

**MINUTES OF THE THREE HUNDRED AND FORTY FIFTH MEETING OF THE
LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT 10.00 AM
ON THURSDAY, 30 APRIL 2009
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, 2-8 GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

Present: Jim McCusker (Chair)
Peter Williamson
Roden Ward
Trevor Morrow
Neal Willis
Norma Heaton
Julie Anne Clarke
Patricia O'Farrell

In Attendance: William Patterson (Chief Executive)
Gerry O'Neill (Director, Corporate Services)
David McGrath (Director, Advisory Services)
Penny Holloway (Director, Conciliation & Arbitration)

1. Apologies Action

Apologies were received for the morning session from Lyn Fawcett and Brenda Maitland (both attending the afternoon session).

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 26 March 2009

There was one point of accuracy in that "form" should read "from" in paragraph 5.7. Secretary

3. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes not listed on this Agenda

4.2 It was noted that Jill Dix ACAS will attend the next meeting of the Research Group to discuss the Pam Meadows paper on ACAS Economic Impact. The date of the meeting will depend on her availability. CEO/DAS

The Joint LRA/LRC papers on working time and fixed term in the separate jurisdictions were made available to the LRA this week. The intention is to place this on the LRA website with the possibility of holding a seminar later in the year. DAS

- 5.1 It was noted that the DEL consultation paper on the Review of Dispute Resolution is expected to be issued in the coming weeks with June to August set for the consultation period.

The LRA is holding a stakeholder seminar on dispute resolution on 4 June at the Ramada Encore facility. Speakers are being arranged representing NIC-ICTU, CBI and possibly the Department.

- 5.4 It was noted that a sub-group of the Board met on 9 April where an approach on finalising the Corporate Plan/Business Plan was determined.
- 5.6 There is a meeting on 6 May involving NIPSA and DFP to discuss the appointment of Chairs to Independent Appeals Panels (for the RPA).

4. Chairman's Business

4.1 DEL Correspondence re Consultation with the Agency on Appointments

The Chairman referred to a letter he had received from Valerie Reilly, DEL, on 25 March. This letter which referred to regulations as a means of enabling consultation with the Agency on Industrial Court and Certification Officer appointments was accepted by the Board.

4.2 Board Vacancies

Noting that Mrs N Heaton had now formalised her resignation from the Board at the end of May, the Chairman briefed Board members on plans for her replacement in terms of timing, panel structure and the employment relations related selection criteria.

4.3 Board Members Interests

It was noted that statements of Board Member interests should be returned to the Secretariat as soon as possible.

5. Chief Executive's Business

5.1 Review of Dispute Resolution in NI

Discussion on this matter was deferred to a special session scheduled for the afternoon of 30 April.

5.2 *liP Review Paper*

Following comment from the Board:

- That there should be an inclusion of SMT responsibility in the scorecard action in page 6.
- That effective management on page 7 should be measured through the achievement of objectives.

This paper was ratified.

5.3 *Resource Allocation*

This paper was agreed on the basis:

- That delays in permanent staffing in year 1 were unfortunate;
- That first year expenditure would be targeted in the main to a balance of staffing and premises refurbishment projects;
- That appropriate business cases should be written as soon as possible to address both short term supernumerary appoints and long term permanent posts;
- That temporary employment agency staff should be used in the first instance to accelerate progress.

A presentation is to be given to the Board on accommodation plans once details had been determined.

5.4 *IS Security Paper*

This paper was accepted subject to a correction in the “resources” section which should refer to approval for the “Intelligent Customer” being received in January 2009.

5.5 *Draft Corporate Plan 2009/2010*

Following discussions and with the proviso that the 2008/09 figures, where available, are included to spotlight the effects of the recession, this paper was approved.

The Board was of the view that the Corporate Plan would require revision following the outcome of the Review of Dispute Resolution. With the exception of this, decisions on whether the plan should be rolled on each year would be approved on a year by year basis.

5.6 *Draft Business Plan 2009/10*

Following discussion and with the proviso that certain wording on page 4 regarding funding policy and commitments was updated, this paper was approved.

In terms of reporting, the Board stated an interest in receiving progress reports on balanced scorecard targets and the associated key actions. Reports should remain quarterly with any significant deviations from the plan reported monthly.

5.7 RPA

The CEO reported on a meeting 6 May involving NICS management and the trades unions regarding the RPA. It was noted that the meeting would discuss the appointment of Chairs to Independent Appeals Panels.

5.8 Equal Pay Audit

The Board was updated on the current position. It was noted that there is a large database of information which requires further review. The conclusions from the review and the NISRA Report taken together will indicate whether specific policy initiatives or further decisions require attention. The next reporting point on this matter will be in September.

5.9 Monthly Management Report

Key matters arising from the report were as follows:

- The Board noted the attendance of the CEO and Dr Mary O'Brien at the iP Awards Ceremony at Hillsborough on 8 April.
- The identification of alternative sources of publically funded employment relations advice in the province and whether this could be rationalised. This is informed by the Anderson Review on the Good Guidance Guide. The Board asked for a short presentation on the Anderson Review concentrating on how the Agency should address the recommendations of the Review.
- Comment was made on the increased number of claims arising in certain jurisdictions which supported the view that the end of 2008/09 figures should be included in the corporate/business plans.
- The Board noted that 3,500 equal pay cases from the NICS are pending.
- The Board was provided with detail regarding the SMT's current view on premises refurbishment. The Chairman requested a presentation on this matter when the plans had been formalised.
- The Board noted the outcome on training and was informed that an evaluation report on the 2008/09 Training Plan would be prepared in due course.

DAS

DCS

6. Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee

Action

6.1 Meeting held 22 April 2009

This meeting was primarily held to discuss the CEO appraisal for 2008/09. However, it also discussed the end of year financial matters and the position on IS Security.

Bearing in mind the Board's liability for the overall performance of the Agency and its capacity to fulfil its statutory responsibilities, the Committee had noted the age profile of many of the more senior staff in the Agency. The CEO is to consider the possible impact of potential labour turnover throughout the Agency.

7. Corporate Correspondence

The Board noted the positive PR coverage relating to the achievement of IiP.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business reported.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held on **Thursday, 28 May 2009**, beginning at 10.00 am in Room 1.

Mr Roden Ward apologised in advance as he will be on holiday on 28 May.