and it had been decided not to include any ALB representation at the DEL Audit Committee. She had suggested that Roden Ward could be included in her annual Accounting Officer meeting with the CEO.

Following discussion it was agreed that the Chairman should write to the Permanent Secretary asking for a review of the arrangements, especially when the DEL Audit Committee was considering matters of particular interest to the LRA. It was also agreed that in the letter the Chairman should seek clarification of the purpose of the LRA Audit Committee Chairperson attending the annual Accounting Officer meeting with the LRA Chief Executive.

**Chairman**

#### **4.4 Remuneration of Chairman**

It was noted that DEL had indicated that the remuneration of the Chairman and Board Members had increased by 2%, depending on satisfactory performance.

#### **4.5 Board Members NIPSA Branch 28 Meeting**

The Chairman reported that the meeting with the TUS JNCC had been positive. It was noted that TUS JNCC had demonstrated a positive attitude to the work of the Agency. The Chairman referred to the six items set out in the record note of the meeting provided in Board papers. Considerable progress had been made.

Board members recognised that comprehensive investment had been made in staff training and development. Further discussion focused on the matters of secondments, communications and the need to balance operational pressures with the creation of development opportunities for staff.

**SMT**

It was noted that the SMT was taking forward the above points as part of the improvement of the organisational effectiveness.

**SMT**

It was agreed that consideration should be given, at an appropriate time, to undertaking a staff attitude survey.

**CEO**

It was also agreed that the above points should be remitted to the Finance and Personnel Sub-committee.

**Chairman**

Following broader discussion it was agreed that any assessment of organisational effectiveness should relate to the pending DEL Review of the Agency.

#### **4.6 Board Member Appraisals 2008**

It was noted that as the Chairman has been in post for only part of the 2007/08 year, DEL had agreed that Board Member performance

**Chairman**

would be deemed as fully satisfactory for 2007/08.

## **5. Chief Executive's Business**

### **5.1 Quarterly Performance Report and Format**

Following discussion, proposals were made for revising the structure of quarterly reports, (1) fewer but high level strategic objectives (2) the tabular reporting of operational performance. Any further proposals are to be forwarded to the CEO. The CEO indicated that proposals for the revision of the structure of the annual Business Plan would be also welcome.

**CEO**

### **5.2 Proposals to Amend Trade Union Law**

Following discussion the recommendations set out in the submitted Board paper were agreed. The CEO is to forward the Agency response to DEL.

**CEO**

### **5.3 IS/IT Strategy**

The CEO reported that the SMT had put a considerable amount of work into progressing the IS/IT strategy with PWC. It was noted that a number of business cases may be required in order to progress the financing of the various elements of the strategy. The first draft IS/IT strategy from PWC is expected within the next two weeks.

**CEO**

Following discussion and in the absence of an IS/IT Strategy, it was agreed that an interim risk analysis should be submitted to the next Audit Committee meeting 15 October.

**DCS/CEO**

### **5.4 IiP**

It was noted that Eric Jenkinson will be meeting with the SMT on 4 September. It was noted that one Board Member will be selected at random to be interviewed as part of the IiP assessment process. It was noted that the IiP application is currently being prepared with proposed assessment - 31 October.

**SMT**

**CEO**

### **5.5 Review of Dispute Resolution in Northern Ireland**

It was noted that the CEO and DCA were attending the DEL Review Steering Group meetings. The CEO indicated that he expected to be able to circulate DEL's formal response to the pre-consultation exercise following Ministerial approval.

**CEO**

### **5.6 Complaints**

It was noted that the Ombudsman would not be investigating a complaint recently lodged against the Agency.

It was noted that a second complaint relating to an arbitration decision was with the Ombudsman.

### **5.7 Corporate Planning Process 2009-2012**

The CEO submitted a draft corporate planning process for the period September 2008 – March 2009. After discussion the process timetable was agreed with the following Board involvement. A stakeholder meeting with the Board is to be arranged for 11 September. The Board will consider the strategic framework and direction 11/ 25 September and hold an away day 18 November.

**CEO**

### **5.8 Monthly Management Report**

It was noted that an equal pay questionnaire had been initiated by a member of the Agency staff. Legal advice is being taken.

**DCS**

The DCS reported on progress with the Equal Pay Audit. He is awaiting a response on the procurement of services and will be contacting the Equality Commission regarding good practice.

**DCS**

The DAS reported that Enquiry Point calls relating to “credit crunch” issues have sharply increased.

The DCS reported on an over spend of approximately £31k, a low level of absenteeism and a considerable HR policy and procedure review agenda.

The DCA reported on a visit with Karen Tarr to an ACAS collective conciliation seminar. The DCA also reported on the pending visit of Robert Benjamin Pepperdine University who will be delivering mediation training for Agency staff.

### **5.9 LRA IS Security Policy**

Following discussion it was agreed that Board members would reply to the CEO by 8<sup>th</sup> September.

**Board  
Members**

## **6. Corporate Correspondence Received Relevant to Board**

No correspondence received.

## **7. Presentations to Staff on Development Achievements**

The Chairman made presentations to members of staff who had recently received an award for completion of courses of study.

**8. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Board will take place on **Thursday, 25 September 2008 at 10.00 am in the City Hotel Derry**. The meeting will be followed by a Public Meeting of the Agency at 12.00 noon.