

**Minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on Tuesday
4 December 2018 at 10.00am at the Labour Relations Agency, Gordon Street, Belfast**

Present: Albert Mills (Chair)
Michelle McGinley
Gary McMichael

In attendance: Tom Evans (Chief Executive)
Don Leeson (Director of Corporate Services)
Paul Herink (IT Manager)

Apologies: Jill Minne

Declarations of Interest: No conflicts of interest were declared.

The Chair welcomed Gary McMichael who was attending the Finance and Personnel Committee for the discussion on the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy in his capacity as the Board's Mental Health Champion.

1. Minutes of the Last Meetings

- 1.1 The minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meetings held on 15 October 2018 and 22 November 2018 (papers FP 01 12/18 and FP 02 12/18 refer respectively) were agreed as accurate records.

2. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

- 2.1 All matters arising from the minutes of the last meetings were dealt with under the relevant substantive agenda item.

3. Finance Update

- 3.1 The Director of Corporate Services reported that the Management Accounts for the period ending 30 November 2018 have not yet been prepared. Therefore, the financial position remains as reported to the November 2018 Board meeting (i.e. a current underspend of –2% against the resource budget profile).

- 3.2 The Committee noted that the Department has not yet responded to the Agency's request for flexibility in the use of Early Conciliation funding in 2018-19.
- 3.3 It was also noted that a provision might need to be made in the Agency's accounts for 2018-19 for a liability for dilapidations regarding the current Regional Office accommodation. This will accrue once formal Departmental approval of the business case to relocate to new premises in Richmond Chambers, which has been submitted following agreement at the November 2018 Board meeting (see agenda item 7 below), has been granted. The liability would be funded from the emerging underspend.
- 3.4 The Chief Executive gave an update on the longer term financial outlook. The Committee noted that the Permanent Secretary at the Department for the Economy had informed the Board on 22 November 2018 that the Agency's budget for 2019-20 would be unchanged. While this is positive news in the current difficult financial climate, it represents a reduction in real terms as pay awards and price inflation will need to be absorbed. The SMT will be considering in due course whether the Agency can afford to bring in any additional staff.

4. HR Update

Organisational Transformation Update

- 4.1 The Chief Executive gave an update on the key proposals agreed with the Trade Union Side (TUS) as part of the Transformation Programme.
- 4.2 The Committee noted that there are pressures at the ERO grade, particularly in the delivery of advisory services. The Agency is developing proposals for discussion with the TUS on how these staff might be used more flexibly. It was also noted that the TUS has been invited to attend the December 2018 Board meeting, where this issue might be raised.

HR Plan for 2018-19 Progress Report

- 4.3 The Committee noted that a key current priority for the HR Team is implementation of the new Absence Management Policy. This has been agreed in principle and is due to be formally signed-off at the JNCC meeting on 13 December. Staff briefing sessions have been arranged for the week commencing 10 December 2018.
- 4.4 HR's other priority is implementing the Leadership Development Programme. The SMT is due to consider how this should be rolled out when it meets on 5 December 2018.

HR Metrics for the period ending 30 November 2018

- 4.5 The Director of Corporate Services tabled a report on key HR metrics (paper FP 03-12/18 refers), which was noted by the Committee.

Investors in People Update

- 4.6 The Director of Corporate Services reported that the Agency's assessment against the new sixth generation IiP Standard, which included an online survey and interviews with a sample of staff, ended on 30 November 2018. The formal report on the outcome of this is expected in December. However, the assessor has indicated that it is likely that the Agency has achieved the IiP Silver Standard, which is equivalent to the previous Gold Standard given that the new version is significantly more challenging. If this is the case, the Agency will have 12 months to develop and implement an action plan to retain Gold status.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

- 4.7 The Director of Corporate Services presented the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy for consideration by the Committee (paper FP 04-12/18 refers).
- 4.8 The Committee noted that an earlier draft of the Strategy was discussed at a special meeting of the Agency's Health and Safety Committee, which was attended by Gary McMichael in his capacity as the Board's Mental Health Champion. Following those discussions, the Strategy had been broadened to take a more holistic approach, recognising that positive mental health is affected by a range of factors inside and out of the workplace.
- 4.9 The Committee commended the Strategy and thanked Gary McMichael for his input.
- 4.10 The Strategy will be circulated for consultation with the SMT, TUS, and staff before being finalised. The Committee noted that the next iteration of the Strategy will include reference to action to promote financial wellbeing, which is another important factor affecting mental health.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

5. ICT Update

- 5.1 The IT Manager gave an update on progress in implementing the ICT Plan.

- 5.2 The Committee noted that new non-geographic (03300) telephone numbers for the Agency went live in October 2018, including a dedicated number for the Enquiry Point.
- 5.3 The Committee noted that the pilot of live web chat is underway. However, early indications suggest that it might not be suitable for the type of complex employment issues dealt with by the Enquiry Point. As a result, consideration is being given by the SMT to refocusing the pilot to deal with other aspects of the Agency's work.
- 5.4 The IT Manager reported that the annual audit against the ISO 27001 information security standard had recently taken place. Informal feedback from the assessor suggests that no significant issues were identified. This contrasts to the outcome of the internal audit of ICT controls, which had taken place in the summer. This audit, the report from which is due to be considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 11 December 2018, has provided only limited assurance. However, the ISO 270001 audit has a similar coverage and therefore it would appear that the shortcomings identified by Internal Audit have been remedied.

6. Communications Plan Progress Report

- 6.1 The Director of Corporate Services gave an update on progress in implementing the Communications Plan.
- 6.2 The Committee noted that key recent activities have been procurement exercises to appoint a contractor to develop the website and a research company to conduct a survey of awareness of the Agency and its services.

7. Accommodation Update

- 7.1 The Committee noted that that the November 2018 Board meeting had approved the business case for the longer term accommodation of the Regional Office. The business case has been submitted to DfE for approval. Detailed planning for relocation to new premises will commence in early 2019.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

- 7.2 The Director of Corporate Services reported that a number of projects were underway to improve the Head Office accommodation, including re-carpeting and re-decorating some areas of the building and installing air conditioning in the main public seminar room.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 There was no other business.

9. Date of Next Meetings

9.1 Committee members expressed a preference for meetings to be held on Tuesdays at 10.00am. The schedule for meetings for 2019-20 will be reviewed and new dates proposed for agreement by Committee members.

Action: Director of Corporate Services