## MINUTES OF THE 440<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT 9.30 am ON THURSDAY, 25<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2018 IN THE RADISSON BLU HOTEL. THE GASWORKS, 3 CROMAC PLACE, BELFAST

Present: Marie Mallon (Chair)

Louise Crilly
Deirdre Fitzpatrick
Michelle McGinley
Gary McMichael
Albert Mills
Jill Minne
Daire Murphy

In Attendance: Tom Evans Chief Executive, (CEO)

David McGrath (Director, Employment Relations Services (DERS))

Don Leeson (Director, Corporate Services (DCS))

Alison Wolfe (Minute Secretary)

	Action
1. Apologies	
Apologies were received from Alison Millar and Pauline Shepherd.	
2. Conflicts of Interest	
There were no conflicts of interest declared.	
3. Chair's Opening Remarks	
The Chair outlined the core business to be covered at the Board meeting and the structure of the public meeting. The Chair explained that the first item of business at the public meeting is the presentation of the 2017-18 Annual Report & Accounts, to be followed by the Annual Lecture.	Chair
Gordon Milligan, IoD, and Owen Reidy, NIC-ICTU, have agreed to speak on the theme 'Better Workplaces: A Thriving Economy'.	
The Chair advised that there had been some positive media coverage of the public meeting and congratulated Keelin Kelly.	
The Chair referred to recent correspondence regarding extensions to Board member terms of appointment; Board members to confirm their acceptance.	BMs
4. Minutes of 27 September 2018 Meeting (Paper BP01-10/18)	
The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2018 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	Secretary
5. Matters arising from the Minutes of 27 September 2018 Board meeting (Paper BP02-10/18)	
The DCS introduced the Board Actions Progress Report, highlighting the following matters:	

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<ul> <li>5.1 Agency Logo</li> <li>The Agency's new corporate branding is being launched at the public meeting. Work is progressing to develop the Agency's social media presence and a social media policy, which is anticipated to be in place for the new year subject to Board approval. Preparations are also underway to develop a new Agency website.</li> <li>5.2 Brexit</li> </ul>	DCS
The DERS reported that the Agency has responded to a DfE query on the potential impact of Brexit, confirming that it is difficult to predict the likely impact until there is clarification on the terms of the Brexit deal.	
5.3 Regional Office – Future Developments  The DCS reported that a business case for the future accommodation of the Regional Office will be presented to the November Board meeting for approval.	DCS
5.4 Mental Health Champion  The Board noted that a meeting of the Health & Safety Committee to discuss a draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy is planned for 15 November. Gary McMichael, as Board Mental Health Champion, will attend. Albert Mills reported that mental health had been a major topic of discussion at the recent TUC conference. It was agreed that more support was needed for people suffering mental health issues.	
6. Board Learning & Development Plan (Paper BP03-10/18)	
The Chair introduced the Board Learning & Development Plan which addresses collective and individual needs for the period to March 2021. The DCS highlighted the following actions:	
<ul> <li>Content and timing of induction processes;</li> <li>Corporate Governance – a workshop to take place in 2019;</li> <li>Board leadership programme covering specific roles such as Committee Chairs;</li> <li>Specific knowledge of the Agency's business – to be delivered in-house by Agency staff at scheduled Board workshops throughout the year;</li> <li>Attendance at relevant workshops and conferences – Board members to share learning by way of feedback at relevant Board meetings;</li> <li>Respond to emerging corporate issues such as GDPR;</li> <li>Reinstate the Employment Law Updates – annually;</li> <li>An annual team development event, particularly important for new Board members.</li> </ul>	Chair
The Board, in approving the plan, agreed that it is very comprehensive and accurately reflects the diverse training needs of a public board.	
The Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee advised that she has been invited to join a forum for the Chairs of ALB ARAC's to share learning and good practice. The Board agreed that this is a very positive development and the Chair of ARAC will report back to the Board on any developments.	
7. Chief Executive's Update	
The CEO's update dealt primarily with Finance issues:	
The CEO tabled the 2018-19 resource allocation letter from DfE dated 24 October 2018, clarifying that this year's budget includes £250k for EC;	

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The allocation letter acknowledges that the sponsor Department failed to communicate in 2016 the decision to reduce the Agency's 2016-17 budget by £100k reduction, which led to the misunderstanding around the quantum of EC funding over the past three years; The CEO confirmed that the Agency only became aware of the 2016-17 budget cut in discussions with DfE in April 2018 about the EC Business Case Affordability Statement: The DfE allocation letter references correspondence between the CEO and the Department, dated 4 August 2016, increasing the EC funding from £150-250k. The CEO confirmed that he had not been able to source the **CEO** correspondence and will seek a copy from DfE; The allocation letter asks the Agency to report separately on the use of EC CEO funding: The CEO reported there will be a presentation to the DfE sponsor team on the work of the Agency on 9 November, the Chair has agreed to be involved. Will also discuss with DfE sponsor team Noel Lavery's attendance at the Chair/CEO November Board meeting. The CEO indicated that the recent legislation (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions Bill) introduced by the Secretary of State at Westminster may allow for EC to be introduced but is unlikely to facilitate new Board appointments, as these matters require Ministerial approval. The CEO reported on his attendance at a DfE Skills Strategy event on 12 October; wide acceptance that generic leadership and line management skills are critical. The CEO's input on the Line Manager Certificate was well received with representatives from EA and INI expressing strong interest; CEO to follow up with Michael Gould CEO from DfE who is leading on the Skills Strategy consultation. The CEO reported on his meeting with Sarah Havlin to discuss the staffing of the **CEO** Certification Office, for discussion with TUS. The CEO advised the Board of his intention to appoint an ERM, on a temporary basis, to take forward a number of special projects under Strategic Theme 2. He will **CEO** consult with TUS in advance of seeking expressions of interest from ERMs. The CEO reported that the Joint Declaration, launched at last year's Public Meeting, will be mentioned at the Public Meeting today, to encourage people to adhere to the principles. Arrangements are being finalised for the Board visit to WRC on 16 November. Oonagh Buckley will be leaving WRC to take up a post in the Civil Service. The CEO is liaising with Liam Kelly about the arrangements; the visit will cover the WRC's adjudication, conciliation and mediation services. Final arrangements to be Secretary communicated to Board members in due course **Business Plan Performance Report (Paper BP04-10/18)** 8. The DERS reported the following: Enquiry Point staff will be piloting Webchat in early November. The pilot will run for 3 months and will be reviewed on an on-going basis with a formal **DERS** review at the end of January: Mental Health awareness training is to be added to the Certificate in Effective Line Management Practice: **DERS** The number of Independent Appeal requests has increased significantly compared to last year;

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<ul> <li>A review of the arbitration process has been prompted by an FOI request.         Arbitrator training will be provided in December to include new processes such as GDPR;     </li> <li>The DERS met with the President and Secretary of OITFET to discuss Early</li> </ul>	
Conciliation issues;  Significant number of mediations/independent appeals in the education sector; may suggest that recently appointed principals need support in dealing with people management issues. Patrick McAuley is working with the Education Authority in this regard. A copy of the CEO's correspondence with Paul Sweeney, former Permanent Secretary, Department of Education, to be copied to Board members.	Secretary
<ul> <li>The DCS reported the following:</li> <li>Work on Phase 2 of CMRS well advanced; a facility for inputting bulk claims has been developed;</li> <li>Work is also progressing to develop a web portal and to roll out CMRS to cover Advisory Services;</li> <li>The liP reassessment is scheduled to take place in November and results will be reported to the December Board meeting. The new standard is much more demanding and the Agency may need to do some remedial work over the next 12 months;</li> <li>A new HR Manager, Paul Lowe, will be joining the Agency on 31 December</li> </ul>	DCS
2018.  The Board noted the contents of the Report which continues to be useful.	
The CEO reported on his meeting with Mary O'Brien and Diane Edgington to discuss information management for performance reporting and research purposes. The CEO reported that the recent Outcomes-Based Accountability (OBA) workshop, facilitated by the Executive Office, had been very positive. It is also the intention that the Agency becomes a NISRA-recognised data centre for research purposes.	DCS
9. Management Accounts (Paper BP05-10/18)	
The DCS introduced the Management Accounts which cover the first six months of the current financial year. There is a small underspend; SMT are considering the best use of this underspend to ensure the end of year expenditure target is met.  The DCS reported that the new accounting system went live at the end of	SMT
September. Prompt payment performances are on target. The auditors are currently carrying out their annual audit, focusing on financial controls and a report will be presented to the ARAC in December.	DCS
10. Mid-Year Assurance Statement 2018-19 (Paper BP06-10/18)	
The CEO introduced his Mid-Year Assurance Statement which provides positive assurance on governance issues within the Agency.	
A project plan is now in place to develop a fully functioning Business Continuity Plan.	DCS
11. Stakeholder Meetings – Update	
The Chair reported on her involvement with the NICS project dealing with ALBs governance. The group are looking at the relationship between ALBs and Departmental Sponsor Teams with a view to developing a more facilitative/partnership approach to governance practice.	Chair

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The Chair and CEO reported on their attendance at the International Agencies meeting in London and the Acas Future at work Conference.	
The CEO has asked Matthew Taylor to speak at the Roundtable's ER/IR 2019 conference, to be facilitated by the Agency.	CEO
The International Agencies meeting will be held in Canada next year and will then be hosted jointly by WRC and the Agency in 2020.	
12. Report from the Chair of the Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee (Paper BP07-10/18)	
Albert Mills reported on the Finance & Personnel meeting held on 15 October. The Chair thanked Albert for his report.	
13. Any Other Business	
None.	
14. Date of Next Meeting	
The next meeting of the Agency Board will take place on Thursday, 22 November 2018 at 10.00 am in the Agency's offices, 2-16 Gordon Street, Belfast.	Secretary

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