

**MINUTES OF THE 408th MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD
HELD AT 10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 27 AUGUST 2015
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

Present: Marie Mallon (Chair)
Deirdre Fitzpatrick
Sally McKee
Gary McMichael
Alison Millar
Jill Minne
Daire Murphy
Gordon Parkes
Pauline Shepherd

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

Action

<p>1. Apologies</p> <p>An apology was received from Albert Mills.</p> <p>The Chair indicated that the minutes from the 21 May 2015 meeting were being tabled to deal with a number of matters arising; and that the Agency's Section 75 Annual Progress Report was also being tabled for discussion at the September meeting.</p>	Secretary
<p>2. Item 5.1 – Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>The Chair advised that this item will now be dealt with as the first item of business at all future Board meetings. There were no interests declared.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 25 June 2015</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2015 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting subject to amendments to 5.3 proposed by the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.</p>	Secretary

<p>4. Matters Arising from 21 May 2015 minutes</p> <p>4.1 SME Support Strategy</p> <p>The DAS provided a verbal progress report and tabled the Agency's September-December 2015 events programme. The DAS also briefed the Board on a series of seminars facilitated by the Agency and the Equality Commission on behalf of ICTU as well as an upcoming business support event being hosted by Minister Foster. Board members interested in attending the Business Support Clinic should contact the Secretariat.</p> <p>The DAS advised Board members that the proposed UU survey of SMEs may not proceed because of funding difficulties.</p> <p>Board members agreed that work was progressing well on a number of fronts and that it was important to continue to work with the independent advice sector to ensure that employees in non-unionised workplaces are aware of the Agency's services.</p> <p>The CEO advised that he had met Kirsty McManus, UU SME Centre, and Lisa Bryson, A&L Goodbody, to discuss a project to develop HR training for non HR managers. The Centre has also agreed to consider terms of reference for a research project focusing on the potential correlation between good employment relations and productivity in the SME sector.</p> <p>4.2 Staff Survey</p> <p>The CEO updated the Board on his recent meeting with Damian McAllister, HR Director with the Belfast Trust, to discuss the Trust's approach to health and well-being. The CEO advised that he has asked the Advisory Directorate to review a range of the Agency's internal policies including our approach to health and wellbeing. The Board to receive updates as this project progresses.</p> <p>The CEO indicated that he had received a confidential report from Carecall that had been commissioned prior to his appointment to examine issues around staff relationships and harassment. He advised that the matter would be discussed at the September JNCC meeting in September and that he would update the Board at the September Board meeting.</p> <p>4.3 liP</p> <p>The DCS briefed the Board on arrangements for the liP assessment scheduled to take place during the week commencing 28 September. The Chair of the Board will be interviewed by the assessor as well as a significant sample of staff from across the organisation.</p> <p>4.4 Board Priorities</p> <p>The CEO highlighted the actions that had been progressed since the last Board meeting. The Chair commented that good progress had been made on many of the actions set out in the Board Priorities paper; and reported that DEL had recently confirmed that it would be appropriate, given the recent appointment of the CEO, Chair and Board members and the planned restructuring of government departments, for the Board to review the strategic direction of the Agency as currently framed in the 2014-17 Corporate Plan.</p>	<p>BMs/Sec</p> <p>DAS</p> <p>DAS</p> <p>CEO</p> <p>CEO/DAS</p> <p>CEO</p> <p>DCS</p> <p>Board</p>
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<p>7. Chief Executive's Business</p> <p>7.1 Budget Performance to end July 2015</p> <p>The DCS presented a paper providing an analysis of current expenditure against forecasted spend. The DCS advised that some of the salaries underspend will reduce when the current ERM vacancy is filled. The CEO referred to a very positive procurement value for money report prepared by the DCS which provides an excellent basis for understanding how the Agency manages its procurement business. The report to be tabled for discussion at the September Board meeting.</p> <p>The Board understand that any substantive budget cuts can only be achieved by reducing our staff headcount but asked that it is communicated to the Department that any cuts will result in an actual reduction in frontline services. The CEO assured the Board that this message has already been conveyed to DEL but that the Chair and CEO will reiterate this message at any meetings with the Minister. The Board discussed the possibility of charging for Agency services and the impact this may have.</p>	<p>CEO</p> <p>DCS/Sec</p>
<p>7.2 Stakeholder Strategy (Paper 23/15)</p> <p>The CEO presented a paper reviewing the Agency's existing stakeholder engagement strategy paper highlighting the range of business objectives that can only be achieved through engagement with stakeholders. The Board emphasised the need for the Agency to engage with the voluntary sector and SMEs and to build on the positive relationships that already exist with these sectors.</p> <p>Following discussion the Board agreed the recommendation to bring a formal engagement strategy to the September meeting.</p>	<p>CEO</p>
<p>7.3 2015-2016 Business Plan – Performance Report – 1 April 2015-31 July 2015 (Paper 24/15)</p> <p>The CEO explained the revised format of the performance report and then highlighted current performance against the key targets, focusing particularly where there is a moderate risk of a target not being met. The CEO reported that at this stage there are no aspects of the business plan where there is a significant risk of a target not being met except where achievement is dependent on the successful introduction of an Employment Bill.</p> <p>Board members indicated that they were generally content with the revised format but asked for more detailed commentary/action plans for the more substantive targets.</p>	<p>CEO/SMT</p>
<p>7.4 Employment Law Update</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the table.</p>	
<p>8. Tribunal Rules Consultation (Paper 25/15)</p> <p>The Board considered a paper recommending how the Agency should respond to the consultation. In advance of responding to the consultation the CEO and DCA will meet with DEL policy leads. A draft response will then be prepared for approval at the September Board meeting.</p>	<p>CEO/DCA</p>

<p>9. Any Other Business</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>10. Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Agency Board will take place on Thursday, 24 September 2015 at 10.00 am in Room 5, Gordon Street.</p>	<p>Secretariat</p>