

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM HELD AT 9.00am  
ON 16 NOVEMBER 2021 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**Present:**

Don Leeson	Chief Executive (Chair)
Paul Lowe	Director of Corporate Services
Mark McAllister	Director of Employment Relations Services
Angela Bryans	Employment Relations Manager (ERM)
Patrick McAuley	Employment Relations Manager (ERM)
Fionn Davey	NIPSA Branch 180 Chair
Alison Wolfe	Minute Secretary

**Apologies:** None

**Declarations of Interest:** no conflicts of interest were declared.

The Chief Executive welcomed Angela Bryans and Patrick McAuley to their first SLT meeting under the 'Give SLT a Go' initiative. He also congratulated Fionn Davey on her temporary promotion to ERM and wished her well in her role as an Arbitration Secretary. Fionn will also be reviewing various work processes to inform the development of proposals regarding future organisational transformation.

**1. Minutes from the Senior Leadership Team meeting held on 19 October 2021**

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting (paper SLT 01-11/21) held on 19 October 2021 were agreed for publication on the Agency's website, subject to revision of some points of detail.

**Action: Director of Corporate Services/Secretary**

**2. Actions arising from the previous minutes**

- 2.1 The Chief Executive and Director of Employment Relations Services continue to meet with stakeholders regarding the future of the Independent Appeals Service (paragraph 2.5 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). A meeting has been arranged with NIPSA officials on 14 January 2022 to discuss the service. It is anticipated that proposals for the future of the service will be brought to the Board in January 2022.

**Action: Chief Executive/Director of Employment Relations Services**

2.2 The action plan developed by HR in response to the Healthy Place to Work report will be issued to the Trade Union Side (TUS) for comment (paragraph 2.12 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). It will then be shared with staff.

**Action: HR**

2.3 Chief Executive to issue the job description for secretariat support for the Roundtable to member organisations (paragraph 3.3 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).

**Action: Chief Executive**

2.4 The Agency awaits confirmation from CIPD to allow the Agency to become an observer at the new CIPD policy forum (paragraph 4.10 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).

### **3. Chief Executive's Update**

3.1 The Chief Executive reported on plans for the SMT workshop, which is scheduled for the next day. The workshop will be the next step in looking at the future transformation of the Agency. The TUS, Employment Relations Group (ERG) and the wider staff group will then be consulted to build consensus around a new vision for the Agency.

3.2 As part of her temporary promotion, Fionn Davey will be looking at the underlying processes and developing proposals to help deliver this vision. Terms of reference will be drawn up for agreement with TUS. An external consultant will be engaged to support the work.

**Action: Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services**

3.3 The Chief Executive will travel to Dublin on 2 December 2021 to co-host the International Agencies virtual conference with the Chief Executive of the Workplace Relations Commission, together with the Chairs of the respective organisations. The Chief Executive thanked those members of staff involved in developing a video highlighting the work of the Agency. The Minister for the Economy and Tánaiste have prepared videos welcoming delegates to the island of Ireland. A promotional video by Tourism Ireland will also be shown to delegates.

**Action: Chief Executive**

3.4 The Chief Executive reported on his meeting with a senior representative from NI Social Care Council (NISCC). The meeting was primarily to benchmark practices with NISCC, which has recently achieved Investors in People Gold. It was noted that the NISCC Chief Executive holds regular 'town hall' meetings to brief all staff on key issues of interest, with opportunity to ask questions. It was agreed to trial this initiative and organise the first 'town hall' meeting before Christmas. Depending on the success of the meetings, other colleagues may be invited to speak on subjects of wider interest.

**Action: Chief Executive**

3.5 The Chief Executive reported an excellent response rate (80%) to the recent Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) survey. The staff EDI Champion will present the results to the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting on 7 December 2021. The Chief Executive and EDI Champion will then publish the report in full to TUS, ERG and the wider staff group. While the survey is positive, there are a number of actions to be progressed. It was agreed to offer members of staff development opportunities to prepare draft policies, so that the burden does not fall entirely on the HR Team.

**Action: Chief Executive**

3.6 Angela Bryans reported that, in light of the EDI survey, HR is meeting with the Agency's Dignity at Work advisers to discuss amendments to the Dignity at Work policy.

**Action: HR**

3.7 The Chief Executive reported that the Information Commissioner has decided not to take action against the Agency in respect of the recent data breach.

3.8 Internal Audit has awarded satisfactory assurance for the Agency's corporate governance arrangements. The audit report and recommendations will be presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 13 December 2021 for sign-off.

**Action: Director of Corporate Services**

3.9 The invitation to the Chair and Chief Executive to brief the Committee for the Economy has been postponed and will be rescheduled for the New Year.

3.10 Due to pressure of other events, the joint Board meeting with the Equality Commission has been postponed and will be rescheduled during February or March 2022. In the meantime, the Chief Executive plans to meet his counterpart in the Equality Commission on 1 December 2021.

**Action: Chief Executive**

- 3.11 The Lord Mayor of Belfast has agreed to give a lunchtime talk to staff to mark International Women's Day in March 2022.

**Action: Chief Executive**

#### **4. Directors' Updates**

- 4.1 The Directors provided updates on current activities.

- 4.2 An increase in collective conciliations is being experienced and diverting some Employment Relations Managers (ERMs) from other priorities. Plans are being made to train other ERMs in collective conciliation.

**Action: Director of Employment Relations Services**

- 4.3 The Director of Corporate Services has responded to queries raised by DfE on the business case for the Agency to on-board IS managed services to IT Assist. Workshops with IT Assist are scheduled for later this week.

- 4.4 The business case for support for the case management and records system (CMRS) is ready for Chief Executive approval. In the meantime, it was noted that implementation of CMRS enhancements continues to be delayed by resourcing difficulties within the current supplier.

**Action: Chief Executive**

- 4.5 The Accommodation Project Manager has been asked to revisit the risk assessment regarding the number of staff attending Head Office at any one time. This is because the number of external visitors can affect staff numbers attending. Consideration to be given to how to manage visitors through the environment. External venues to be used to facilitate larger meetings.

**Action: Director of Corporate Services**

- 4.6 Updating the Agency's Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures will be raised with DfE.

**Action: Director of Employment Relations Services**

#### **5. Board Matters**

##### Actions arising from the last Board meeting

- 5.1 The SLT noted the actions arising from the last Board meeting (paper SLT 02-11/21).

- 5.2 A date and venue will be arranged for a hybrid disability awareness training event for staff early in the New Year. The SLT noted the marked trend in disability queries/statistics.

**Action: Secretary**

#### Preparation for the next Board meeting

- 5.3 The key agenda items for the November 2021 Board meeting were noted (paper SLT 03-11/21).

- 5.4 The Minister for the Economy will be attending the December 2021 Board meeting. Subject to space on the agenda, there will also be a presentation on the new document toolkit at this meeting.

**Action: Director of Employment Relations Services**

- 5.5 An invitation was extended to Angela Bryans and Patrick McAuley to attend the December 2021 Board meeting.

**Action: Secretary**

## **6. People Matters**

### HR metrics

- 6.1 The SLT noted the HR Metrics (paper SLT 04-11/21).

### Resourcing Plans

- 6.2 The SLT noted the resource pressures within the HR team in supporting business needs. Discussions are ongoing with a university regarding a placement student to assist with policy work.

### Other People Matters

- 6.3 HR to issue a questionnaire to senior managers seeking feedback from teams in terms of policy development for hybrid working.

**Action: HR**

- 6.4 Angela Bryans reported that HR is due to meet the Board Mental Health Champion to discuss health and wellbeing.

**Action: HR**

## **7. Business Plan Performance Report for the period ending 31 October 2021**

- 7.1 The SLT noted the Business Plan Performance Report (paper SLT 05-11/21).
- 7.2 Chief Executive to seek an update from the Departmental Solicitors Office regarding legal advice on a Board constitutional issue ahead of the Board meeting on 29 November 2021.

**Action: Chief Executive**

## **8. Finance Matters – Management Accounts for the period ended 31 October 2021**

- 8.1 The Director of Corporate Services presented the Management Accounts for the period ended 31 October 2021 (paper SLT 06-11/21). He thanked Glenn Baker, Claire Fitzsimmons and Angela Bryans for their support to the finance function during the absence of the Finance Officer.
- 8.2 The SLT is keen to encourage all staff to take part in the Leadership Development Programme; this has been provided for in the budget. HR to provide a list of everyone who has been through the training.

**Action: Director of Corporate Services/HR**

## **9. Corporate Risk Register**

- 9.1 The SLT noted the Corporate Risk Register (paper SLT 07-11/21).
- 9.2 It was noted that issues regarding the format of the Register will be discussed at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting on 13 December 2021.
- 9.3 The Chief Executive requested a progress report under each action to be included in the version of the Risk Register submitted to the Committee meeting.

**Action: Director of Corporate Services**

## **10. Board paper – The statutory role of the Labour Relations Agency**

- 10.1 The Director of Employment Relations Services presented the paper on the statutory role of the Labour Relations Agency (paper SLT 08-11/21).
- 10.2 The paper was requested by the Board and will be presented to the November 2021 Board meeting. The paper will be shared with staff following the Board meeting.

**Action: Director of Employment Relations Services**

## **11. Draft Communications Strategy**

11.1 The SLT noted the Communications Strategy (paper SLT 09-11/21) which was revised following discussion at the Board Strategy Day in September 2021.

11.2 Comments on the proposed 'elevator pitch' to be forwarded to the Director of Corporate Services and Communications Manager in advance of the Board meeting. It was agreed that the tone of communications is important.

**Action: All**

## **12. Any Other Business**

12.1 There was no other business

## **13. Date of Next Meeting**

13.1 The next formal SLT meeting will be on 7 December 2021 at 2.00 pm, by videoconference.

**Action: Secretary**