

**MINUTES OF THE 415th MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT
10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 28th APRIL 2016
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

Present: Marie Mallon (Chair)
Louise Crilly
Deirdre Fitzpatrick
Michelle McGinley
Gary McMichael
Alison Millar
Albert Mills
Jill Minne
Daire Murphy
Pauline Shepherd

In Attendance: Tom Evans Chief Executive, (CEO)
Gerry O'Neill (Director, Corporate Services, (DCS))
David McGrath (Director, Advisory Services, (DAS))
Alison Wolfe (Minutes Secretary)

	Action
<p>1. Apologies</p> <p>An apology was received from Penny Holloway.</p>	
<p>2. Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>There were no interests declared.</p>	
<p>3. Chair's Opening Remarks</p> <p>The Chair thanked members for their contributions at the Board business planning day in February. She indicated that this was an important time for the Agency as at the time of the May Board meeting the Agency will be under the direction of the new Department for the Economy.</p>	
<p>4. Minutes of 21 January and 25 February 2016 Meetings</p> <p>The minutes of the meetings held on 21 January and 25 February 2016 were agreed as true and accurate records of the meetings.</p>	Secretary
<p>5. Matters Arising from 21 January 2015 Minutes</p> <p><i>CIPFA Presentation on Corporate Governance</i></p> <p>The CEO referred to his recent meeting and follow up correspondence received from Steve Mungavin regarding CIPFA's Mark of Excellence governance standard. Board members expressed some concern about the cost and potential work involved in working through the standard. The Chair emphasised the importance of continuing to strengthen the Agency's governance arrangements to offer assurance to our new sponsor Department.</p>	

<p>It was agreed that the CEO should contact some of the organisations involved in the CIPFA pilot scheme and report back to the Board.</p>	<p>CEO</p>
<p>ICMS Presentation</p> <p>The CEO reported that the SMT had agreed that the Phase 2 specification for CMRS would cover the residual functions of Advisory Services only with the HR requirements being taken forward under a separate bespoke tender process. The DCS advised that the Phase 2 specification is being adjusted to reflect this approach and to include further enhancements that are required for Early Conciliation. The CEO confirmed that the CMRS Project Steering Committee is being reconstituted to oversee the Phase 2 implementation.</p>	<p>SMT</p>
<p>MSFM</p> <p>The Board noted the CEO's end year assurance statement. The CEO explained that he had included a reference to the limited assurance from the records management internal audit but did confirm that the overall assurance is satisfactory. The CEO also confirmed that he had discussed an appropriate form of words for inclusion in Governance Statement for the 2015-16 Annual Report and Accounts with Internal Audit.</p>	<p>CEO</p>
<p>The CEO reported that the Certification Officer is content with the revised MoU. The CEO also advised that the ERM in the Certification Office will be retiring at the end of May and would be replaced through the current recruitment exercise.</p>	<p>HR ERM</p>
<p>Matters Arising from 25 February 2015 Minutes</p> <p>Board members commented that they found the February Board workshop and the induction session very worthwhile but would appreciate more time for a more in depth discussion on some issues. In response the Chair indicated that the September Board meeting will be used to start the corporate planning process for 2017-2020; this would be timely given the upcoming changes to the operating environment and challenges faced by the Agency.</p> <p>The CEO confirmed that he has been invited to a workshop on 12 May that will inform sponsored bodies about the Executive's approach to the new Programme for Government, which will be more outcome-focused. The new approach will have implications for the Agency's annual and corporate business plans.</p>	<p>CEO</p>
<p>6. Board Member Training/Appraisals</p> <p>Board members were encouraged to avail of suitable training opportunities.</p> <p>The Chair will be attending a conference on 'Human Rights – a 21st Century Approach to Ombudsmen' on 26 May.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Board members for agreeing suitable dates for appraisal meetings which would provide an opportunity, particularly for new members, to discuss ideas.</p> <p>A summary of responses on the recent Board self-assessment exercise will be provided at the May Board meeting.</p>	<p>BMs/Sec</p> <p>Chair</p> <p>Chair/BMs</p> <p>BMs/DCS/Sec</p>
<p>7. Board Sub-Committee Updates</p> <p>7.1 Research Sub-Committee</p> <p>The Chair reminded members about the vacancy on the Research Sub-</p>	

<p>asked to give consideration to ways to mark the occasion. Discussions are on-going regarding a staff conference later in the year which it may be possible to combine with the anniversary event.</p> <p>The Chair and CEO reported on their meeting with Eugene Rooney & Paul Brush regarding the restructuring of government departments and the new Department for Economy.</p> <p>The Chair and CEO also reported on a very positive meeting with Jackie Kerr, who will have lead responsibility for sponsorship of the Agency within DfE.</p> <p>The Chair also reported on her input to the Gateway Review in relation to the restructuring of government departments and her attendance at the most recent meeting of the Chairs' Forum.</p>	BMs/SMT/Sec
<p>9. Finance Issues</p> <p>9.1 End Year Budget Performance for 2015/16 (Paper 22/15 – updated)</p> <p>The DCS introduced the end year budget performance paper which indicated underspend of less than 2%, the actual final underspend will be clarified when all accruals have been established. The DCS indicated a satisfactory performance throughout the year.</p> <p>The DCS confirmed that the format of the Annual Report and Accounts has changed from the 2014-15 arrangements and that John Davin of Baker Tilley Mooney Moore will provide an overview of the accounts at the May Board meeting and will also be available to respond to issues raised by the Board.</p> <p>Board members suggested that urgent consideration should be given to the staff training budget for 2016/17.</p> <p>The Chair congratulated the DCS and his team for their work on the budget throughout the year.</p> <p>9.2 DEL Letter – 2016-17 Financial Position – Labour Relations Agency</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the letter.</p>	DCS SMT
<p>10. HR Issues – Human Resource – Quarterly Board Update Paper (Paper 3/16)</p> <p>The DCS introduced the HR update paper and draft HR People Strategy which had been adjusted following comments provided by the Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee on 14 March. The CEO confirmed that the HR People Strategy will be shared with staff and TUS for consultation.</p> <p>The CEO also confirmed his intention to develop a leadership and management programme for all levels of management as a mechanism for increasing capability and contributing to succession planning. The Chair was encouraged by the emphasis on team effectiveness and development.</p> <p>Board members felt that while the Strategy provided an excellent framework, it had a very generic focus; and that the themes needed to be more specifically aligned to the strategic objectives of the Agency. The strategic context should include the values and behaviours of staff; evaluation was important – consultation,</p>	SMT

<p>implementation, involvement, engagement.</p> <p>Board members were updated on the recent recruitment exercises.</p>	<p>SMT/HR ERM</p>
<p>11. Business Plan Performance Report for 2015/16 (Paper 24/15 – updated)</p> <p>The CEO in introducing the end year Business Plan performance report indicated that despite not having a full complement of staff the Agency had met a substantial number of targets in the Business Plan. The CEO confirmed that a number of targets could not be achieved because of the following external factors; late introduction of the Employment Bill, a policy change by DEL, dependency on the commitment/actions of third party organisations.</p> <p>The CEO highlighted that all frontline service operational targets had been met by introducing a range of measures to mitigate the impact of staff shortages.</p> <p>The Board, in noting the paper, acknowledged and congratulated staff for their commitment in meeting all key delivery targets.</p>	
<p>12. Draft 2016/17 Business Plan (tabled)</p> <p>The CEO presented the draft 2016/17 Business Plan paying particular emphasis to new priorities/themes identified by the Board at their February workshop.</p> <p>The following amendments were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ SO1 – amend the Strategic Objective to ‘when individuals and organisations...’. CEO to add target referring to individuals. ✚ SO5 – amend wording in para 3 to read ‘Develop with the Employment Relations Roundtable Forum the strategic drivers that will strengthen Northern Ireland’s employment relations system by 31 December 2016.’ ✚ SO13 – para 1 – amend to read ‘31 March 2017’. <p>A revised Business Plan including updated performance indicators and financial information will be considered at the May Board meeting with a final version going to DfE for approval. The CEO agreed to share the final draft with DfE in advance of the May Board meeting.</p>	<p>SMT</p>
<p>13. Employment Bill - Early Conciliation Business Case (Paper 2/16)</p> <p>Board members noted the content of the Early Conciliation Business Case and the initial queries raised by DEL.</p> <p>The CEO reported that the Employment Bill has now received Royal Assent. An implementation date of May 2017 for Early Conciliation is anticipated.</p>	<p>CEO/DCA</p>
<p>14. Any Other Business</p> <p>Chair to follow up invitation to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for the Economy to meet the Agency Board.</p>	<p>Chair</p>
<p>15. Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Agency Board will take place on Thursday, 19th May 2016 at 10.00 am in the Agency’s offices, 2-16 Gordon Street, Belfast.</p>	<p>Secretariat</p>