

MINUTES OF THE THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY SIXTH MEETING OF THE
LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT 10.00 am
ON THURSDAY, 12 MAY 2011
IN THE AGENCY'S OFFICES, 2-16 GORDON STREET, BELFAST

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

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 was an apology from Penny Holloway.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 24 March 2011

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

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

4.5 Agency Public Lecture 2011

It was noted that Jackie Orme, CIPD was not available to give the lecture on 19 October. It was agreed that CEO would contact John Philpott, Chief Economist at CIPD who has been recommended as a possible speaker.

CEO

6.2 Audit Committee Meeting held on 10 March 2011

- Concern had been expressed at the risk identified with the Individual Case Management System. It was noted that the CEO, DCA and DCS had held a lengthy teleconference debate with Keith Myson and Keith Johnston, ACAS on 25 March to discuss the possible adoption of the ACAS IC system by the Agency.

Noting the high level of risk to the system Board members stressed the need for a resolution to this problem as soon as possible. The CEO agreed to bring a paper with proposals to the next Board Meeting in June.

CEO

11. Presentation to Mr Eric Johnston

The Chairman read out a letter from Eric Johnston expressing his thanks for the presentation made to him last month to mark his retirement from the Agency.

Presentation on DEL/ADR Project

Mark McAllister, ERM, presented an update on the DEL ADR facilitation project. Following a question and answer session with Board Members, the Chairman thanked Mark and expressed appreciation for his work on the project. The Chairman looked forward to a report on the completion of the project.

DAS

4. Chairman's Business

4.1 Declarations of Board Member Interests

Register of Interest forms were distributed to Board Members for signature. Lyn Fawcett declared that he had been appointed a Governor of the University of Ulster.

4.2 Board Vacancy – update

It was noted that the advertisement for LRA Board Member vacancies had been placed in local newspapers. Short-listing takes place on 1 June and interviews 28/29 June.

4.3 DEL and LRA Draft Budgets 2011-15

It was noted that the Chairman and CEO will be meeting with Alan Shannon, Permanent Secretary, on 23 May 2011 at 2.00 pm regarding the LRA budget 2011-15. It was proposed and agreed that three Board Members would also attend, namely Lyn Fawcett, Brenda Maitland and Neal Willis.

**Chairman/
CEO**

It was noted that the Agency budget 2011-12 had not been confirmed. After discussion it was agreed that the deputation consider the impact of a reduced budget at a pre-meeting 18 May commencing 4.30 pm. The deputation would also meet prior to the meeting with Alan Shannon at 12.30 pm on 23 May in the LRA.

CEO

4.4 Agency Public Lecture 2011

Refer to Para: 3.4.5 above.

4.5 Board Member Training

The Chairman reported on two CIPFA courses which he had recently attended – “Government Priorities & Spending Plans” and “Reducing Bureaucracy, Maximising Efficiency & Maintaining Accountability”.

It was noted that Board Members interested in any future CIPFA Training Courses should ring CIPFA for more details of the course and then contact Anne Gunning for booking arrangements.

It was noted that CEF have provided several dates for Board member governance training workshops. After discussion on the proposed topics it was agreed to pursue “*Facilitation on Board Performance*”.

DCS

4.6 Attendance at UK Conferences 2011

Attendances at Annual Conferences were agreed as follows:

CBI Conference	21 Nov	London	Brenda Maitland (provisional)	
CIPD	8-10 Nov	Manchester	Gordon Parkes	
TUC	w/c 11 September (to be confirmed)		Sally McKee	Secretariat
International Agencies	4-9 Sept	Cardiff	Chairman/CEO	
*Conference only	7-8 Sept	Cardiff	Peter Williamson Brenda Maitland or Sally McKee	

5. Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee Meeting

5.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2011

The minutes were ratified by the Board.

5.2 Finance & Personnel Sub- Committee Meeting held on 24 March 2011

The Chairman gave a verbal report on the meeting providing details on each item discussed. The report was noted by Board members.

6. Informal Joint Audit Committee/Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee Meeting

The Chairman of the Audit Committee indicated that (1) the Annual Report and Accounts were being progressed to target and (2) ICMS had been informally discussed as a matter of importance.

7. Chief Executive’s Business

7.1 DEL Review of Agency – Quarterly Update

CEO agreed to send copies of the prior report to Board Members. The submitted report was noted.

CEO

7.2 Launch of LRA Disciplinary & Grievance Code

It was noted that the launch on 4 April 2011 had been very successful. There had been an excellent attendance. It was also noted that the feedback on the Code had been very positive.

7.3 Charging for Agency Services

Board Members discussed the issue of the Agency charging for services. It was noted that under financial rules the income generated through service charges would not accrue to the Agency. It was also acknowledged that small firms tended not to be in favour of charging.

CEO

Following discussion it was agreed that the CEO contact DEL in order to clarify the conditions and the approval processes required for the introduction of charging. Board Members also agreed with the proposal to run a workshop for the Board/SMT to establish a more detailed understanding of ACAS' commercial experience and intent and to review in more detail the implications of charging for Agency services.

CEO

7.4 DEL/ADR Project

This subject was discussed above at Para: 3. 11.

7.5 SROI Feasibility Report

The Board discussed the SROI scoping study report prepared by Karl Leathem of Lodestar and agreed to undertake a predictive SROI study.

CEO/DAS

7.6 Whistleblowing - named Board Member

Following discussion it was agreed that the Chair of the Audit Committee would be the named Board member under the Agency Whistleblowing policy.

CEO

7.8 DEL Review of Dispute Resolution in NI

(i) Employment Bill

It was agreed that this item could be removed from the Board agenda.

(ii) DEL Advisory Group

It was noted that the Advisory Group had met on 11 May. The group had supported DEL in taking forward, initially on a research/gap analysis basis, (1) developing employment relations information and advice and (2) small firms support.

(iii) Others Matters

There are no other matters at present.

7.9 DEL ALB Review

Nothing further to report.

7.10 RPA

Nothing to report.

7.11 Equal Pay

It was noted that the 2009 pay settlement has been implemented. It was also noted that concern has been expressed by staff at the considerable delay in the process which they claimed had caused detriment in respect of National Insurance payments. The CEO indicated that a number of individual grievances were, at this point in time, stayed.

CEO

8. Corporate Correspondence Received Relevant to Board

8.1 Letters dated 31 March and 6 April from Employment Relations Policy & Legislation Branch, DEL re Employment Act (NI) 2011 (C.13) and explanatory notes

Contents noted.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 CIPFA Training Bulletin – June 2011

Contents noted.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held in Room 1, Gordon Street, Belfast on **Friday, 24 June 2011 beginning at 9.30 am.**

11. Presentation to Mrs Elizabeth Carr

The Chairman made a presentation on behalf of the Board to Elizabeth Carr on the completion of 25 years with the Agency on 3 March 2011.