

**MINUTES OF THE 375th MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY
BOARD HELD AT
10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 19 APRIL 2012
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

Present: Jim McCusker (Chair)
Peter Williamson
Brenda Maitland
Trevor Morrow
Gary McMichael
Sally McKee
Alison Millar
Gordon Parkes
Neal Willis
Lyn Fawcett

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

1. Apologies Action

There were no apologies.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 1 March 2012

There was one point of accuracy noted. In *4.2 Board Member Training*, second paragraph, reference is made to four questions. This should read five questions. Secretariat

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2012 were then proposed by Peter Williamson, seconded by Neal Willis, and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to the above amendment.

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

3. 7.5 SROI Feasibility Report

It was noted that the SROI business case has now been formally approved by DEL and will now be subject to tender. DAS

4.2 Board Member Training

It was noted the Chairman and DCA had met with the DEL Assembly Committee on 18 April to give the Agency's views on the proposed dissolution of the Department. The Committee had acknowledged the Agency's concern regarding a potential loss of focus and expertise on employment relations

should the Agency become part of a larger Department. Emphasis was also placed on the potential loss of the good relations that had built up between DEL and Agency personnel. The Board agreed to be informed of developments. **Chairman**

4.3 LRA Seminar – 16 February 2012

The Chairman informed members that he and the Chief Executive had met with key stakeholders regarding the employment law agenda for Northern Ireland. The Chairman agreed to report to the Board in May. **Chairman**

6.1 Launch of Statutory Generic Arbitration Scheme

It was noted that the Scheme is expected to be launched by the Agency in September 2012. **CEO**

6.5 Replacement of ICMS

The CEO indicated that he had received confirmation that the Agency Business Case, recommending a replacement IS Managed Services Contract by open competitive tendering, has been approved by the Department. The contract is to be progressed to tender. **CEO**
DCS

4. Chairman's Business

4.1 Declarations of Interests

No interests were declared by members.

4.2 Board Member Training

No training was reported.

4.3 Correspondence between the Agency Chairman & DEL Minister re Arbitration Scheme

It was noted that a meeting had been arranged with the Minister and representatives from the Agency to discuss the new arbitration arrangements. Unfortunately this was postponed by the Minister. A new date is to be arranged. **Chairman/**
CEO

4.4 Board Away Day – 15 March 2012

A record note of the main points of discussion at the Board Away Day was circulated to members.

4.5 Board Appointments

(a) Vacancies arising in 2012

It was noted that the Chairman had written to Colin Jack, DEL on the Board's behalf regarding public appointments to the LRA Board. The Chairman and CEO had subsequently met with Colin Jack on 16 March. A letter had been received from Colin Jack on 4 April setting out the criteria agreed by the Department for public appointments to the Board. This identified four generic criteria and two specific criteria. The Board noted the revised criteria. It was the view of the Board that DEL should initiate the appointments process as **Chairman**

soon as possible.

(b) Vacancies arising after 2012

It was agreed that the record note (Para 4.4 above) accurately reflected the Board's position.

Chairman

4.6 Meeting with Equality Commission

It was noted that the Chairman and CEO will be meeting the new Commissioner of the EC, Michael Wardlow, on 15 May for preliminary discussions. Board members were asked to forward any issues which could be raised at that meeting. It was also noted that the proposed joint Board/Commission meeting would probably be held in the autumn.

**Board
Members
CEO/
Chairman**

5. Chief Executive's Business

5.1 DEL Review of Agency Quarterly Report

The CEO presented the progress report for the period to 5 April 2012. The Board expressed concern that the LRA Business Plan 2012-13 had not yet been approved by the Department.

CEO

The Report was accepted by the Board with some agreed minor amendments.

CEO

5.2 Statutory Generic Arbitration Scheme Legislation

Following discussion, the draft legislation was approved by Board members, with some minor amendments. It was noted that the final draft will be submitted by the CEO to DEL for approval.

CEO

It was noted that the launch of the Scheme is most likely to be held in September 2012.

CEO

5.3 IiP Update

It was noted that the celebration which was held to recognise staff contributions in attaining the IiP Bronze award was very successful.

5.4 VfM Strategy

Following discussion, the Board agreed the approach being taken to demonstrate VfM. It was agreed that an appropriate commentary should be included in Bi-monthly Management Reports.

CEO

5.5 Stakeholder Framework

Following discussion the recommendations were agreed subject to proposed changes to the text of the paper.

CEO

5.6 Equality Scheme

It was noted that the Equality Scheme is expected to be approved by the

CEO

Equality Commission in May.

DCS

5.7 Board expenses claims

Board members were reminded that expenses claims need to be forwarded to the Agency on a regular basis, ideally monthly.

**Board
Members**

5.8 Northern Ireland ER Strategy

It was noted that the amended chart presenting the current GB employment law agenda against the current NI position had been updated.

5.9 Replacement of ICMS

This item was dealt with at 3. 6.5 above.

5.10 Promotion of Pre-Claim Conciliation

It was noted that the final formal report on the promotion of the pre-claim conciliation service would be available in August.

DCA

5.11 DEL Review of Dispute Resolution in NI

(i) DEL Advisory Group

It was noted that the Group had met on 2 April. The Employment Rights survey for companies with up to 50 members of staff had been discussed as well as (1) discussion and (2) pre-consultation processes in respect of a review of NI employment law.

(ii) Others Matters

Nothing to report.

6. Corporate Correspondence received relevant to Board

Nothing received.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Joint LRA/LRC Board Meeting

It was proposed that a joint Board Meeting with the Labour Relations Commission would be held on 21 June 2012, possibly in the Ballymascanlon Hotel. Further details will be advised to members.

Secretariat

7.2 Post Graduate Research Student

It was noted that no responses had been received, as yet, from post-graduate students. The closing date for applications is 1 May 2012.

DAS

7.3 *LRA Audit Sub-Committee Chairman*

It was noted that proposals for the next Chairman of the Audit Committee would be considered at the Board Meeting 25 May.

8. *Date of Next Meeting*

The next meeting of the Board will be held in Gordon Street, Belfast on Friday, 25 May 2012 at 10.00 am.