


**MINUTES OF THE 402nd MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY
BOARD HELD AT 10.30 am ON THURSDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2014
IN THE AGENCY’S OFFICES, GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

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

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)

		<i>Action</i>
1.	Welcome At the outset of the meeting the Chair formally welcomed Deirdre Fitzpatrick, Jill Minne and Daire Murphy to the Board of the Agency. The Chair wished the new members well in their appointments.	
2.	Apologies There were no apologies.	
3.	Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 20 November 2014 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2014 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting subject to the following amendment: Para 6.4, first sentence should read – “It was noted that Agency officers had been involved in settlements relating to holiday pay with a large employer following a recent decision of the Employment Appeals Tribunal.”	Secretariat

<p>4. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes not listed on this Agenda</p> <p>4.4 Update on Stakeholder Meetings</p> <p>It was noted that the meeting of the ER Roundtable scheduled for 16 December had been postponed. The CEO will be contacting members to arrange a meeting for late February 2015.</p>	<p>CEO</p>
<p>5. Chair's Business</p> <p>5.1 Declarations of Interests</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest expressed.</p>	
<p>5.2 Board Member Training</p> <p>It was noted that Albert Mills will be attending interview training in January 2015.</p> <p>The Chair reported that she had completed the CIPFA Inspiring Boardroom Leadership programme which had been a condition of her appointment. The programme had been very comprehensive and had covered not just the compliance aspects of governance and boardroom leadership but also how Boards can lead and improve performance. The Chair recommended the programme to Board members and members of the SMT.</p> <p>As agreed at the November meeting the Chair, CEO and DCS had looked at arrangements for the Board to meet to discuss:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development of a business plan, and 2. Board effectiveness. <p>Board members agreed to hold an away day/overnight stay to facilitate discussion and focus on the above issues. In response to a query about staff perceptions about such a meeting, given the tight budget situation, the Chair indicated that it was important to invest in the Board to make it effective. Members agreed that this would constitute essential training for the Board. It was agreed that the away day should be independently facilitated.</p> <p>It was also agreed that DEL is advised that, due to the current changes at Board and CEO levels, submission of the Agency Business Plan 2015/16 may be delayed.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Secretariat email Board members and Tom Evans, the new CEO, with possible dates for an away day in late February/early March 2015.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Chair/CEO/DCS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair/DCS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Secretariat</p>

<p>5.3 Update on Stakeholder meetings</p> <p>See Item 4 for ER Roundtable update.</p> <p>The Chair reported that she had attended the opening of the new INTO headquarters and met with officials.</p> <p>The Chair had also attended meetings of the Chairs’ Forum but indicated that due to time restraints she may have to re-examine her position on the Committee.</p> <p>On 17 December the Chair had a very constructive informal meeting with members of LRA JNCC Trade Union Side (NIPSA Branch 28).</p> <p>The Chair then reported on a meeting she and the CEO attended with representatives of DEL to discuss the funding position. While there had been no cut to the Agency budget this year there was still concern about the possibility of cuts next year and the impact these would have on Agency services. The Chair and CEO had reiterated the fact that the Agency remained structurally underfunded and was facing challenges relating to (1) the outcome of the DEL Review of Employment Law and (2) the expected increase in demand for operational services deriving from the current economic situation and the pending organisational reform of the public sector.</p> <p>Members agreed that a paper is prepared for submission to DEL indicating why the Agency budget should not be cut. It was noted that the Agency Business Plan 2015-16 will need to contain justification for an increase in the Agency budget given the pending impact on Agency services of points (1) and (2) above.</p>	<p>Chair/CEO</p> <p>Chair</p> <p>CEO/Dirs</p>
<p>5.4 Appointments to the Board of the Labour Relations Agency</p> <p>As at Item 1 it was noted that Deirdre Fitzpatrick, Jill Minne and Daire Murphy had been appointed to the Board with effect from 1 December 2014. It was noted that the Board was now at full complement.</p>	<p>Chair</p>
<p>5.5 Recruitment of LRA CEO</p> <p>Tom Evans, currently with DEL, is to commence employment as the LRA CEO on Monday, 16 March 2015. A process of induction is to be organised, in conjunction with the outgoing CEO.</p>	<p>CEO</p>
<p>5.6 Board Sub-Committee Membership</p> <p>Due to changes in Board personnel the following sub-committee vacancies had arisen:</p> <p> 2 vacancies on the Audit Committee</p>	

<p>✚ 1 vacancy on the Finance & Personnel Committee ✚ 1 vacancy on the Research Committee</p> <p>Board members were asked to consider the above vacancies and to contact the Chair indicating their interest in serving on the above committees.</p>	<p>BMs/Chair</p>
<p>5.7 Board Register of Interest Forms</p> <p>All updated Board Register of Interest forms have been returned.</p>	<p>CEO/Secretariat</p>
<p>6. Audit Sub Committee</p> <p>It was agreed to change the name of the Audit Sub-Committee to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.</p> <p>6.1 Audit Sub-Committee meeting held on 19 June 2014 (Paper 31/14)</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee clarified para 9.1, second paragraph – the reference in the Internal Audit Review of Value for Money was not an indication that the Board was ineffective rather that a Board should continuously improve its effectiveness going forward.</p> <p>6.2 Meeting held on 4 December 2014</p> <p>Due to the fact that two members of the Committee were retiring Sally McKee had attended the meeting on 4 December and had provided valuable input. Members were reminded that there was opportunity for all Board Members to attend meetings of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.</p> <p>The meeting had focused on the Risk Register and the plan for Internal Audit for the next 3 years.</p> <p>As indicated in the CEO Stewardship Statement all appropriate governance systems and processes were in place. The Agency was compliant in all relevant areas of governance.</p> <p>There were currently 8 risks in the Risk Register. Risks 3 (Agency funding) and 5 (the new ICMS system) were discussed in detail. The Committee had asked the SMT to review the risks facing the Agency paying particular attention to succession management.</p> <p>It was noted that ASM have been appointed as the Internal Auditors for the next 3 years.</p> <p>No significant issues were raised in the overview from the External Auditors.</p>	<p>DCS/Secretariat</p> <p>SMT</p>

<p>The CEO provided background for new Board members regarding clarification sought by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on the role of the Accounting Officer in relation to the Certification Office. The proposal put to DEL was that accountability for the Certification Office would lie with the CEO as Accounting Officer reporting to the Permanent Secretary DEL and not to the Board of the LRA.</p>	<p>CEO</p>
<p>7. Chief Executive's Business</p> <p>7.1 Budget Position</p> <p>The CEO reported that through prudent management and restricted spend it was expected that the Agency budget would break even at the year end. He reminded Board members that the Agency remained structurally underfunded with the budget position becoming more difficult to reconcile year on year.</p> <p>It was noted that the CEO had responded to the consultation on the Assembly budget highlighting the importance of employment relations and supporting the principles of the DEL vision.</p>	<p>CEO</p>
<p>7.2 Corporate/Business Planning Process</p> <p>The Board was in the process of agreeing a date for an away day, part of which would focus on business planning.</p> <p>The Chair and CEO will be discussing a format for the away day, including presentations from Directors. A draft programme will be circulated to Board members in due course.</p>	<p>CEO/Ch/Dirs</p>
<p>7.3 Employment Law Update</p> <p>For the benefit of new Board members the CEO explained that the update provided an indication of change and potential changes to the programme of NI employment law.</p> <p>Board members expressed their appreciation of the update and the usefulness of the information provided.</p> <p>It was noted that an update was required to the item on Shared Parental Leave.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the table.</p>	<p>DAS/MMcA</p>
<p>8. Corporate Correspondence Received Relevant to Board</p> <p>The Chair read a card from Mary O'Brien expressing her appreciation of the sympathy of the Board at the time of her mother's death.</p>	

<p>9. Any Other Business</p> <p><i>7.1 Death of Hazel Grove, former member of staff</i></p> <p>The CEO advised the Board of the death, on 14 December, of Hazel Grove. Hazel was a valued and long standing member of staff. She had joined the Agency in 1978 and had retired in May of this year. A funeral service for Hazel would take place on Friday, 19 December at 10.30 am in Kirkwoods Funeral Home, Kings Road, Belfast.</p>	
<p>10. Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Agency Board will take place on Thursday, 29 January 2015 at 10.00 am in Room 5, Gordon Street.</p>	<p>Secretariat</p>

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