LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY

MINUTES OF THE 386th MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT 10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 23 MAY 2013 IN THE BELFAST BUSINESS CENTRE, WARING STREET, BELFAST

Present:	Jim McCusker (Chair) Albert Mills Neal Willis Gordon Parkes Alison Millar Pauline Shepherd Sally McKee	
In Attendance:	Bill Patterson Gerry O'Neill David McGrath Maxine Murphy-Higgins Anne Gunning	 (Chief Executive) (Director, Corporate Services) (Director, Advisory Services) (Acting Director, Conciliation & Arbitration) (Minutes Secretary)

	Action
1. Apologies	
There were apologies from Lyn Fawcett, Gary McMichael, Trevor Morrow and Penny Holloway.	
2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 18 April 2013	
The minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2013 were proposed by Neal Willis, seconded by Gordon Parkes, and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to agreed minor amendments.	
3. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes not listed on this Agenda	
4. 4.5 Visit to the European Foundation and LRC Dublin The CEO confirmed that copies of the presentation given by Ger Deering to Agency staff on the ROI Reform ER Programme would be forwarded to Board Members.	
4.7 Research Committee 6 March 2013/Just Economics	CEO
<i>Presentation</i> It was noted that the final draft SROI report would be submitted to the Board in June 2013.	DAS
4. Chairman's Business	
4.1 Declarations of Interests No interests were declared by members.	

BM/4/13

4.2 Board Member Training	
The Chairman reported on Chairs Forum events which he had attended, one on 16 May - " <i>It takes two</i> ", and a second on 22 May – <i>NI Economy update</i> .	
4.3 Update on Stakeholder Meetings	
The Chairman reported on the ER Roundtable meeting on 9 May. Members noted the topics being discussed by the Roundtable.	
4.4 DEL/LRA Management Statement/Financial Memorandum	
The Chairman outlined recent exchanges of correspondence with DEL which included the Chairman's reference to the MS/FM for the Police Ombudsman for NI. He had expressed the Board's view that the Police Ombudsman documents provide a model for the Agency given the statutory independence from Government of both the Police Ombudsman and the Agency.	
It was noted that the Board will again consider the matter when DFP responds to DEL on the draft MS/FM.	Chairman/ CEO
4.5 LRA/International Agencies Conference	
It was noted that the arrangements for the Conference on 2 August are progressing. Speakers' availability is being finalised.	СЕО
4.6 LRA Seminar	
It is anticipated that the DEL proposals in relation to the review of employment law should be made public by September 2013. It was agreed that the proposed LRA Seminar should be held in early September.	Chairman/ CEO
4.7 LRA Vice Chair	
The Chairman nominated Sally McKee as Vice-Chair of the Agency Board. The proposal was seconded by Gordon Parkes and agreed.	
4.8 Board Assessments 2012-13	
It was noted that Board Performance Assessments had been issued to some Board members for completion and return.	
4.9 Register of Interest Forms	

5. Chief Executive's Business	
5.1 Corporate Planning Process (Sept 2013-March 2014) (Paper 16/13)	
Following discussion the proposed corporate planning process was agreed. It was noted that the strategic direction for the corporate plan would be set by the Board 26 September 2013. It was agreed that if necessary, the Board meeting 26 September could be extended into the afternoon.	СЕО
5.2 Equal Pay Review 2013 (Paper 17/13)	
The Board noted the content of the NISRA Equal Pay Review. It was indicated that the minimising of anomalies was considered to be an objective justification. Following discussion the Board suggested that the SMT should determine an assurance that there was no evidence of grade drift.	SMT
5.3 Attendances at Conferences	
Following discussion it was agreed that Board member attendance at external conferences would be considered on a value for money basis, conference by conference. It was agreed that more information on the TUC, CIPD and CBI 2013 conferences would be brought to the next Board meeting.	Secretariat
5.4 Joint LRA/ECNI Meeting	
It was noted that a joint LRA/ECNI meeting was to be arranged for October/ November 2013. Suggested topics for discussion were (1) the re-routing of tribunal cases to the Agency and (2) the Agency proposal to provide a neutral assessment service.	CEO
5.5 Bi-Monthly Management Report – 31 March 2013 (Paper 18/13)	
It was noted that the SMT had made considerable progress over the 2012/13 financial year. However, the Board expressed concern at the current level of sickness absence. Following discussion the bi-monthly management report was ratified by the Board.	
5.6 Closure of DEL Quarterly Report	
The CEO agreed to follow-up previous correspondence issued to DEL in respect of the closure of the quarterly report. Members agreed to keep this item on the Board agenda.	СЕО
5.7 NISRA Statistical Report (Paper 19/13)	
The Board welcomed the report as an independent verification of trends in Agency work. Members discussed the findings of the Report. No exceptional points were highlighted. It was noted that the Report was to be used as a	

resource document for future planning and for the reporting of trends. It was also noted that some of the figures had been shared with members of the ER Roundtable.	
5.8 Employment Law Agenda 2012-15 (table)	
The contents of the table were noted.	
5.9 DEL Advisory Group	
It was noted that the Advisory Group 13 May had discussed matters arising from the reform of the NI Tribunal structures. The CEO had shared the LRA response to the DoJ consultations on Tribunal reform. The next meeting of the Group 3 June is to discuss the re-routing of tribunal claims to the Agency and the proposed new Agency neutral assessment service.	СЕО
It was noted that the DEL/McClure Watters SME Research Report was complete and would be issued following Ministerial approval.	CEO
5.10 Promotion of Agency Services – ADR	
Maxine Murphy-Higgins provided an update on the recent promotional work being undertaken by the Advisory Section and the Conciliation and Arbitration section. The verbal report was noted. It was also noted that a recent press release by the Minister had been very positive for the Agency.	
6. Corporate Correspondence Received Relevant to Board 6.1 The Employee Relations Institute – foundation membership offer to LRA	
It was noted that a letter had been received on 9 May 2013 from Andy Cook of the Employee Relations Institute offering the Agency free founder membership. The CEO awaited the decision of ACAS regarding their position on founder membership before making a formal response to the Institute.	
6.2 <i>Equality</i> It was agreed that a representative from the Equality Commission would be asked to speak to the Board on equality reporting, possibly at the Board meeting on 29 August.	DCS
7. Any Other Business	
Presentation to Paul Blease	
The Chairman warmly welcomed Paul Blease ERM to the Board meeting. Paul had just completed 35 years' service with the Agency. After reviewing the considerable contribution made by Paul the Chairman made a presentation to which Paul replied with some history and humour. Paul's response was appreciated by all present.	

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next Board meeting will be held on Thursday, 20 June 2013 at 10.00 am in Gordon Street.