

MINUTES OF THE 462<sup>nd</sup> MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD  
HELD AT 10.00 am ON THURSDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2021  
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Present:** Marie Mallon (Chair)  
Deirdre Fitzpatrick  
Michelle McGinley  
Gary McMichael  
Alison Millar  
Albert Mills  
Jill Minne  
Daire Murphy

**In Attendance:** Don Leeson Chief Executive  
Paul Lowe Interim Director of Corporate Services  
Mark McAllister Director of Employment Relations Services  
Alison Wolfe Minute Secretary  
Sarah Livingstone Boardroom Apprentice

**Apologies:** Louise Crilly

Board members met 'in-camera' prior to the formal commencement of the meeting. The key points from this discussion are recorded at agenda item 1.

**Declarations of Interest:** Paul Lowe declared a potential interest in a matter contained in the Chief Executive's report.

## 1. Chair's Opening Remarks

- 1.1 The Chair reminded Board members that there would be a governance meeting to clear essential business, following by a corporate planning workshop. The minutes of the last Board meeting and action points' progress report will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- 1.2 Board members were asked to review their biographical information and update their declarations of interest.

**Action: Board members**

- 1.3 The Chair reported on the Employment Relations Roundtable meeting held on 17 February 2021. Given the focus on the Engagement Forum, this was the first meeting of the Roundtable in 12 months. It was very positive, with members reaffirming their commitment to the Roundtable; this was subsequently welcomed by DfE's Permanent Secretary. The Agency will prepare an action plan for 2021-22 for the Roundtable for approval at its next meeting.

**Action: Chair/Chief Executive**

- 1.4 The Chair reported on the NI Engagement Forum meeting held on 22 February 2021. DfE's Permanent Secretary had updated Forum members on the proposed Economic Recovery Plan and confirmed that the Forum continues to be an important conduit for the Department to disseminate and receive information. The Forum was also briefed by Patricia Donnelly, Head of the Covid-19 vaccination programme, which was very well received by members.

## 2. Chief Executive's Report

- 2.1 The Chief Executive presented his report (paper BP01-02/21) highlighting a number of issues.

- 2.2 Legal advice has been received on an anomaly in the Agency's founding legislation, which came to light following a Court of Appeal judgement regarding another arm's length body. The Chief Executive has written to DfE about this matter and will keep Board members updated on developments.

**Action: Chief Executive**

- 2.3 The Board agreed to approve the Agency's response to the draft Programme for Government by correspondence.

**Action: Chief Executive**

- 2.4 Michelle McGinley agreed to join the selection panel for the forthcoming Communications Manager recruitment competition.

- 2.5 The Chief Executive reported that the Investors in People (IiP) assessor had presented his assessment report to the Senior Management Team. The Board noted that the Agency is currently the only public sector body in NI to have achieved the new sixth generation IiP Gold standard. This is particularly encouraging as one of the Agency's values is to be an exemplar employer.

- 2.6 The Board approved the Agency's continuing participation in the Boardroom Apprentice programme.

**Action: Chief Executive**

- 2.7 The Chief Executive reported that the Agency awaits confirmation of its budget for 2021-22. The Agency has submitted an additional bid for resources in light of the Economic Recovery Plan; the Recovery Plan has been shared with Board members.
- 2.8 Board members noted that the Agency's formal assessment against the Customer Service Excellence standard is scheduled for 16-18 March 2021, and that they may be interviewed as part of this process.
- 2.9 The Chief Executive reported that work is in progress to develop a Covid-19 vaccine policy for the Agency. This will be shared with other employers as part of the Agency's advisory work. The views and endorsement of the Engagement Forum will be sought for the model policy.

**Action: Chief Executive**

### **3. Business Plan Performance Report for the period ending 31 January 2021**

- 3.1 The Board noted the Business Plan Performance Report (paper BP02-02/21).
- 3.2 The Chief Executive advised the Board of a delay until July 2020 in the enactment of the legislation to designate the Agency as a provider of official statistics.
- 3.3 The Board noted the content of the Business Plan Performance Report.

### **4. Management Accounts for the period ended 31 January 2021**

- 4.1 The Chief Executive presented the Management Accounts (paper BP03-02/21), which was noted by the Board.
- 4.2 The Chief Executive reported that the Agency expects to achieve its financial target to spend at least 99% of its budget. The Board noted that some funding needs to be held back as a contingency for estimated expenditure commitments such as the backdated pay award, which may not be finalised until after the end of the financial year.

### **5. Any Other Business**

- 5.1 There was no other business.

**6. Date of Next Meeting**

6.1 The next meeting of the Agency Board will be on 25 March 2021 at 10.00 am, by videoconference.

**Action: Secretary**