

**MINUTES OF THE 392nd MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY
BOARD HELD AT 10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 19 DECEMBER 2013
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

Present: Jim McCusker (Chair)
Lyn Fawcett
Albert Mills
Trevor Morrow
Sally McKee
Gordon Parkes
Neal Willis
Pauline Shepherd
Alison Millar

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

Action

<p>1. Apologies</p> <p>An apology was received from Gary McMichael.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 28 November 2013</p> <p>The following amendment was proposed Para 5.2, 1st bullet point, last point –</p> <p><i>- Appointment of members of the Audit Committee and involvement of the Audit Chair in the appointment of Audit Committee members – the Chair of the Audit Committee is to be consulted on proposals to change the membership of the Audit Committee.</i></p> <p>The draft minute is to be amended accordingly. The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2013 were then proposed by Neal Willis, seconded by Alison Millar and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to the above amendment.</p>	<p>Secretariat</p>
<p>3. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes not listed on this Agenda</p> <p>6.1 DEL/LRA Management Statement/Financial Memorandum (Paper 36/13)</p> <p>It was noted that the Chairman and CEO will be meeting Tom Evans DEL, 7 January to discuss the Board's proposals on the acceptance of the draft MSFM subject to the determination of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) addressing the independence of the Agency. The MoU is to be modelled along the lines of the Police Ombudsman MSFM MoU.</p>	<p>Chair/CEO</p>

<p>4.4 Joint LRA/EC Meeting – 12 November 2013</p> <p>The Chairman reported that he had received a letter from Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner, ECNI thanking the Agency for hosting the recent joint meeting.</p>	
<p>4. Chairman’s Business</p> <p>4.1 Declarations of Interests</p> <p>Alison Millar declared an interest in item 5.3 indicating that she would leave the meeting while this item was discussed.</p> <p>No further interests were declared by members.</p>	<p>A Millar</p>
<p>4.2 Board Member Training</p> <p>The Chairman reported on two briefing sessions he had attended recently:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lessons from Audit by Kieran Donnelly, CAG. The session focussed on the role of non-executive directors. Other topics included risk management, internal audit, procurement, fraud and whistleblowing. The priorities for the CAG for the future were inefficiency, staff productivity, unit cost information and benchmarking. 2. Workshop by Ben Lucas (2020 Public Services Trust) on Public Sector Reform and Innovation. The Chairman indicated that while the speakers had been interesting there had been very little discussion about the motivation of staff and its links to innovation. <p>Sally McKee reported on a training course she had attended led by Brian Whalley where it was suggested that organisations should have a representative with a financial background on the Audit Committee even if this meant co-opting someone onto the Committee. It was noted that the Agency Audit Committee had recently reviewed the checklist and were satisfied that the members of the Committee had the relevant experience. The Audit Committee agreed to re-examine the matter.</p>	<p>Audit Cttee</p>
<p>4.3 Update on Stakeholder Meetings</p> <p>The Chairman informed members that the Roundtable had met with Dr Stephen Farry the DEL Minister on 10 December. The Minister was very encouraging in respect of the work of the Roundtable. He asked the Roundtable to keep him updated on progress and said he would give favourable attention to any conclusions reached.</p> <p>At a subsequent meeting 12 December the Roundtable decided that in the New Year they would concentrate on –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing up a joint declaration of protection between employers 	<p>Chairman</p>

<p>and trade unions on a ‘harmonious/inclusive’ workplace;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protected conversations – the Roundtable had concerns regarding the GB model but felt a need for guidance in particular regarding pre-retirement situations. It was agreed that the Agency would submit a brief paper and give a presentation on ‘Handling Difficult Conversations.’ Preparing a business case to DEL for resources to carry on the work of the Roundtable. <p>A series of meetings have been planned up to June 2014 to consider various topics.</p>	
<p>4.4 Register of Interest forms</p> <p>It was noted that all Board Register of Interest forms had been completed and returned.</p>	CEO
<p>5. Chief Executive’s Business</p> <p>5.1 Bi-Monthly Management Report – 1 April-30 November 2013 (Paper 40/13)</p> <p>It was noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Agency awaits the outcome of the DEL Review of Employment Law. The Leadership and Management Strategy was being implemented. The ICMS steering group has met and reviewed the first draft specification. SROI has now been incorporated into the Corporate & Business Plans. There had been an increase in in-house training and seminars held. An increase was recorded in collective disputes. There was a reduction in the number of non-ET1s. <p>It was noted that the Conciliation Section continues to promote the Arbitration Scheme. A review paper is to be prepared for the February Board meeting.</p> <p>It was also noted that the stress risk assessment was complete; focus groups had been held. The Agency awaits a report from the HSE in January.</p> <p>It was reported that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sickness absence levels have reduced. A stair lift will be installed in HQ as a H&S contingency. <p>Due to an error in printing the DCS is to submit his November bi-monthly report in January.</p> <p>The bi-monthly report for the period was ratified by the Board pending the Corporate Services update.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CEO/DCA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DCS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DCS</p>

<p>5.2 Bribery Act – Bribery Act 2010 – Incorporation into LRA Policy and Procedures (Paper 41/13)</p> <p>It was noted that the Board had agreed not to have a specific policy document regarding bribery but that references to the Bribery Act were to be included, as appropriate, in other relevant Agency Policies and Procedures. The Board agreed that the paper submitted provided clarity as to where and when the Act applied. It was noted that the Audit Committee had addressed bribery earlier in the year, however in order to ensure that procedures are up-to-date it was agreed to refer the matter to the Audit Committee to consider whether this approach is adequate.</p>	<p>Audit Cttee</p>
<p>5.3 Equal Pay Review (Paper 43/13)</p> <p>Alison Millar declared an interest in the above review and left the meeting at this point.</p> <p>It was noted that only minor variances existed in the NISRA report. No adjustments were recommended. The Agency awaits the implementation of any 2014 pay settlement and may commission NISRA to carry out a further full equal pay review in 2015.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the report.</p> <p>Alison Millar returned to the meeting.</p>	<p>CEO/DCS</p>
<p>5.4 Employment Law Agenda</p> <p>It was noted that an in-house update on employment law had been provided for staff. It was agreed to look at the possibility of providing an update for Board members in early 2014.</p> <p>It was noted that amendments were proposed to the ACAS Code of Practice on Discipline and Grievance which was currently out to consultation. The Agency may need to carry out a similar exercise.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the table.</p>	<p>Chair/CEO</p> <p>DAS</p>
<p>6. Corporate Correspondence Received Relevant to Board</p> <p>There was no correspondence received.</p>	
<p>7. Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no other business to report.</p>	

<p>8. Retirement Presentation to Anne Gunning</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Anne to the meeting. He reviewed the 9 years' service that Anne had given to the Agency and thanked Anne for the excellent and dedicated support she had provided to the Board. The Chairman presented Anne with a gift from the Board. Anne thanked the Board and reflected on her very enjoyable years with the Agency.</p>	
<p>9. Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next Board meeting will be held on Thursday, 30 January 2014 at 10.00 am in Gordon Street.</p>	