

**MINUTES OF THE 396th MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY
BOARD HELD AT 10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 22 MAY 2014
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

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

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. Tom Evans – Update on DEL Review of Employment Law</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Mr Tom Evans (DEL) to the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Evans briefed the Board on the current position and possible future progress of the DEL Review of Employment Law. Extensive discussion followed. It was noted that Mr Evans would be reporting on the review to the Assembly's DEL Committee meeting 4 June 2014.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Mr Evans for a very comprehensive and helpful briefing.</p> <p>Mr Evans left the meeting.</p>	
<p>2. Board Self-Assessment</p> <p>The Board, as part of its continuous improvement agenda, undertook a 'self-assessment.' It was agreed that the CEO action matters arising from the assessment.</p>	CEO
<p>3. Apologies</p> <p>An apology was received from Sally McKee.</p>	
<p>4. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 27 March 2014</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2014 were proposed by Alison</p>	

<p>Millar, seconded by Gordon Parkes and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	<p>Secretariat</p>
<p>5. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes not listed on this Agenda</p> <p><i>Item 3 5.1 Corporate Plan 2014-17</i> <i>5.2 Business Plan 2014-15</i></p> <p>It was noted that the Agency awaits approval of the Corporate and Business Plans submitted to DEL 28 February.</p> <p><i>5.4 Review of Promotion of the Generic Statutory Arbitration Scheme</i></p> <p>It was noted that a Board briefing on the resourcing of early conciliation will be held on Thursday, 3 July commencing 10.00am at Gordon Street.</p> <p><i>5.2 LRA Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures (Paper 8/14)</i></p> <p>The Agency awaits DEL approval of the proposed revised wording.</p> <p><i>7.2 LRA Gordon Street Lift</i></p> <p>It was noted that the lift in HQ had been replaced and was now fully operational.</p>	<p>CEO</p> <p>CEO/DCA</p> <p>CEO/DAS</p>
<p>6. Chairman's Business</p> <p><i>6.1 Declarations of Interests</i></p> <p>No interests were declared by members.</p>	
<p><i>6.2 Board Member Training</i></p> <p>Pauline Shepherd reported on her attendance at a 'Public Accountability & Governance for Audit Committees' training session run by CEF. Material from the course had been shared with Audit Committee members and will be shared with Board members. The course highlighted best practice for an Audit Committee in taking the opportunity to meet in private with auditors and to undertake independent third party training.</p> <p>The Chairman reported on a PwC briefing session he attended titled 'Economic Recovery but not yet out of the woods'. Indications were that the economic recovery was underway although indicators in terms of growth and earnings put NI at the bottom of the UK regions.</p>	
<p><i>6.3 Update on Stakeholder Meetings</i></p> <p>The Roundtable met on 28 April when they considered further drafts of the Joint Declaration of Protection for a Harmonious and Inclusive Working Environment and the complementary model workplace policy. The amended documents are now being considered by the Roundtable organisations.</p>	

<p>The Roundtable also discussed protected conversations. The Agency is examining the possibility of producing a guide on workforce planning and retirement.</p> <p>The Roundtable wish to hold discussions with the Department on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> resources – the Roundtable awaits DEL comment on the proposals submitted 27 January 2014; and the Roundtable programme of work. <p>It was noted that following on from the ‘Engaging for Success’ presentation by Nita Clarke, Director IPA, a seminar on employee engagement has been arranged. This will take place on Friday, 20 June with a trade union speaker and speakers from NIE and Moypark. Board and staff members are to be invited.</p>	<p>CEO/DAS</p> <p>Chair/CEO</p> <p>Chair/CEO</p>
<p>6.4 Management Statement/Financial Memorandum</p> <p>Board members discussed the two draft Memorandums of Understanding (MoU). Board members re-iterated the importance of the independence of the Agency and its unique statutory responsibility to promote the improvement of industrial relations in NI. Following discussion it was agreed to review the DEL draft in light of the Agency draft. The revised draft will be submitted to DEL for consideration.</p>	<p>Chair/CEO</p>
<p>6.5 Chair of Agency</p> <p>The Chairman advised members that shortlisted candidates would be interviewed on 9 and 11 June.</p>	<p>Chairman</p>
<p>6.6 Appointments to the Board of the Labour Relations Agency</p> <p>The Chairman reported that he had responded to DEL outlining concerns raised at the Board meeting in March about the representative nature of the Agency Board. Following a response from DEL the Chairman had raised further issues such as conflicts of interest. A further response from DEL accepted the Board’s comments other than the use of a welcoming statement. It was noted that the Chairman was giving further consideration to the criteria specified for an independent member.</p>	<p>Chairman</p>
<p>6.7 International Agencies Meeting – New Zealand Oct 2014</p> <p>After some discussion it was agreed to respond to MBIE, New Zealand indicating that due to forthcoming changes the Agency was currently not in a position to nominate a representative.</p>	<p>Chairman</p>
<p>6.8 Board Register of Interest Forms</p> <p>It was noted that Register of Interest forms, as at 22 May, were issued to Board members for approval, signature and return.</p>	<p>Chair/Sec</p>

<p>6.9 Board Appraisals 2013-14</p> <p>It was noted that Board appraisals were issued to certain members on 12 May for completion and return.</p>	<p>Chairman</p>
<p>7. Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting</p> <p>7.1 Finance & Personnel Committee meeting held on 26 September 2013 (Paper 9/14)</p> <p>The minutes of the Finance & Personnel Committee meeting held on 26 September 2013 were ratified by the Board.</p> <p>7.2 Meeting held on 27 February 2014</p> <p>It was noted that the Chairman had provided a report on the Finance & Personnel Committee meeting held on 27 February at the March Board meeting. Outstanding matters are to be reported in the bi-monthly management report – item 9.1.</p>	<p>DCS</p>
<p>8. Audit Committee Meeting</p> <p>8.1 Audit Committee meeting held on 21 November 2013 (Paper 10/14)</p> <p>The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 21 November 2013 were ratified by the Board.</p> <p>8.2 Meeting held on 7 May 2014</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit Committee summarised the business of the meeting on 7 May 2014. Key matters of importance were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee’s endorsement of the 2014 NI Audit Committee Handbook which the Board subsequently agreed should be implemented with minor tailoring as noted in a revised terms of reference; • The Committee’s conclusions on the CEO’s annual assurance to DEL and the content of the 2013/14 Governance Statement; • Adjustments to the Risk Register to reflect changes in the business environment (mainly in the areas of staff development and IT systems); • The role of the Committee in examining the Internal Audit Certification Office Report (where some matters addressed were outside the purview of both it and the LRA Board); and • Procurement details for the 2014 to 2017 internal audit service. <p>Agreed minutes of the May 2014 Audit Committee will be included in the June</p>	

2014 Board papers for endorsement.	DCS
<p>9. Chief Executive's Business</p> <p>9.1 Bi-Monthly Management Report April 2013-March 2014 (Paper 11/14)</p> <p>Board members were advised that the majority of objectives were met by the year end. Due to budgetary restraints aspects of certain strategic objectives were carried over into 2014-15.</p> <p>Advisory services Page 9 – b) and c) – status against year-end should read ‘Target met’. Page 23 Promotion – a) – Performance to Date – ‘Helpline enquiries...- an increase of 5.1%’ should read ‘a decrease of 5.1%’. Promotion – Impact of conferences/seminars – insert data.</p> <p>Conciliation It was noted that the number of collective conciliation cases received was higher than for the same period last year. There was also an increase in the number of trade union recognition claims received from the private sector.</p> <p>Board members congratulated the Senior Management Team and staff for an excellent end of year report especially given the restraints in funding.</p>	DAS
<p>9.2 Board Member Car Insurance (Paper 12/14)</p> <p>Board members were advised that in line with DFP guidance on travelling on official business the Agency wished to ensure that those who use their car on official business should have adequate insurance. Board members agreed to comply with DFP guidance on car insurance.</p>	DCS
<p>9.3 Retention of Board Minutes & Papers</p> <p>Board members were advised that the Agency is currently reviewing the administration of Board minutes and papers dating back to 1976. The Agency was seeking guidance from PRONI on the matter and would abide by the procedures set out for statutory bodies. It was agreed that a paper setting out the final proposals would be submitted to the Board for approval.</p>	CEO
<p>9.4 Employment Law Update</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the table.</p>	
<p>10. Corporate Correspondence Received Relevant to Board</p> <p>10.1 Correspondence from the DEL Committee re the Work and Families Bill</p> <p>It was noted that the Agency had responded to an Assembly Committee</p>	

<p>request for comment on the ‘Work and Families Bill’. The Agency had reiterated its earlier response to DEL on the ‘Sharing Parental Rights, Extending Flexibility at Work – Public Consultation’.</p>	
<p>11. Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no other business to discuss.</p>	
<p>12. Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Agency Board will take place on Thursday, 26 June 2014 commencing 10.00 am in Assembly Buildings (Spires), Fisherwick Place, Belfast. Members were reminded about the Board briefing on the resourcing of early conciliation which will be held on Thursday, 3 July.</p> <p>Presentation to Anne Beattie, Anne McQuillan & Helen Smyth</p> <p>The Chairman congratulated Anne Beattie who had completed 35 years’ service with the Agency and Anne McQuillan and Helen Smyth who had each completed 25 years’ service. The Chairman highlighted the career paths taken by each member of staff and thanked them for their commitment to the Agency. Anne and Helen replied on behalf of the three recipients thanking the Chairman and Board for their presentations.</p>	<p>Secretariat</p>