

**Labour Relations Agency**  
**Minutes of a Senior Management Team Meeting**  
**held on Monday, 17 October 2011 in Room 2, Gordon Street**

**Present:** William Patterson  
Penny Holloway  
David McGrath  
Gerry O'Neill

**In Attendance:** Alison Wolfe (Minute Secretary)

- |   | <b>Minute</b>   | <b>Action</b>      |
|---|---|--------------------|
| <b>1. Apologies</b>                                 |   |                    |
|   | There were no apologies.  |                    |
| <b>2. Minutes of Meeting held on 22 August 2011</b> |   |                    |
|   | The minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2011 were agreed subject to the insertions to be made by Directors.  | <b>Secretariat</b> |
| <b>3. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes</b>     |   |                    |
|   | <b>9.3 International Agencies Meeting/Conference, Cardiff</b><br>It was noted that the Agency had been represented at the above by the Chairman, CEO, Board Members and members of the Senior Management Team. Feedback was very positive and it was agreed that the Agency should continue to be represented at future meetings. | <b>CEO</b>         |
|   | <b>9.5 Annual Lecture – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2011</b><br>It was noted that arrangements are well advanced for the public lecture; approx 50 people have confirmed attendance.  | <b>Secretariat</b> |
|   | <b>9.6 Pay Deal</b><br>The pay deals for 2010/11 and 2011/12 have been approved and the Agency is in the process of administrating implementation.  | <b>DCS</b>         |
|   | <b>9.7 Schedule of SMT meetings</b><br>It was noted that following approval of Board meeting dates for 2012, schedules of dates will be drawn up for the SMT, JNCC and related meetings.  | <b>Secretariat</b> |
| <b>4. Innovation in Employment Relations</b>        |   |                    |
|   | <b>4.1 Promotion of Pre-Claim Conciliation</b><br>It was noted that statistics relating to PCC have been incorporated into the bi-monthly Board report. The statistics are reviewed quarterly with the next review due in January 2012.   | <b>DCA</b>         |

Discussion took place on promotional opportunities for PCC. It was agreed to examine this in more detail at the SMT business planning day on 24 October.

**SMT**

Discussion then took place on the Helpline opening hours and piloting 8am-6pm. It was agreed that the DAS and DCS submit a protocol to the SMT for the transition before forwarding to the JNCC for consultation.

**DCS/DAS**

#### **4.2 Generic Arbitration Scheme**

It was noted that an introductory meeting was held on 30 September with the newly appointed arbitrators. Arbitrator training is being organised for 6 December.

**DCA/Arb Sec**

A paper has been prepared for the October Board meeting reviewing the arbitrator appointment process. The paper indicated that despite the Agency's welcome statement the recruitment process failed to attract sufficient numbers of candidates from women, with a trade union background or ethnic groups. The SMT agreed that the appointment process was effective in delivering a high calibre of appointees.

**CEO**

It was noted that the Arbitration Secretary has written to the existing arbitration panel for equality monitoring purposes.

**DCA/Arb Sec**

#### **4.3 Code of Practice on Time Off**

Following discussion it was agreed that the DAS contact DEL to establish progress on the approval of the draft Code.

**DAS**

### **5. Agency Strategy and Services**

#### **5.1 Corporate Plan 2011-14**

#### **5.2 Business Plan 2011-12**

It was noted that objectives are mainly on target for the year end.

The DEL Minister, Dr. Stephen Farry visited the Agency on 15 September. Following the visit a Ministerial press release was issued by DEL. It was agreed that the visit had been very positive.

It was agreed that the JNCC meeting which took place on 28 September was constructive. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 7 December at which it is hoped to establish the Health & Safety Committee and to formally sign the Dignity at Work and Workplace Respect Procedures.

**SMT**

It was noted that Agency staff are among public service staff being balloted for industrial action which is scheduled to take place on 30 November.

It was noted that CEO/staff briefings will take place on 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November.

**CEO/Sec**

It was noted that the Agency is in the process of submitting its Equality Report to the Equality Commission NI. **CEO/DCS**

### **5.2.1 ICMS**

The IT Manager had recently visited ACAS to view their ICMS system and is currently preparing a report on same. In the short term a business case on managed risk is being prepared for the CEO along with a paper relating to the specification and scoping of ICMS. **DCS/IT Mgr**

## **6. Leadership Organisation and Performance Management**

### **6.1 SMT Development Programme**

The DCS is to examine the possibility of further SMT training perhaps in line with the recent Board facilitation training. **DCS**

### **6.2 Performance Appraisal**

It was noted that only a small number of appraisals remain outstanding. Directors will follow up on these. **Dirs**

The initial sift of PLDPs has taken place and the training plan has been placed on staff folders. **DCS**

After some discussion regarding the format of interim appraisals it was agreed that the DCS issue the standard form to staff for completion. **DCS**

### **6.3 IiP**

It was noted that, due to the possibility of industrial action by public servants on 30 November, the IiP assessment of the Agency will now take place on 6-8 December. A focus group has been established to prepare for IiP chaired by the DCS. **DCS**

It was noted that the CEO has reviewed the Group Learning Record Report which has now been returned to the DCS for processing. **DCS**

## **7. Evaluation**

### **7.1 PPEs**

It was noted that the DCS is currently completing PPEs for the IT Manager and Compliance Officer posts. Business cases for new posts were premised on PPEs being completed one year after the post was filled. The DAS is to consider PPEs for the new Helpline posts. **DCS/DAS**

The DCS will also be completing PPES for the premises project and the support for the development of financial accounts. **DCS**

It was noted that very positive comments were being received concerning the Agency's suite of conference rooms. It was agreed that the rooms were being effectively utilised.

## **7.2 SROI**

It was noted that a business case was submitted to DEL on 15 August 2011. The CEO is to contact DEL regarding the current status of the business case.

**CEO**

## **7.3 Value for Money**

It was noted that the CEO will be drafting a value for money strategy for the Agency. The draft will initially be circulated to the SMT for comment and discussion.

**CEO**

# **8. Governance and Accountability**

## **8.1 LRA Funding 2011-12**

It was noted that the strictures on spend had been lifted. The Agency has a limited opportunity to examine possible spend before the year end.

**CEO/DCS**

It was agreed:-

- ✚ to gauge interest in working additional hours from part-time staff in the Conciliation section to cover the current ERO vacancy
- ✚ to proceed with the proposal to fill the IC vacancy at CO grade by rotation of AA staff
- ✚ to fill permanent vacancies subject to budget
- ✚ that the DCS will issue the necessary career break documentation requested by a member of Regional Office staff.

**DCS**

It was noted that at the recent DEL quarterly meeting DEL indicated that in due course they will be forwarding a revised Financial Memorandum/Management Statement to the Agency.

**CEO**

# **9. Any Other Business**

## **9.1 Staffing**

It was agreed that the DCA put a proposal from two members of staff at ERM grade to the CEO/DCS for consideration with a view to approval. The proposal would entail both members of staff working an 11 month contract spread over 12 months.

**DCA  
DCS/CEO**

It was noted that another member of staff at ERM grade wished to reduce to a 2 day working week.

**CEO/DCS**

## **9.2 Corporate Social Responsibility**

It was agreed to allow staff to hold charity fundraisers in the coming months on the proviso that the charities are legitimate and the events held are voluntary and pose no undue impact on the business of the Agency.

**DCS**

**9.3 Attendance at CIPD Conference**

It was noted that one Board member will be attending the CIPD conference this year. Directors are to nominate members of staff to attend from EOII grade upwards.

**Dir**

After a short discussion it was agreed to encourage administration staff to take up more training opportunities. It was also agreed to investigate new training opportunities for admin staff.

**DCS**

**9.4 Mediation Training**

It was agreed that the DCA identify providers of mediation training and prepare the necessary tender documentation for approval.

**DCA/CEO**

**9.5 Redundancy Procedure**

The CEO is to check current status of the draft procedure with personnel with a view to progressing to the SMT and JNCC consultation.

**CEO**

**9.6 IS Managed Services**

It was noted that DEL has suggested that the Agency look again at utilising the services provided by IT Assist; this is being progressed with some urgency as the IT Managed Services contract requires renewal at the earliest.

**DCS/CEO**

**10. Date of Next Meetings**

- Informal SMT – Mon 24, 31 October  
Mon 7, 14, 21, 28 November
- Mon 5, 19 December
- Formal SMT - Mon 12 December