

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM HELD ON 4 MAY 2021
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

Present:	Don Leeson	Chief Executive (Chair)
	Fionn Davey	Chair, NIPSA Branch 180
	Claire Kilpatrick	Employment Relations Manager (ERM)
	Paul Lowe	Interim Director of Corporate Services
	Mark McAllister	Director of Employment Relations Services
	Helen Smyth	Employment Relations Manager (ERM)
	Alison Wolfe	Minute Secretary

Apologies: None

Declarations of Interest: no conflicts of interest were declared.

1. Minutes from the Senior Leadership Team meeting held on 13 April 2021

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2021 were agreed for publication on the Agency's website (paper SLT 01-05/21).

Action: Secretary

2. Actions arising from the previous meeting

- 2.1 The Chief Executive reported that the Board has agreed to invite ERMs on the SLT development programme to one Board and one of each of the sub-committee meetings during their term on SLT (paragraph 2.1 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). Invitations will be issued for the June 2021 Board and committee meetings.

Action: Secretary

- 2.2 Furthermore, as part of their development, the ERMs on the programme are also welcome attend meetings of the NI Engagement Forum, including the Forum's breakfast briefing with the Interim Head of the Civil Service on 10 May 2021.

Action: Chief Executive

- 2.3 Similarly, ERMs will be advised when a date has been scheduled for the next Oversight and Liaison meeting with DfE.

Action: Chief Executive

- 2.4 The Agency Chief Executive and Chief Executive of the Workplace Relations Commission have issued a joint email to the international agencies indicating that it would not be feasible to host a meeting this year (paragraph 2.5 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). Instead, they have suggested hosting a virtual meeting via a series of webinars to provide an update on the work of each agency.
- 2.5 Chief Executive to progress stakeholder representatives from DfE and the Roundtable to join a working group to curate the employment relations conference in 2022 (paragraph 2.6 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).
Action: Chief Executive
- 2.6 No further update in relation to Board members' visits to Agency premises and Killymeal House, given the prevailing public health guidance (paragraph 2.13 of the minutes of the previous meeting refers).
- 2.7 Directors reported on very positive introductory meetings with the new Chair (paragraph 3.1 of the minutes of the last meeting refer).
- 2.8 Arrangements are being made for a presentation by SLT on the work of the Agency to the new Chair and Board members (paragraph 3.2 of the minutes of the last meeting refer). Introductory meetings are also being arranged between the Chair and new Board members.
Action: Secretary
- 2.9. The Chief Executive is to prepare an action plan for the Roundtable for the year ahead (paragraph 3.3 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).
Action: Chief Executive
- 2.10 Helen Smyth reported that the Equality Commission anticipates issuing a press release this week promoting the menopause at work guidance (paragraph 3.5 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). Further promotional work is being progressed by the Agency.
Action: Helen Smyth
- 2.11 The Chief Executive reported that Tom Boydell will host a workshop for the SMT on 23 June 2021 on organisational culture and the future development of the Agency. Consideration is being given to the format of the workshop; a diagnostic questionnaire may be issued in advance. It was agreed to invite the TUS Branch Chair to the workshop and to consider inviting the liP adviser.
Action: Chief Executive
- 2.12 The Director of Corporate Services reported that training for SMT members in complaint handling is being progressed.
Action: Director of Corporate Services

2.13 The Chief Executive and Directors will meet later today to discuss the creation of a number of new temporary ERM posts.

Action: Chief Executive/Directors

2.14 The IT Manager is progressing the use of Vimeo as a platform for pre-recorded webinars. The Communications Manager has created a separate area on the website for webinars.

Action: Director of Corporate Services/Helen Smyth

3. Chief Executive's Update

3.1 The Chief Executive reported that the current focus is on the completion of the Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21, developing the Business Plan for 2021-22 and progressing induction arrangements for the new Chair and Board members.

Action: Chief Executive

3.2 Arrangements have been made for the new Chair to meet staff virtually on 5 May 2021. Consideration to be given to discussion topics for the new Chair.

Action: All

3.3 Interviews to fill the Communications Manager post are scheduled for later this week.

3.4 A number of staff have been taking part in interviews with the Healthy Place to Work (HPW) organisation (paragraph 6.3 of the minutes of the last meeting refer). In advance of a written report, John Ryan, HPW, will brief the Chief Executive on the key findings this afternoon.

3.5 The Chief Executive reported that he is keen to hold SLT and then SMT team building events during the summer.

Action: Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services

4. Directors' Updates

4.1 The Director of Employment Relations Services provided a detailed update.

4.2 It was noted that changes suggested by the Deputy Chief Scientific Officer have been incorporated into the Covid vaccine guidance. Briefing has been prepared for the Minister prior to the launch of the guidance.

4.3 The Director of Corporate Services provided a detailed update.

4.4 It was noted that IT Assist has been invited to provide costs for on-boarding IS managed services with them.

4.5 It was noted that CMRS Phases 3 and 4 are effectively complete; residual updates to better support holiday pay processing are to be completed this week. User acceptance testing is to be arranged.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

5. Board Matters

Arrangements for SLT presentation to new Chair/Board members

5.1 Arrangements are being made for a presentation to the new Chair and Board members. A provisional date of 24 May 2021 is being explored.

Action: Secretary

Preparation for the next Board meeting

5.2 The agenda for the May 2021 Board meeting was agreed.

6. People Matters

HR metrics

6.1 The HR Manager presented the HR Metrics for 2020-21 (paper SLT 02-04/21). The SLT noted the outcome for the year, particularly the substantial reduction in absence.

People matters

6.2 It was noted that permanent changes to employment contracts, such as additional hours, and the filling of some posts, made possible by projected savings from James House relocation, have been processed.

6.3 Work is commencing to offer fixed term contracts to candidates on the ERO reserve list.

6.4 One member of staff has expressed an interest in becoming the Agency's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion.

6.5 It was noted that the HR policy review is ongoing. TUS comments on the Absence Management Policy will be forwarded to HR for consideration.

7. Performance

Preparing the Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21

- 7.1 It was noted that the audit of the Annual Report and Accounts for 2020-21 is scheduled to start on 10 May 2021.

Preparing the Business Plan for 2021-22

- 7.2 The Chief Executive reported that the draft Business Plan will be discussed at tomorrow's SMT meeting. The draft has also been issued to DfE and TUS for comment and will be discussed at the May 2021 Board meeting.

Action: Chief Executive/TUS Branch Chair

8. Finance Matters

Preparing the budget for 2021-22

- 8.1 Once finalised, the draft budget will be shared with SLT and TUS.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

- 8.2 The Chief Executive reported that the Agency has received over £1m above baseline for this year. Unfortunately, this is non-recurrent, which means that new posts have to be filled on a temporary basis. There will be a risk of not meeting expenditure plans if posts cannot be filled quickly.

- 8.3 It was noted that additional funding can be made available to run a further cohort of the Leadership Development Programme later in the year. This will be reflected in the Learning and Development Plan for 2021-22.

Action: HR Manager

- 8.4 It was noted that the Treasury is committed to a multi-year Spending Review this autumn, which will provide an opportunity to seek to increase the Agency's baseline.

9. Corporate Risk Register

Preparing the Risk Register for 2021-22

- 9.1 It was noted that it has been agreed with the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee that the annual Risk Workshop between the Committee and SMT will take place later in the year. This is to allow new Committee members to be fully inducted.

Action: Chief Executive

9.2 As a result, the current Risk Register will be rolled forward. The Risk Register, using the new format showing inherent risks, will be prepared for June 2021 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and SLT meetings.

Action: Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services

9.3 It was noted that risk with holiday pay cases has reduced in its severity with new staff being recruited.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 The Chief Executive reported that Sarah Havlin, the current Certification Officer, will be vacating her post in June 2022. DfE are in the process of preparing the appointment process. The Agency has benefitted from a very good relationship with the Certification Officer. In advance of the appointment of a new Certification Officer, it may be opportune to examine the service level agreement.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

11. Date of Next Meetings

11.1 The next formal SLT meeting will be on 5 June 2021.

Action: Secretary