

**MINUTES OF THE THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY FIRST MEETING OF THE
LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT 2.00 PM
ON THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2009
IN THE BUSHMILLS INN HOTEL, BUSHMILLS**

Present: Jim McCusker (Chair)
Peter Williamson
Brenda Maitland
Neal Willis
Trevor Morrow
Patricia O'Farrell
Lyn Fawcett

In Attendance: David McGrath (Director, Advisory Services)
Gerry O'Neill (Director, Corporate Services)
Penny Holloway (Director, Conciliation & Arbitration)
Anne Gunning (Minutes Secretary)

1. Apologies Action

Apologies were received from Bill Patterson who was ill.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 29 October 2009

5.13 Monthly Management Report

Last line should read: *A similar group of managers will be invited to the Agency in the New Year.*

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2009 were proposed by Peter Williamson, seconded by Brenda Maitland, and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to the above amendment.

3. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes not listed on this Agenda

It was noted that Alan Shannon has been appointed as Permanent Secretary of DEL. It was proposed that he would be invited to the February or March 2010 Board Meeting.

Chairman

4. Chairman's Business

4.1 Declaration of Board Member Interests

No interests were declared by members.

4.2 Board Vacancies – Update

The Chairman indicated that unfortunately the appointment process had still not been finalised as yet.

4.3 Board Member Performance Appraisals 2008/09

The Chairman reported that all the current Board Members had returned completed Performance Appraisal forms.

4.4 Joint LRA/LRC Board Meeting

It was noted that there was nothing further to report with regard to a joint meeting.

4.5 Annual Board Public Meeting

It was noted that the Public Board Meeting held in October in Omagh had not been a great success due to very low numbers of outside bodies attending. It has been suggested for next year's Public Meeting, as well as launching the LRA Annual Report, that the Agency hosts a lecture given by a prominent speaker. The Chairman asked Board Members to consider suggestions for a suitable person.

Board Members

4.6 Joint LRA/Equality Commission Meeting

It was noted that the Chairman and CEO had met with Bob Collins and Evelyn Collins of the EC on 10 November. Discussions centred mainly on matters arising from the DEL Review of Dispute Resolution. The Equality Commission and the LRA shared views on many aspects although there were some differences in approach.

It was agreed that a joint LRA/EC meeting in the New Year would be useful in order to exchange views on the DEL Review and to give an opportunity to air different perspectives.

4.7 Conference Attendances 2010

It was noted that the TUC Conference would be held 13-16 September 2010 in Manchester. It was agreed that representatives from the Agency would attend.

The CIPD Conference will also be held in Manchester 9-11 November 2010. Trevor Morrow, who had just returned from the 2009 CIPD Conference, reported that there had been some very high profile speakers and they, and the keynote speakers were exceptionally good. He also said that there were excellent networking opportunities at the conference as a lot of organisations were represented. It was agreed that LRA representatives would attend next year.

It was also agreed that the Agency would be represented at the CIPD Ireland Conference in May 2010.

With regard to the CBI Conference, which has not been attended by members of the Agency in recent years, it was agreed to check the agenda for the 2010 conference.

Secretariat

It was also agreed that information would be gathered on the next International Agencies Conference.

Secretariat

It was agreed to discuss conferences further at the next Board Meeting, when hopefully new Board Members would be in place.

CEO

4.8 LRA/EC Meeting 10 November 2009

This meeting was discussed at 4.6.

5. Chief Executive's Business

5.1 DEL Review of the Agency

It was noted that this Review was raised at the most recent LRA/DEL quarterly meeting which was attended by the CEO and the DCS. DCS reported that there was nothing of major consequence so far noted. The consultants will be providing a draft report by the end of November.

5.2 Continuous Improvement

It was noted that progress is being made on outstanding annual staff appraisals.

SMT

It was further noted that the Mid-Term Appraisal Reviews are being processed at present.

SMT

The DCS reported on the meeting with Mr Eddie Salmon on 26 October. Mr Salmon reviewed the first draft Management Charter, produced by CEO, which came out of the assessment report on IiP. He also indicated that the next assessment was 3 years after initial assessment or by request from the Agency.

CEO

5.3 RPA

It was noted that application of the RPA to local government and education was a complex matter which may offer opportunities for LRA engagement.

5.4 Equal Pay Audit

It was noted that there was nothing current to report.

5.5 *Review of Dispute Resolution in NI*

It was noted that June Ingram and Tom Evans, DEL would be making a presentation after the Board Meeting.

5.6 *The Anderson Review – The Good Guidance Guide*

The DAS gave a verbal presentation highlighting recommendations for ways of ensuring firms place greater reliance on good guidance on employment issues, and ensuring that the Agency provides appropriate advice and assistance.

5.7 *Risk Register*

The Risk Register was presented for information. The Chairman of the Audit Committee, Peter Williamson, reported that it had been discussed at the last Audit Committee Meeting and it had been agreed that the SMT could further refine the Register, to more effectively focus on the key risks impacting the Agency.

SMT

CEO

5.8 *Board Year Plan 2010*

The Board discussed the Year Plan for 2010. It was agreed that the Annual Report and Equal Pay matters would probably be added for discussion in April. Also arrangements for external conferences 2010.

DAS suggested that staff members could update Board Members on the particular projects they were involved in. This was noted.

It was further noted that the Year Plan might be augmented after the Board discussions the following day.

5.9 *Monthly Management Report*

DCS

Accommodation

A lot of progress is being made and some staff will be moved to Unit 1 in January in order that work can progress elsewhere.

IS/IT - progressing in accordance with revised targets.

HR - a wide range of recruitment exercises were currently in progress.

6. *Corporate Correspondence Received Relevant to Board*

It was noted that no correspondence had been received.

7. *Any Other Business*

7.1 *Public Relations*

In terms of public relations, it was noted that, on behalf of the Chartered

Institute of Arbitrators (Irish Branch, NI Chapter), the Agency had hosted a seminar on 18 November - ADR in Sport -as part of their annual lecture series.

It was noted that the PR Committee met on 6 November and some good ideas had been discussed. In line with the PR Strategy, several opportunities were being pursued.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held on **Friday, 18 December 2009**, beginning at 11.30 am in Room 1, following a corporate planning workshop to be facilitated by Mr Alan Shields of Development and Innovation Division.

The Board/Staff meeting will be held on **Tuesday, 15 December** in the Ramada Encore Hotel, Talbot Street, Belfast at 12.30 pm.