

**MINUTES OF THE 372nd MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY
BOARD HELD AT
10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2011
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, GORDON STREET, BELFAST**

Present: Jim McCusker (Chair)
Peter Williamson
Brenda Maitland
Trevor Morrow
Gary McMichael
Sally McKee

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

1. Apologies Action

There were apologies from Lyn Fawcett, Alison Millar, Gordon Parkes, Neal Willis and Penny Holloway.

The Chairman welcomed newly appointed Board Member, Gary McMichael, to his first LRA Board Meeting.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 24 November 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2011 were proposed by Peter Williamson, seconded by Brenda Maitland, and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

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

3. 7.5 SROI Feasibility Report

It was noted that the DAS had contacted the Department but nothing further has been received regarding the SROI business case. The CEO agreed to contact DEL after the meeting.

CEO

5.2 MoU LRA/Tribunals

It was noted that no response has been received from the Tribunal Office regarding the draft MoU. The CEO is to contact the Tribunal Office with a view to arranging a meeting for early in the New Year.

CEO

It was also noted that a Tribunal Reform consultation document had been received from the Department of Justice (DoJ). The Board is to consider a draft response 26 January 2012 for submission to the DoJ by 31 January 2012.

CEO/DCA

6.4 Industrial Court MoU

It was noted that the CEO and DCA will be meeting Industrial Court Representatives on 13 February 2012.

4. Chairman's Business

4.1 Declarations of Interests

No interests were declared by members.

4.2 Board Member Training

No training reported.

Details of future 'On Board' training for new Board Members were provided to Gary McMichael.

4.3 Board Development Programme

It was noted that a seminar, facilitated by the Agency, on the future NI employment relations agenda would be held on 16 February 2012. Proposed speakers had been contacted but the venue had yet to be confirmed. It was agreed that a strategic approach to employment relations should be discussed at a future Board meeting.

CEO
Chair/CEO

It was noted that the Chairman and Brenda Maitland (Vice-Chair) had submitted a number of points to the Department regarding the terms for the appointment of the Certification Officer and that the substance of these points had been accepted by the Department.

With regard to Board member training, it was noted that the DCS would forward details to members of a CIPFA Striving for Excellence course.

DCS

Members discussed the Chairman's paper on the skills and knowledge of Board Members. It was agreed that the paper with appropriate adjustments should form the basis of a letter to the Department. It was also agreed that a Board Away Day would be arranged in March to discuss the employment relations agendas and Board development. Dates to be considered were 15, 16 or 21 March.

Chair/CEO

4.4 LRA Response to Programme for Government

One minor amendment to the tabled draft response was agreed before submission to the Department. The omission in the draft document of employment relations was considered a serious weakness.

CEO

4.5 Senior Civil Service (SCS) Pay Strategy 2008

Board members noted the Chairman's confirmation of receipt from DEL/DFP of approval for the implementation of the SCS Pay Strategy 2008.

Chair/DCS

5. Audit Sub-Committee Meetings

5.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 June 2011

The minutes of the Audit Sub-Meeting held on 15 June 2011 were ratified by the Board.

5.2 Meeting held on 8 December 2011

The Chair of the Audit Committee provided a summary of the key matters covered.

On IS/IT, work is progressing on two key fronts:

- a) the project to improve the resilience and functionality of the existing ICMS system where the system is to be upgraded by mid January; and
- b) the provision of a business case for IS Managed Services which is to be with DEL by the end of December.

**DCS
DCS/CEO**

The Audit Committee has arranged to receive a progress report on these issues on 26 January 2012.

DCS

The Audit Committee had accepted that progress on risks underlying the new Equality Scheme would be incorporated in the Committee's evaluation of risk at each meeting. However, the Audit Committee was of the view that it should also be advised of general monitoring compliance and have submitted the relevant reports from these exercises as they arose.

DCS

In respect of its self assessment, the Audit Committee noted that updated training was necessary for its members in respect of the control environment required in relation to fraud and in the requirements of the Bribery Act.

DCS

The report was noted.

6. Chief Executive's Business

6.1 Bi-Monthly Management Report April – December 2011

After discussion, the report was noted.

6.2 Cross Directorate Activities

The overview report on cross directorate working was noted and considered very encouraging.

6.3 Risk Register

It was noted that the risk register had been endorsed by the Audit Committee. After discussion on risk scores, it was agreed that Peter Williamson would raise the review of scoring at the next Audit Committee meeting.

PW

6.4 Review of Arbitrator Recruitment Process

Following discussions on the SMT review of the recruitment process for Arbitrators, it was agreed that the appointment process had been a worthwhile exercise. The follow-up programme of work to revise the recruitment strategy in advance of a future recruitment exercise was endorsed.

CEO/DCA

6.5 Statutory Generic Arbitration Scheme

It was noted that the legislation to introduce the Scheme, being progressed by DEL, is on target, with a view to an effective date of 11 April 2012.

Following discussion it was agreed that the Agency proposal that the provision for appeal on an arbitrator's award on a limited number of grounds to be heard by the Industrial Court should be raised, by the Chairman, with the DEL Minister.

Chairman

6.6 Replacement of ICMS

This subject was discussed at 5.2 above - report of the Audit Committee Meeting of 8 December 2011.

6.7 Promotion of Pre-Claim Conciliation

It was noted that promotional work is ongoing.

DCA

6.8 DEL Review of Dispute Resolution in NI

(i) DEL Advisory Group

It was noted that the revised draft of the Group Terms of Reference would be shared with the Board when available.

(ii) Others Matters

Nothing to report.

7. Corporate Correspondence received relevant to Board

7.1 Letter from the National Association of Head Teachers expressing appreciation of the contribution an ERM had made to the NAHT conferences.

The contents were welcomed by the Board.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business reported.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held in Gordon Street, Belfast on Thursday, 26 January 2012 at 10.00 am.