

LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY

**MINUTES OF THE SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE FINANCE &
PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY
HELD AT 10.30 am ON THURSDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2011
IN ROOM 1, 2-12 GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

Present: Mr Jim McCusker (Chairman)
Mrs Brenda Maitland
Mr Neal Willis
Mrs Sally McKee

In Attendance: Mr William Patterson (Chief Executive)
Dr Gerry O'Neill (Director Corporate Services)
Mrs Anne Gunning (Minutes Secretary)

Minute

Action

1. Apologies

There were no apologies

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 30 September 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2010 were proposed by Neal Willis, seconded by Jim McCusker and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes

There were no matters arising that were not listed on the agenda.

4. Finance

4.1 Finance Report

The Finance Report, provided by DCS, was discussed. It was noted that the supplier payments picture has improved compared to last year. Over 90% of suppliers are paid inside the 30 days. Approximately 7% of payments are outside this period, usually because of the late submission of invoices.

It was noted that the total absence figure has been gradually rising over the period from a low figure to above the target figure of 4.5%. It was particularly noted that casual absence has been rising. A pilot counselling scheme has been introduced to support earlier return to work; this includes occupational health support. Back to work interviews are considered of critical importance to the effective management of absence. It was noted that a training programme for all line managers will be

DCS

arranged. Board members commended the DCS in taking a pro-active and positive approach to the management of absence.

With regard to vacancies, it was noted that the JNCC has been advised of the Board's position on the selection panel for the IS/IT Manager post i.e. comprising SMT members plus an independent IT adviser.

After discussion on staff acting up to vacant positions, it was suggested that consideration should be given to limiting the time periods for acting up. It was agreed that the SMT would look at this issue and bring proposals to a future meeting.

CEO

Unit costing – It was noted that the DCS is to produce figures for the Board by the end of the financial year.

DCS

DCS reported that the details provided to illustrate the information available from the Sage system, demonstrated that the Agency is making progress in this area. It provided a good overall assessment of the expenditure on Sage.

It was agreed that at a future meeting the SMT would report on the scope of the use of shared services and whether they would provide the Agency with value for money.

CEO

5. Personnel and Staffing

5.1 Draft HR Strategy 2011-14

The revised HR strategy was well received by members. The revised version had been aligned with the current draft Corporate Plan (2011-14). It was noted that the document may require further revision when the Corporate Plan is finally approved by DEL.

CEO/DCS

5.2 Equal Pay Audit

It was noted that the 2009 pay settlement for Agency staff had been discussed at the JNCC Meeting on 1 February. However, the meeting with Tom Evans scheduled for 3 February, which was to include the equal pay issue, had been postponed by DEL. Members expressed grave concern at the delay in the approval of this payment, on what is now an agreed contractual obligation for the Agency. The CEO indicated that he would be contacting DEL to press on progress and ensuring any responses required of the Agency were speedily dealt with. If the matter was noted resolved by the date of the next Board meeting, the Board would have to consider what action it could take.

CEO

5.3 IiP Update

It was noted that the IiP readiness health check, due in November/December for re-

accreditation in December, will not now be progressed. It was noted that the DCS will be setting up an informal project team to carry out a spot audit to determine what the Agency needs to do in order to be ready to re-apply. Re-accreditation will then be applied for in April 2012.

DCS

Following lengthy discussion it was agreed that the appraisal system requires further attention by the sub-committee, particularly in light of the pending IiP assessment. It was agreed to focus on this item F & P Meeting in September.

CEO

5.4 Accommodation

DCS reported on the current situation regarding the accommodation project. The 'knock-throughs' between each unit of the building are almost complete, It is estimated that the work will be completed by the end of February when staff will be re-located on a permanent basis.

5.5 IS/IT Strategic Programme

It was noted that the security accreditation project is well advanced. The IS Security Manual has been written. The DCS and the temporary IS/IT Manager will be attending training. DCS reported that the business case for the IS Managed Services contract remains with DEL. Committee members expressed concern at the delays in the approval of security accreditation, disaster planning and the upgrade of the ICMS system which is now critical. It was agreed that if there is no progress in the near future consideration should be given to making a Board representation to DEL.

DCS

CEO

6. CEO Pay and Appraisal

The Committee discussed CEO's appraisal and remuneration in closed session.

7. Any Other Business

There was no other business to be discussed.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee will be held at **2.00 pm on Thursday, 24 March 2011 after the Board Meeting.**

There will be a joint meeting with the Audit Committee at **10.00 am on Wednesday, 11 May**, and a meeting of the F & P Committee at **2.00 pm on Thursday, 29 September** after the Board Meeting.