

MINUTES OF THE 371st MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY
BOARD HELD AT
10.30 am ON THURSDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2011
IN THE LRA REGIONAL OFFICE, DERRY

Present: Jim McCusker (Chair)
Peter Williamson
Gordon Parkes
Neal Willis
Brenda Maitland
Trevor Morrow
Alison Millar
Lyn Fawcett

In Attendance: Bill Patterson (Chief Executive)
Gerry O'Neill (Director, Corporate Services)
David McGrath (Director, Advisory Services)
Anne Gunning (Minutes Secretary)

The Chairman welcomed, on behalf of the Board, the re-appointment of Lyn Fawcett, Trevor Morrow and Neal Willis to their second term of office.

1. Apologies **Action**

There were apologies from Sally McKee and Penny Holloway.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 19 October 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2011 were proposed by Peter Williamson, seconded by Trevor Morrow, and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

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

3. 7.5 SROI Feasibility Report

It was noted that the Department is positively considering the SROI business case. After some minor amendments to the format it will be forwarded to DFP.

CEO

5.2 MoU LRA/Tribunals

It was noted that no response had been received from the Tribunal Office however on receipt of response the DCA, in the first instance, would be addressing any points raised.

DCA/CEO

5.3 *Bi-monthly Management Report April 2011-September 2011*

It was noted that an analysis of claims for the period had been forwarded to Board members after the last Board meeting. It was confirmed that the majority of claims were multi jurisdictional with less than 16% single jurisdictions.

4. Chairman's Business

4.1 *Declarations of Interests*

No interests were declared by members.

4.2 *Board Vacancy – update*

It was noted that the Minister has made a decision on the appointment to the LRA Board of a member with an independent background. An official announcement will be made shortly.

4.3 *Board Member Training*

Gordon Parkes reported on the CIPD Conference. The main theme was organisational change which proved valuable. It was recommended that the Agency continue to consider attendance.

The Chairman reported on events he had attended organised by the Chairs' Forum on the themes "What is the Future for Public Audit?" and "Managing Stakeholders' Expectations." The Chairman also gave a report on the CIPFA annual conference which he had attended along with the CEO, Brenda Maitland and Sally McKee. The title of the event was "Managing Public Money Effectively".

4.4 *Board Development Programme – Stakeholder Mapping*

As agreed at the last Board meeting, it was noted that a mapping exercise on LRA relationships with stakeholders had been undertaken. After discussion it was agreed that staff, for the purposes of this exercise, should not be included as the Board wished to focus on external stakeholders.

CEO

To further enhance relationships with stakeholders it was agreed to hold a seminar on the future NI employment relations agenda. It was agreed that speakers should represent both sides of industry, reflect the developing agenda in GB and take into account the impact of developments in GB for constructing a NI policy agenda.

CEO

The CEO referred to his notes on a speech tabled by the DAS. The speech delivered by the Business Secretary, Vince Cable, dealt with Government's draft agenda for change in GB employment relations. It was agreed that it would be useful to have these issues addressed at the LRA seminar in the New Year after which the Agency could begin to frame an informed position on the agenda items.

CEO

Board members also discussed the development of an employment relations framework for Northern Ireland. It was agreed that the Agency should develop this idea. **CEO**

Members also discussed Board member training. It was also agreed that (1) the Chairman submit a paper on the skills and knowledge of Board Members and (2) that the DCS would investigate further Governance training for Board members. **Chair**
DCS

4.5 Board Meeting Dates 2012

The amended schedule for 2012 was agreed.

4.6 Register of Interest Forms

Register of Interest forms for November 2011 were distributed for members' approval and signature.

It was agreed that members would check their personal profiles on the LRA website against their profiles in the Annual Report 2010/11. Any discrepancies should be reported to the Secretariat. **Board Members**

4.7 Staff Training Day Board/Staff Lunch – 29 November 2011

It was noted that Board members have been invited to join staff for lunch at a staff training day 29 November at which there would be recognition of professional achievements for some members of staff. **Board Members**

5. Research Committee Meetings

5.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 May 2011

The minutes of the Research Meeting held on 12 May 2011 were ratified by the Board.

5.2 Meeting held on 19 October 2011

The Chairman gave a report on the Research Committee Meeting held on 19 October.

Items included:

- Update on SROI
- A review of the session with Gill Dix, ACAS, on their Research programme
- Pending research on the public's awareness and understanding of the LRA – June 2012
- Discussion on the research is being carried out on employment relations specific to Northern Ireland

The Chairman's report was noted.

6. Chief Executive's Business

6.1 DEL Review of Agency – Quarterly Report

It was noted that the Agency is comprehensively progressing the Review recommendations. It was agreed that CEO would send a reminder to DEL regarding his correspondence on the expected framework/protocols for the consideration of a LRA charging regime.

CEO

6.2 Customer Focus Strategy

After discussion it was agreed to adopt the Customer Services Excellence model however it was considered that a more strategic presentation was required on the way ahead. It was also agreed that the 'Purpose' section of the paper would be reviewed and amended.

DCS

6.3 PR Strategy

Following discussion the proposed PR strategy was approved.

The following points were noted:

CEO

- PR and Communications would be tailored to the resources available.
- In- house PR capability would be developed
- It was agreed that DEL should be approached in relation to assistance with the issue of Agency press releases
- It was noted that the proposed stakeholder seminar, discussed at 4.4 above, would be a good PR opportunity as would the proposed joint LRA/LRC meeting later in 2012
- It was noted that the arrangements for presenting the Agency's 2010/11 annual report were also a good PR opportunity and it was agreed that similar arrangements should be made for the 2011/12 annual report.

CEO

6.4 Research Partnerships

This paper was welcomed as a sound approach to developing an Agency research agenda. Following discussion the proposal on Research Partnerships was approved.

It was agreed that the DAS would liaise with Lyn Fawcett and Trevor Morrow on the details required for submissions to the Agency.

DAS

6.5 Industrial Court MoU

It was agreed that the draft LRA/Industrial Court MoU, as amended, should be submitted to the Court. Thanks were extended to Karen Tarr, on behalf of the Board, for her work on the draft and the previous Tribunal draft.

CEO

6.6 Statutory Generic Arbitration Scheme

It was noted that the Scheme was being progressed by DEL with a view to an effective date of 1 April 2012.

The Board welcomed this progress in particular the inclusion of all relevant jurisdictions including equality jurisdictions but decided to make further representations on 1) appeals being heard by the Industrial Court (2) the presentation of the Scheme in user friendly language and (3) the more positive promotion of arbitration within the Scheme.

6.7 Replacement of ICMS

The DCS reported that a resilient system for ICMS would be installed, probably in the New Year. It is believed that this addition to the temporary system will give more time for the development of an Agency specification for a new ICMS system.

DCS

6.8 Promotion of Pre-Claim Conciliation

It was noted that promotional work continues.

Directors

6.9 DEL Review of Dispute Resolution in NI

(i) DEL Advisory Group

It was noted that at the Advisory Group meeting on 11 November –

- It was noted that a revised draft of the Group Terms of Reference would be shared with the Board when available. It was also noted that the DEL SME research project was progressing.

CEO

(ii) Others Matters

Nothing to report.

CEO

6.10 Draft Programme for Government

Copies of the draft Programme for Government, recently received by the Agency, were distributed to members. Whilst employment relations was not overtly referred to it was considered that the Agency should highlight the contribution of employment relations to the economy. The following themes would require LRA consideration and possible involvement.

- 1 RPA issues
- 2 Job creation and promotion
- 3 Organisational change
- 4 Welfare/social exclusion
- 5 Justice issues
- 6 IS/IT

CEO

After discussion it was agreed that a draft response would be submitted at the December Board Meeting.

7. Corporate Correspondence received relevant to Board

7.1 *Letter dated 13 October from Employment Relations Policy & Legislation Branch, DEL re The Agency Workers Regulations (NI) 2011 – Legislation & Guidance*

Contents noted.

7.2 *Consultation Responses re Public Appointments (strictly private & confidential) –*

- (i) *Chair of the Industrial Court*** – It was noted that the Chairman/CEO had been asked to consider the arrangements for the appointment. They made a number of minor suggestions, all of which have been accepted.
- (ii) *NI Certification Officer*** – It was noted that the draft advertisement and information pack had been shared with the Vice Chair and a number of minor points had been made to the Department. Nothing further has been received.

7.3 *Consultation on NI Assembly Members' Salaries and Office Holder Allowances, Office Expenses and Pensions* – It was noted that the Board had agreed that no response would be made by the Agency.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business reported.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held in Gordon Street, Belfast on Thursday, 15 December 2011 at 10.00 am.