

**MINUTES OF THE 445th MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT
10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 9 MAY 2019
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES 2-16 GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

Present: Marie Mallon (Chair)
Louise Crilly
Deirdre Fitzpatrick
Michelle McGinley
Gary McMichael
Alison Millar
Albert Mills

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

	Action
<p>1. Apologies</p> <p>Jill Minne, Daire Murphy and Pauline Shepherd.</p>	
<p>2. Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>No conflicts of interest declared.</p>	
<p>3. Chair's Opening Remarks</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Keelin Kelly and Mary O'Brien who were in attendance to present the draft Social Media Policy and the Official Statistics paper.</p> <p>The Chair congratulated Mark McAllister on his appointment as Director of Employment Relations Services. The Chair also thanked Neill Wallace and Patrick McAuley for their support as interim team leaders for the Advisory and Dispute Resolution teams respectively.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that she had received a card from David McGrath thanking the Board for their retirement gift and wishing the Agency well for the future.</p> <p>Appraisal dates for Board members arranged. Following the appraisal process the Chair will bring a revised Board Learning and Development Plan to a future Board meeting.</p> <p>The Chair suggested that the Board should review the feedback from the self-assessment process with the intention of holding a Board Effectiveness/Governance workshop at end of 2019/early 2020. The Chair agreed to discuss with the CEO.</p> <p>The Chair sought volunteers to be the named Board contact on the Whistleblowing Policy.</p>	<p align="center">Chair</p> <p align="center">Chair/CEO</p> <p align="center">BMs</p>

<p>The Chair advised that she had discussions with the Chief Executive about the pressures of hosting the Roundtable conference in 2019 and the International Agencies Conference in 2020. The Board supported the Chair's proposal to seek the Roundtable's agreement to defer the 2019 conference and combine with the 2020 International Agencies event.</p> <p>The Chair of the ARAC reported on the Risk Management Workshop held on 1 May 2019; a revised Risk Register to be considered at the June ARAC before coming to the June Board meeting for approval.</p> <p>The Chair then highlighted the key issues for discussion at today's meeting.</p>	<p>Chair</p> <p>ARAC Chair/DCS</p>
<p>4. Minutes of 28 March 2019 Board Meeting (Paper BP01-05/19)</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2019 agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>
<p>5. Matters arising from the Minutes of 28 March 2019 Board meeting (Paper BP02-05/19)</p> <p>The CEO introduced the Board Actions Progress Report, highlighting the following matters:</p> <p>5.1 Web Chat The DCS reported that web chat is being prepared for general enquiries about the Agency's services to provide another contact channel for customers.</p> <p>5.2 Business Continuity Plan - Internal Audit Report Internal Audit has provided a satisfactory assurance in terms of the Agency Business Continuity arrangements; the Board acknowledged Diane Edgington's excellent work in developing such an effective plan.</p> <p>5.3 Chief Executive's Update - Web Portal The CEO reported that work is progressing on the development of the web portal. An update on the Early Conciliation (EC) project, focusing on the customer journeys, scheduled for the June Board meeting (see agenda item 6).</p> <p>The DCS is due to meet with OITFET Secretary to review the Memorandum of Understanding in light of EC; any revisions to be reported to the Board in due course.</p> <p>5.4 Business Plan Performance Report The DERS reported that the Agency is working with the Equality Commission to develop a Mental Health in the Workplace seminar. The Agency is also providing input to development of a Mental Health Charter.</p> <p>5.5 Chief Executive's Update - NICVA The CEO and DERS are in discussion with NICVA about how best to support their member organisations. NICVA are an accredited ILM training centre and may be able to assist if the Agency decides to seek accreditation of the Agency's Effective Line Manager training.</p> <p>CEO to meet with Daire Murphy to discuss a mentoring project with school principals.</p>	<p>DCS</p> <p>CEO</p> <p>DCS</p> <p>DERS</p> <p>CEO/DERS</p> <p>CEO</p>

<p>5.6 Any Other Business</p> <p>The CEO reported on his meeting with Dr Thomas Hastings, QUB School of Management to discuss a research request.</p> <p>The Board noted the action points update paper.</p>	
<p>6 Chief Executive's Update (Paper BP03-05/19)</p> <p>The CEO highlighted the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit by Susan Clews, Acas CEO, on 16 April to discuss early conciliation and service delivery; • The CEO met with Liam Kelly, WRC, to discuss a potential collaboration between Acas, WRC and the Agency on a range of service delivery and corporate issues. This will be for discussion at the upcoming WRC/LRA joint meeting; • The CEO reported that Neill Wallace has replaced Mark McAllister as Chair of the local trade union branch. The CEO due to meet Neill to discuss priorities including a proposed joint initiative on staff engagement; • The CEO reported that the second year of the post-graduate certificate in Employment Law is almost complete, the Agency will be hosting an end year reception in June. Two places will be available to Agency staff again for next year's intake; • The CEO reported that feedback from staff participating in the inaugural Leadership Development Programme was very positive. The current programme will finish on 22 May with a more formal feedback session; • The Agency has received confirmation that its 2019-20 budget is the same as for 2018-19; but will have to absorb pay award and price increases. The Agency awaits the outcome of negotiations between NIPSA and NICS on the 2018 pay award which will create extra pressure, particularly in 2020; • Department of Finance is making at least £120K available to the Agency to help cover additional pension costs; however, the Agency is hopeful to secure in year cover for the full costs (£150K), it is not clear whether budget cover will be available in future years; • Early Conciliation (EC) – the CEO reported that communication is a key issue in raising awareness of EC. The Agency invited to speak at the EEF's annual conference in June, which will be the first public communication that EC will be in place from January 2020. The Board agreed that effective communication is critical; CEO to raise with DfE and agreed to inform Board members of any significant developments. A presentation on EC scheduled for the June Board meeting; 	<p>CEO</p> <p>CEO</p> <p>CEO</p> <p>DCS</p> <p>CEO</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resourcing of EC – the CEO confirmed that capacity to deliver EC is a key priority and that the recent unexpected loss of two conciliators could have an impact. Given the lead in time required for training of conciliators and the need to have new staff operational from January 2020, the CEO asked for Board approval of a temporary variation from the recruitment and selection policy to allow internal competitions to fill vacancies at the ERO and EOII grades; The Board approved this proposal subject to consultation with TUS. Board members raised concerns about the impact of budgetary pressures and sought assurance that there would be sufficient resources to deliver EC. The CEO advised that contingency measures are being developed; most staff at the ERO grade will be trained in conciliation; As agreed at the February 2019 Board Workshop, a review of the Agency’s document review service is about to get underway as part of a wider continuous improvement process; Public appointments – The Chair confirmed that there were no developments with regard to public appointments. Chair agreed to write formally to DfE indicating that the Agency has struggled to achieve a quorum on occasions. 	<p>CEO</p> <p>DERS</p> <p>Chair</p>
<p>7 Annual Report & Accounts for 2018-19 (Accountability Report) (Paper BP04-05/19b)</p> <p>The CEO introduced the Accountability Report and agreed to circulate the Performance Report in advance of the next Board meeting. A consolidated Annual Report to be considered at the June ARAC meeting; and will then come to the June Board meeting for approval.</p>	<p>CEO</p>
<p>8 Business Plan for 2019-20 (Paper BP05-05/19)</p> <p>The CEO confirmed that the draft Business Plan reflects discussions at the Board’s February workshop. The CEO explained that the business plan is now in an OBA format designed around three types of measure, as recommended by the NI Audit Office: what are we doing, how well did we do it, and the impact of our services. Business plan performance reporting to the Board/DfE will be based on three scorecards related to the services provided.</p> <p>The Board approved the draft Business Plan for submission to DfE.</p>	<p>DCS</p>
<p>9 Budget for 2019-20 (Paper BP06-05/19)</p> <p>The DCS introduced the draft Budget for 2019-20, which was approved by the Board</p>	

<p>10 Draft Social Media Operational Guidelines (Paper BP07-05/19)</p> <p>Keelin Kelly presented the draft Social Media Operational Guidelines; the core purpose being to guide customers to information on the new website and our services. Board members felt that the proposed management of our social media presence could be overly restrictive and suggested adding 'other specified or nominated staff'.</p> <p>The Board approved the paper with the proposed amendment and agreed to consider the merits of a workshop on social media training for Board members.</p>	<p>Keelin Kelly</p>
<p>11 Official Statistics proposal (Paper BP08-05/19)</p> <p>Mary O'Brien presented a paper highlighting how the Agency could become a listed body under the Official Statistics Order. However, due to the absence of an Assembly, this is currently not possible; and the proposal is to seek voluntary recognition. Statutory recognition will be sought once an Assembly has been restored.</p> <p>The Board approved the recognition proposals.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mary for her paper.</p>	<p>Mary O'Brien</p>
<p>12 Stakeholder Meetings</p> <p>The Chair provided the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ The meeting with Susan Clews provided a very good opportunity to progress the relationship with Acas. ✚ Attended a meeting of the Chairs' Forum followed by a budget briefing by Joanne McBurney, Budget Director, Department of Finance. 	
<p>13 Any Other Business</p> <p>The Chair informed the Board that she is be unable to attend the International Agencies meeting in Canada in September. The Chair will consider who should accompany the Chief Executive.</p>	<p>Chair</p>
<p>14 Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Agency Board will take place on Thursday, 27 June 2019 at 10.00 am in the Agency's offices.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>