

**MINUTES OF THE 395<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY  
BOARD HELD AT 10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 27 MARCH 2014  
IN SUITE 201, ARTHUR HOUSE, ARTHUR STREET, BELFAST**

**Present:** Sally McKee (Chair for part of meeting)  
Jim McCusker (Chair for remainder of meeting)  
Lyn Fawcett  
Albert Mills  
Gordon Parkes  
Neal Willis  
Trevor Morrow  
Alison Millar  
Gary McMichael

**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>
<b>1. Apologies</b>		
<p>An apology was received from Pauline Shepherd. Jim McCusker had given notice of arriving late. He arrived at 11.10 am.</p> <p>It was agreed that Sally McKee, Vice Chair, would chair agenda items 1, 2, 3, 4.2, and 4.7. Jim McCusker on arrival addressed items 4.1 and 4.2 and chaired the remaining items.</p>		
<b>2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 27 February 2014</b>		
<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2014 were proposed by Gordon Parkes, seconded by Neal Willis and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>		<b>Secretariat</b>
<b>3. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes not listed on this Agenda</b>		
<p><b>5.1 Corporate Plan 2014-17 and consultation responses received</b> <b>5.2 Business Plan 2014-15</b></p> <p>It was noted that the CEO had held briefing sessions with staff on 5 March when he expressed the Board’s appreciation of the contribution that staff make to the work of the Agency.</p> <p>It was noted that both the Corporate and Business Plans were submitted to DEL on 28 February. The Agency awaits DEL approval of the Plans.</p>		<b>CEO</b>

<p><b>5.4 Review of Promotion of the Generic Statutory Arbitration Scheme</b></p> <p>It was noted that an assessment of the resourcing impact of early conciliation was underway. The CEO and DCA would be considering the resources required to effectively implement the new service.</p> <p><b>5.6 Bi-Monthly Management Report April 2013-January 2014</b></p> <p>It was noted that the Agency had received the HSENI Report: “Report on Implementation of Management Standards for Work Related Stress”. As a follow-up the DCS is carrying out a stress risk assessment using the data from the report. Deriving from the stress risk assessment an action plan will be implemented jointly through the JNCC.</p>	<p><b>CEO/DCA</b></p> <p><b>DCS</b></p>
<p><b>4. Chairman’s Business</b></p> <p><b>4.1 Declarations of Interests</b></p> <p>No interests were declared by members.</p>	
<p><b>4.2 Board Member Training</b></p> <p>It was noted that members of the Board, SMT and Roundtable had attended a presentation by Nita Clarke, Director IPA on ‘Engaging for Success’. Ms Clarke is currently leading a taskforce on employee engagement in the UK. It was agreed that the session was useful and that the topic was very pertinent to the work of the Agency however there was some qualification about the extent of the practice of employee engagement across the economy.</p> <p>It had been agreed to invite a representative from NIE to give a presentation on the NIE experience of employee engagement. This was to take the form of an open seminar.</p> <p>The Chairman reported on a Public Expenditure Update. It was reported that the NI fiscal debt has been increasing significantly and that all Government departments would have to deliver resource savings from 2015/16 until the end of the decade. It had been suggested that there was a need for further public service reform.</p>	<p><b>Chair/GP</b></p>
<p><b>4.3 Update on Stakeholder Meetings</b></p> <p>The Chairman reported that the meeting of the Roundtable on 24 March had been inquorate. Members had discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A further draft of the (1) Joint Declaration of Protection for a Harmonious and Inclusive Working Environment and (2) a complementary model workplace document.</li> <li>• Resources for the Roundtable – it was noted that the Roundtable awaited an indication from DEL of the expected outcomes should DEL provide staffing resource.</li> <li>• It was noted that the Scottish Government has set up an</li> </ul>	<p><b>Chair/CEO</b></p>

<p>independent review group on workplace policies which will see trade unions, employers and academics working together with the Scottish Government to create better working environments.</p> <p>The next meeting of the Roundtable will take place on 28 April.</p>	<p><b>Chair/CEO</b></p> <p><b>CEO</b></p>
<p><b>4.4 Management Statement/Financial Memorandum</b></p> <p>DEL had indicated that, in principle, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Agency and DEL would be helpful. The Chair and CEO were developing a draft MoU for submission to DEL.</p>	<p><b>Chair/CEO</b></p>
<p><b>4.5 Chair of Agency</b></p> <p>The Chairman advised members that DEL had revised the selection criteria for the post of Chair of the Agency. The revised advertisement for the post had been placed on the DEL website; closing date 25 April 2014.</p>	<p><b>Chairman</b></p>
<p><b>4.6 Appointments to the Board of the Labour Relations Agency (letter dated 13 March 2014 from Tom Evans, DEL)</b></p> <p>The Chairman referred to a letter he had received from DEL regarding appointments to the Board of the Agency. The letter referred to a report by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for NI. The report indicated that the criteria for selection to a Board should be more specific to the public body in question.</p> <p>After extensive discussion it was agreed that the Chairman respond to DEL emphasising –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the importance of maintaining the statutory tri-partite nature of the Agency Board,</li> <li>ii. that in working towards a balanced Board membership the selection process for pending appointments should welcome applications from those with a Roman Catholic community background, women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and</li> <li>iii. in relation to the pending appointments process the Agency would benefit from academic and employment law representation among the independent members.</li> <li>iv.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Chairman</b></p>
<p><b>4.7 International Agencies Meeting 2014</b></p> <p>Board members discussed Agency representation at the International Agencies meeting in New Zealand in October. Taking into account travel costs it was agreed that at least one Agency representative would attend; a final decision is to be made following the appointment of the new Agency Chair.</p>	<p><b>Board/ Secretariat</b></p>

<p><b>5. Chief Executive's Business</b></p> <p><b>5.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (Paper 7/14)</b></p> <p>Board members discussed the CSR paper at length.</p> <p>Following discussion the Board approved the paper subject to the following amendment: the first sentence of Annex A is to read 'is the concept whereby organisations integrate CSR into their overall business operations'.</p> <p>It was agreed that the implementation of the policy would be reported to the Board as appropriate.</p>	<p><b>DCS/CEO</b></p>
<p><b>5.2 LRA Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures (Paper 8/14)</b></p> <p>A consultation exercise on amendments to the LRA Code had closed on 14 March. Members discussed the responses received from (1) the Citizens' Advice Bureau, (2) Belfast City Council and (3) the Engineering Employers' Federation. Consideration was given to the replies received following which the Board approved the recommended revised wording of Paragraphs 103 and 104 and the correction of an anomaly at Paragraph 101. DEL approval would be sought for the revised wording. It was noted that once approval was received the Agency would notify the respondents of the amendments.</p>	<p><b>DAS/CEO</b></p>
<p><b>5.3 Employment Law Update</b></p> <p>It was suggested that where appropriate, future updates might indicate the likely timetable for the transposing of GB legislation to NI.</p> <p>The report of a 79% reduction in cases being lodged with GB Employment Tribunals was discussed in relation to the impact of the introduction of Tribunal fees in GB. Following discussion it was agreed that the impact of the introduction of Tribunal fees in GB is monitored and, as and when appropriate, that updates are provided for the Board.</p> <p>Members discussed the status of the DEL Review of NI Employment Law. The impact of the pace of progress on the work of the Agency was noted. It was agreed that the CEO write to DEL regarding the expected timetable for progression.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the table.</p>	<p><b>DAS/MMcA</b></p> <p><b>CEO/MMcA</b></p> <p><b>CEO</b></p>
<p><b>6. Corporate Correspondence Received Relevant to Board</b></p> <p>None.</p>	

<p><b>7. Any Other Business</b></p> <p><b>7.1 Finance &amp; Personnel Committee Meeting held on 27 February 2014</b></p> <p>The Chairman reported on the meeting held on 27 February 2014. He indicated that financially the Agency anticipated breaking even for the current financial year. However difficulties were anticipated in the 2014/15 financial year particularly when taking into account the possible introduction of early conciliation coupled with the related preparatory and publicity work required.</p> <p>Consideration had been given to the Agency's preparation for liP re-assessment due in early 2015.</p> <p>Particular attention had been paid to the progress made in the procurement of ICMS. It was noted that the target date for implementation remained at January 2015.</p> <p>The Committee had discussed equality issues and noted that a Disability Action Group was to be formed.</p> <p><b>7.2 LRA Gordon Street Lift</b></p> <p>It was noted that installation of a replacement lift in Gordon Street was almost complete.</p>	
<p><b>8. Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The next Board meeting will be held on Thursday, 22 May 2014 at 10.00 am in Gordon Street and will be followed by the annual joint Audit Committee and Finance and Personnel Committee briefing at 2.00 pm.</p>	<p><b>Secretariat</b></p>