

**Labour Relations Agency  
Minutes of a Senior Management Team Meeting  
held on Tuesday, 30 September 2014 in Room 3, Gordon Street**

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

**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 19 August 2014</b> | The minutes of the meeting held on 19 August 2014 were agreed subject to clarification of the date in para 4.5 which should read 'June 2013'.  | <b>Secretariat</b>     |
| <b>3. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes</b>     | None.  |                        |
| <b>4. Innovation in Employment Relations</b>        |  |                        |
|   | <b>4.1 October Board meeting/launch of Annual Report/Annual Lecture</b>  |                        |
|   | The SMT discussed arrangements for the October Board meeting/launch of the Annual Report and the Annual Lecture. It was noted that Jim Mather, former Minister for Energy, Enterprise & Tourism and a member of the Scottish National Party had agreed to deliver the lecture. Mr Mather recently chaired the Working Together Review (Scotland) and his lecture will examine a profile of industrial relations in Scotland. | <b>CEO</b>             |
|   | Arrangements for the event are underway.   | <b>CEO/Secretariat</b> |
|   | <b>4.2 Review of NI Employment Law</b>   |                        |
|   | The Chair, CEO and Board representatives met with the DEL Minister, Stephen Farry on 15 September to discuss the DEL review of NI employment law. The meeting was very positive and while Board members were optimistic about Agency funding 2014/15 there had been no assurances regarding cuts to the budget 2015/16.  | <b>CEO</b>             |
|   | The impact of early conciliation and the re-routing of claims to the Agency were discussed. Neutral assessment remained under consideration. The Agency would be taking initiatives with respect to small firms.   | <b>CEO</b>             |

#### **4.3 Roundtable Discussion on NI ER**

The Roundtable met on 27 August 2014. The CEO is drafting a paper on Leadership and Management Skills for consideration by the Roundtable. The Roundtable is also considering the Working Together Review paper.

**CEO**

#### **4.4 International Agencies Meeting 2014**

It was noted that, due to budget pressures, the Agency will not be attending the International Agencies meeting 2014. It was hoped that the Agency would be in a position to attend the meeting in 2015.

#### **4.5 Employment Relations Research**

Employment relations research had been raised with the DEL Minister at the meeting on 15 September, and also discussed at the September Board meeting. Due to funding restrictions the Agency is unable to carry out evidence based research. A meeting of the Research Committee is scheduled for 20 November 2014.

**CEO/DAS**

#### **4.6 SROI**

A paper on SROI was submitted to the Board for approval in June 2013. The CEO is to review the PPE for SROI.

**CEO**

#### **4.7 Consultation on the LRA Code of Practice on Discipline & Grievance – proposed amendment to paragraphs 103 & 104**

It was noted that the Agency awaits DEL approval of the amendments to the Code.

**DAS**

#### **4.8 ECNI Project**

The CEO is to follow up on information received from the DCA on the project.

**CEO/DCA**

#### **4.9 Civil Service Appeals Board**

The DCA reported on a meeting she attended with DFP HR section in respect of a review of Civil Service appeal boards. The Agency was advising DFP HR on best practice in this regard.

**DCA**

### **5. NI & GB Employment Relations Systems**

See note at 4.1 re Jim Mather lecture on 30 October 2014.

It was noted that arrangements would be made in due course for the new Agency Chair to visit Acas and LRC.

**CEO**

Following the appointment of a new CEO and three Board members a visit would also be arranged to Eurofound, Dublin.

**CEO**

### **6. Agency Strategy and Services**

#### **6.1 Corporate Plan 2014-17**

#### **6.2 Business Plan 2014-15**

As reported in the Bi-Monthly Performance Report to the Board the majority of objectives were progressing well.

**CEO**

Following the appointment of a new CEO and three Board members the Chair and Board will be reviewing both the Corporate and Business Plans.

**Chair/CEO/Dir**

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

### **7.1 Cross Directorate Working Groups**

It was noted that the IS/IT group has a good representation across the sections. The group continues to meet regularly and make progress.

**DCA**

The Engagement group met in relation to the recent staff conference and continues to work towards IiP re-assessment.

**DCS**

The CEO and DCS will examine the feasibility of the Corporate Governance group/all groups, with the exception of IS/IT and report to the SMT.

**CEO/DCS**

It was noted that the MoU addendum to the MS/FM was approved by the Board at their meeting on 25 September. Signed copies of the MoU will be forwarded to DEL for completion at the quarterly meeting on 2 October.

**CEO**

### **7.2 Performance Management**

HR to identify outstanding appraisals with a view to completing these prior to the issue of interim appraisals.

**DCS**

It was noted that at the last quarterly meeting DEL had suggested there were insufficient quantitative indicators in the Business Plan. DEL has requested that the Agency identify a number of high level quantitative targets to highlight in the Business Plan. The CEO will raise the DEL request at the quarterly meeting on 2 October.

**CEO**

### **7.3 HR Strategy**

#### **7.3.1 Stress Risk Assessment**

It was noted that the Agency was progressing the 'confidential recipient' service for staff as highlighted at the staff conference.

**DCS**

#### **7.3.2 HR Strategy**

It was noted that leadership and management training proposal for line managers has been approved.

**DCS**

The IiP assessment had been postponed until next year pending the appointment of a new CEO. The SMT discussed the possibility of applying for gold standard rather than silver. It was agreed that there was a need to look at ways to implement the Staff Reward & Recognition Policy and to look at implementing a staff suggestion scheme. The DCS was currently preparing a detailed report on the recent staff survey.

**DCS**

### **7.3.3 Staff Conference**

It was noted that feedback from the staff conference on 17 September was positive.

### **7.3.4 Staffing**

The SMT were continuing to fill all posts on a permanent basis but were cognisant of the implications of possible cuts to the budget 2015/16.

**CEO**

Recruitment for the forthcoming CEO vacancy is underway.

**DCS**

The exchange of ERMs in the Certification Office and Advisory was complete.

**DCS/DAS**

Interviews were held to fill the 2 temporary ERO vacancies and the successful candidates will be taking up post on 1 October.

**DCS/DCA**

Progress was being made with regard to the temporary EOII vacancy in the Regional Office.

**DCS**

Arrangements were being made for the successful candidate in the Clerical Officer vacancy to take up post.

**DCS**

The SMT discussed a request for a variation in working hours and it was agreed that the DCA would deal with the issue; arrangements to be made by HR.

**DCS/DCA**

The three forthcoming vacancies on the Agency Board were being progressed by DEL.

**SMT**

CEO/staff briefings will be taking place on 1 October.

**CEO**

## **8. ICT**

### **8.1 IS Managed Services**

Work with the new IS managed services supplier (Kelway) was progressing. It was noted that progress was being made with regard to the installation of Windows 8 in the Agency.

**DCS/ERM**

### **8.2 Security Accreditation**

Preparations were on-going for the audit which has been re-scheduled for November.

**DCS**

### **8.3 ICMS**

It was noted that ICMS was progressing and the Steering Group continued to meet.

**SMT**

### **8.4 Website Security Accreditation**

A penetration test of the Agency's website has been completed as required by the website host, DID. From the Agency's viewpoint, the report was positive but a small number of weaknesses require

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|---|----------------|
| attention from DID.   | <b>DCS/ERM</b> |
| Following discussion at JNCC on 11 September, the mobile phone policy had been modified and is currently with TUS for consultation with the Branch.   | <b>DCS</b>     |
| <b>9. Evaluation</b>  |                |
| <b>9.1 PPEs</b>   |                |
| It was noted that the PPE on SROI has been completed and forwarded to DEL.  | <b>DCS</b>     |
| <b>9.2 Value for Money</b>  |                |
| The Board have indicated that the Agency concentrate on effectiveness rather than efficiency re vfm. The CEO has reflected this in the Business Plan.   | <b>CEO</b>     |
| <b>10. Governance and Accountability</b>  |                |
| <b>10.1 LRA Funding 2014/15</b>   |                |
| It was noted that the Agency was 1.7% underspent.   |                |
| As reported to the Board on 25 September the Agency Chair, CEO and Board representatives met with the DEL Minister, Stephen Farry to receive an update on the Review of Employment Law. Discussion also took place on the impact of any cuts to the Agency budget and the consequences these might have on the Agency fulfilling its statutory duties. While the meeting with the Minister had been positive, there had been no assurances that the Agency budget would not be cut during this financial year. The budget position remained very tight and any cut would have implications on staff as the Agency had little discretionary spend. | <b>CEO</b>     |
| It was noted that a further business case was required for DEL in respect of Phase 2, ICMS.   | <b>DCS</b>     |
| Robust plans would be required to ensure that monies were used to target priorities such as learning and development.   | <b>SMT</b>     |
| <b>10.2 Statutory Compliance</b>  |                |
| The Agency awaits a response from DEL to the revised MoU/SLA for the Certification Office. CEO to contact the Certification Officer.  | <b>CEO</b>     |
| <b>10.3 Corporate Social Responsibility</b>   |                |
| DEL has formed a central group including NDPBs to look at issues such as energy conservation planning. The Agency will be developing this role.   | <b>DCS</b>     |

**11. JNCC**

***11.1 Redundancy Procedure***







The CEO and DCS will be meeting TUS at 10.30 am on 9<sup>th</sup> October to discuss the Redundancy Procedure.

**DCS/CEO**

**12. Any Other Business**

There was no other business to report.

**13. Date of Next Meetings**

-  Informal meetings: Monday, 6 October
-  Tuesday, 21 & 28 October
-  Thursday, 6 November
-  Formal meeting: Tuesday, 18 November
-  Informal meeting Tuesday, 2 December
-  Formal meeting Monday, 22 December

**Secretariat**

With the exception of Monday, 6 October, all of the above meetings will be followed by a meeting of the ICMS Steering Group.

All meetings will be held in Room 3 (unless otherwise indicated) commencing at 10.00 am.