

**MINUTES OF THE 439<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT  
10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 27<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2018  
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, 2-16 GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

**Present:** Marie Mallon (Chair)  
Louise Crilly  
Deirdre Fitzpatrick  
Michelle McGinley  
Gary McMichael  
Albert Mills  
Jill Minne

**In Attendance:** Tom Evans Chief Executive, (CEO)  
David McGrath (Director, Employment Relations Services (DERS))  
Don Leeson (Director, Corporate Services (DCS))  
Alison Wolfe (Minute Secretary)

Helen Smyth, Patricia Coulter, Mark McAllister, Keelin Kelly (ERMs)

	<b>Action</b>
<p><b>1. Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Alison Millar, Daire Murphy, and Pauline Shepherd.</p>	
<p><b>2. Conflicts of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no conflicts of interest declared.</p>	
<p><b>3. Chair's Opening Remarks</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Helen Smyth, Patricia Coulter, Mark McAllister and Keelin Kelly to the meeting. Keelin has recently joined the Agency as Communications Manager, through the public sector Interchange Programme.</p> <p>The Chair outlined the agenda; a short Board meeting to deal with essential business to be followed by a series of presentations on developments in frontline services, key elements of the Matthew Taylor Review and the Agency's Communications Plan.</p> <p>The Chair reported that she met with the CEO and DCS to discuss Board members' learning and development requirements. A draft action plan will be prepared for approval at the October Board meeting.</p> <p>The Chair informed the Board of her appointment as Chair of the Chairs' Forum and that she will continue to use this platform to promote good industrial/employment relations. The Chair advised that she had met Sue Gray, Permanent Secretary for the Department of Finance, at the recent Chairs' Forum AGM. Sue Gray is keen to build a good relationship with ALBs across the wider public sector.</p>	<b>Chair/DCS</b>
<p><b>4. Minutes of 30 August 2018 Meeting (Paper BP01-09/18)</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 30 August 2018 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	<b>Secretary</b>

<p><b>5. Matters arising from the Minutes of 30 August 2018 Board meeting (Paper BP02-09/18)</b></p> <p>The CEO introduced the Board Actions progress report, the following matters were discussed:</p> <p><b>5.1 Meetings with Stakeholders</b> A draft proposal will be submitted to NICS HR by the next Board meeting.</p> <p><b>5.2 Update on Roundtable and Other Stakeholder meetings</b> The CEO reported on a very positive meeting of the Roundtable on 10 September; Michael Gould, DfE, attended to discuss the review of the NI Skills Strategy. The CEO will be attending a DfE Skills Workshop on 12 October. The Roundtable has also agreed a general approach to the ER/IR conference which will take place in September/October 2019.</p> <p>Albert Mills expressed his concern about the lack of progress in promoting the Joint Declaration of Protection. The Chair agreed to raise with the Roundtable.</p> <p><b>5.3 Business Planning</b> The CEO reported that the SMT are holding a workshop on Outcome Delivery Plans on 3 October facilitated by the Executive Office. The CEO reported that the Executive Office officials had commented positively on the Agency's business plan. The CEO indicated that this work will inform the discussions at the Board's business planning workshop scheduled for February 2019.</p> <p><b>5.4 Mental Health Champion</b> A draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy is being developed, to be discussed at a meeting of the Health &amp; Safety Committee. Gary McMichael, the Board's Mental Health Champion, will be invited to the meeting.</p> <p><b>5.5 Business Plan Performance Report</b> Work is underway to develop a consolidated profile of operational statistics which will be incorporated in Business Plan Performance Reports for consideration at future Board and SMT meetings.</p> <p><b>5.6 Regional Office – Future Developments</b> The CEO reported that staff are encouraged that the Board has agreed that frontline services will continue to be delivered from the Regional Office.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the Progress Report.</p>	<p><b>CEO/DERS</b></p> <p><b>CEO</b></p> <p><b>Chair</b></p> <p><b>CEO</b></p> <p><b>DCS</b></p> <p><b>DCS</b></p>
<p><b>6. Chief Executive's Update</b></p> <p><b>6.1 EC Business Case</b> The CEO advised that the EC Business Case has been approved by DoF; and that this is a significant development for the Agency. Discussions at the recent EC Project Board meeting had centred round the legislation which needs to be finalised with the DSO. The CEO is optimistic that proposals may be brought forward to allow Departments more flexibility to progress matters. The new Communications Manager will be involved in promotional work for EC.</p> <p><b>6.2 Transformation</b> The CEO reported on his recent meetings with staff when he addressed issues raised at the Staff Conference in March. He found the meetings useful particularly with regard to communication and the preparations for the initial assessment under the new liP standard.</p>	

<p>In respect of Strategic Theme 2 the CEO advised that there is a need to identify a dedicated resource at ERM level to support the Roundtable and progress the ER model. The CEO will bring forward proposals to the October Board meeting.</p> <p><b>6.3 John McKeown</b></p> <p>The CEO reported that John McKeown, the DfE Business Partner, will be retiring at the end of September. It was noted that John had been very supportive of the Agency. The CEO agreed to pass on the Board's good wishes.</p>	<p><b>CEO</b></p>
<p><b>7. Report by the Chair of the Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committee</b></p> <p>The Chair of ARAC provided an update from the ARAC meeting of 18 September. A number of issues were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ TOR for the Financial Controls audit to include a review of petty cash procedures;</li> <li>✚ All internal audit recommendations on target;</li> <li>✚ Management Accounts to be presented at October Board meeting will be prepared using Sage 200;</li> <li>✚ Delay in appointment of Board members may lead to a risk to the Agency's reputation, Wendy Carberry to follow up with DfE.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair expressed her appreciation to members of the ARAC for their work.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the report.</p>	
<p><b>8. Board Workshop</b></p> <p>The Board received presentations on the following issues; developments across the frontline services (Helen Smyth &amp; Patricia Coullter); key recommendations from the Mathew Taylor Review (Mark McAllister); and the Agency's draft Communications Plan (Keelin Kelly).</p> <p>The following issues were highlighted;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Advisory services are working closely with Enquiry Point staff to raise the profile of the Agency;</li> <li>✚ There is a resource pressure in the Short Term Advisory team which has resulted in a number of projects having to be deferred;</li> <li>✚ The current review of non IT processes and other dispute resolution services is business critical;</li> <li>✚ The issues explored in the Matthew Taylor Review are central to the delivery of Strategic Theme 2 objectives and the work of the Roundtable;</li> <li>✚ The Board is very supportive of the focus of the Communications Plan;</li> <li>✚ The Board agreed that there is a need to highlight the impact of current resourcing pressures when Noel Lavery comes to the November Board meeting.</li> </ul> <p>Albert Mills agreed to provide an update at the October Board meeting on his attendance at TUC where mental health was a major issue. Board members felt that the issues currently in focus are mental health and future ways of working; recognising that the Agency is actively monitoring these issues.</p>	<p><b>Board</b></p> <p><b>Albert Mills</b></p>

