

**MINUTES OF THE THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY SECOND MEETING OF THE  
LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT 9.30 am  
ON THURSDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2010  
IN THE RAMADA ENCORE HOTEL, BELFAST**

**Present:** Jim McCusker (Chair)  
Peter Williamson  
Lyn Fawcett  
Patricia O'Farrell  
Gordon Parkes  
Sally McKee  
Trevor Morrow  
Neal Willis

**In Attendance:** Bill Patterson (Chief Executive)  
Gerry O'Neill (Director, Corporate Services)  
David McGrath (Director, Advisory Services)  
Anne Gunning (Minutes Secretary)

**1. Apologies Action**

Apologies were received from Penny Holloway and Brenda Maitland.

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 18 November 2010**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2010 were proposed by Peter Williamson, seconded by Sally McKee, and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

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

There were no matters arising.

**4. Chairman's Business**

**4.1 Declarations of Board Member Interests**

No interests were declared by members.

It was noted that LRA Register of Interest forms have been sent to members for the period to 30 November 2010. Chairman requested that these are returned as soon as possible.

**Board  
Members**

It was noted that the Register of Interest form may be updated. Chairman to discuss with CEO and DCS.

**Chairman/  
CEO/DCS**

## **4.2 Board Vacancy – update**

It was noted that the Department has indicated that there will be a further short delay in the process, probably until after the New Year.

The question of extension of Board Member contracts was raised.

## **4.3 Board Performance Appraisals**

The Chairman requested that outstanding completed appraisal forms are forwarded by Board members as soon as possible.

**Board  
Members**

## **4.4 Board Member Training**

Neal Willis gave a short report on the CIPD Conference which he attended 9-11 November 2010. The main themes were about management of change in difficult situations and attempts to involve staff with regard to managing exits from organisations. Neal found it an interesting conference and well worthwhile attending.

It was noted that Trevor Morrow, Gordon Parkes and Peter Williamson had attended Audit Committee training in November/December. This had included some discussion regarding changing the name of Audit Committees to Risk and Audit Committees. Board members agreed that this should be explored for the LRA Audit Committee. It was also agreed by members who had attended the training that in their view the LRA Audit Committee is being run efficiently.

**Audit  
Committee**

## **4.5 Meeting with new DEL Minister**

It was noted that the new DEL Minister, Mr Danny Kennedy, has agreed to attend the next Board Meeting on 27 January, at 9.45 am. It was agreed that Board members should meet at 9.30 am on 27<sup>th</sup>. It is hoped that the meeting will be held in Room 1. As the accommodation project will be ongoing and may cause some noise disruption, it was noted that Lyn Fawcett has offered facilities for the January Board Meeting in the University of Ulster premises if necessary. CEO to liaise with Lyn.

**CEO**

## **4.6 Meeting with Industrial Court**

It was noted that the Chair of the Industrial Court, Barry Fitzpatrick, has approached the Agency with regard to a meeting regarding developments in the Industrial Court and the interface between the Agency and the Industrial Court. A meeting has been arranged with the Chairman and CEO for 8 February.

**Chairman/  
CEO**

## **5. Research Committee**

### **5.1 Meeting held on 18 November 2010**

The Chairman reported that the main item for discussion at the meeting was the research with regard to Social Return on Investment (SROI). The SMT

had met with a consultant and have agreed to undertake a scoping study on the methodology for the evaluation of the Agency's services. CEO/SMT

It was noted that the Committee decided to look at the possibility of research in engineering and construction areas. It was agreed that these are significant areas affected by the downturn in the economy.

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

### **6.1 *LRA Code of Practice on Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures***

The Board discussed the responses to the public consultation exercise with regard to the draft Code of Practice which ended on 28 November 2010. It was noted that these took account of the comments received from a list of people who were approached. The DAS explained that it is an important document which tries to draw up a code of practice on how to handle disciplinary and grievance issues in the workplace and set a benchmark. It will apply to every organisation in Northern Ireland - public, private, large and small. The document is unique, in that it only applies to Northern Ireland, and the aim is to make it relevant to the N Ireland economy. It was noted that it has been difficult to achieve a balanced form of words for the document. The aim is to respond positively to the comments received and not to over complicate the document.

The Board considered the responses received, including those from the Law Society. These were accepted, with a few minor amendments.

Tribunals – With regard to the Advisory Committee on Tribunal Rules, it was agreed that the DAS would contact Noel Kelly at OITFET regarding the Code. After Board discussion, it was agreed that the CEO would highlight any sections that the Advisory Committee wished to have amended and email them to Board members for comment. Any comments received would then be submitted to the Department for approval, along with recommendations already agreed.

**DAS**

**CEO**

**CEO**

It was noted that the promotion of the Code would be considered if approval is received.

### **6.2 *Recruitment of new members for Arbitrator Panel***

It was noted that the Board has discussed the renewal of the Arbitrator Panel on several occasions. Board Members considered a number of documents associated with the recruitment exercise and the criteria required. It was decided that documents should be prepared using as templates the documents for public appointments.

### **6.3 *Corporate Plan 2011-14***

The Board discussed the revised format for the Corporate Plan which has been put in place after previous comments from Board Members. This included four strategic aims and objectives themes – Services, Promotion, People and Resources & Accountability. These were agreed by the Board. A gantt chart

was also produced showing the timetable for all 29 strategic objectives. It was noted that the Business Plan will be discussed at the next Board Meeting in January.

**CEO**

#### **6.4 DEL Review of Dispute Resolution in NI**

##### **(i) Employment Bill**

The CEO reported on feedback from the Secretary of the DEL Committee. After the Agency presentation in November the Committee considered the Employment Bill clause by clause. It was noted that there are no significant changes to the Bill after their deliberations. However the Committee is to monitor the progress of the Bill and review in due course. It was further noted that the Agency submission did make the Committee conscious that there are issues relating to the implementation of the new Bill.

##### **(ii) DEL Advisory Group**

It was noted that Tom Evans, Chair of the Group, has forwarded draft Terms of Reference for the Group to the Agency. The Chairman has responded highlighting a number of points which the Board agreed regarding the independence of the Agency. It was noted that the CEO is to re-word the TOR and return to Tom Evans. A meeting has been arranged with Tom on Monday, 20 December.

**CEO**

##### **(iii) Others matters**

Nothing to report.

#### **6.5 DEL Review of LRA – Progress Report**

It was noted that the Progress Report will be discussed at the next LRA/DEL quarterly meeting. Any response from DEL could be included in the Report.

**CEO**

#### **6.6 DEL ALB Review**

Nothing more to report. As it was noted that there is to be a further review of Government quangos, it was agreed to contact ACAS regarding their defence of the Review.

**CEO**

#### **6.7 RPA**

There were no significant developments to report.

#### **6.8 Equal Pay**

It was noted that there has been no more information on equal pay with respect to Agency implementation of the 2009 pay settlement. It was noted that CEO will contact the Department as soon as possible in anticipation that this will be agreed for the January salaries.

**CEO**

#### **6.9 Board Cycle of Meetings 2011**

The proposed dates for Board meetings and sub-committee meetings in 2011 were agreed by the Board.

### **6.10 Board Brought Forward Information**

Further to a discussion at the November Board Meeting regarding Board Meeting action points, it was noted that a bring forward system has been produced which will record action points from Board Meetings. These will either be dealt with before the next meeting and recorded, or logged into a rolling action list for review/further action (where applicable). It is hoped that this will ensure that actions agreed at meetings are not inadvertently overlooked. It was agreed to try out this new system.

**CEO**

### **6.11 Bi-Monthly Management Report**

It was noted, that due to time constraints, the Bi-Monthly Management Report will be discussed at the next meeting in January.

**CEO**

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

No correspondence received.

## **8. Any Other Business**

### **8.1 Public Relations**

- Economic Outlook and Business Review – “*Regulating Retirement – Reviewing the Business Case Approach*” – by Bill Patterson  
Noted.

### **8.2 Social Corporate Responsibility**

It was noted that the Chairman would be acknowledging the staff’s contribution to charity fundraising events in 2010 at the Christmas lunch, following the meeting.

### **8.3 Letter of Commendation**

It was noted that a letter of commendation had been received by the Agency from Stewart Pauley, of the Regional Training Unit thanking LRA staff for their excellent work and the high quality of their presentation which had been well received. He thanked the Agency for their valuable contribution.

## **9. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Agency Board will take place on Thursday, 27 January 2011 commencing at 9.30 am in Room 1, Gordon Street, Belfast, subject to the progress of the accommodation project. It is hoped that the new DEL Minister, Danny Kennedy, will join the Board prior to the meeting.

### **Presentation to Miss Sylvia Pedlow**

The Chairman made a presentation on behalf of the Board to Sylvia Pedlow on the completion of 25 years with the Agency on 2 December 2010.