

**MINUTES OF THE 410th MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT
10.30 am ON THURSDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2015
IN THE REGIONAL OFFICE, 1-3 GUILDHALL STREET, LONDONDERRY**

Present: Marie Mallon (Chair)
Sally McKee
Alison Millar
Albert Mills
Jill Minne
Daire Murphy
Gordon Parkes

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

Action

The Chair welcomed Board members to the Agency's Regional Office and indicated that following the meeting there would be an opportunity to meet with staff and a number of local representatives. Invitations had been issued to local business people and trade unionists to join the Board for lunch in order to showcase the work of the Agency. Members were provided with a brief profile of the staff in the Regional Office along with a regional profile and a list of those who would be attending lunch.

The Chair went on to formally announce that the liP assessor had recommended the Agency should be granted gold status. The Agency would be one of a small number of organisations in Northern Ireland to receive the gold standard and it was great testimony to the management team and staff to achieve this. An impromptu celebration had taken place with staff last Wednesday and the Board's congratulations conveyed to staff. There would a further opportunity for the Board and staff to celebrate this achievement in the future, perhaps at the staff conference. Consideration would be given as to how to convey the result to stakeholders. It was noted that a new platinum standard had now been introduced and the Agency would have the opportunity to go forward to this standard in three years' time. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, formally thanked the management team and staff for their hard work and input to the assessment.

CEO

The Chair then advised Board members that the Agency had also been successful in achieving the new ISO 27001 standard. . The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Senior Management Team and Paul Herink, IT Manager, for the considerable amount of work which they had carried out in preparation for the assessment.

CEO/DCS

It was agreed that the achievement of both awards was a good foundation for the Agency to build upon.

Notification had been received from DEL that Louise Crilly and Michelle McGinley had been appointed to the Board with effect from 1 November 2015. Louise Crilly

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<p>was a practising lawyer and was appointed as an independent member. Michelle McGinley was a qualified solicitor and was appointed as an employer representative. The two new members would replace Gordon Parkes and Sally McKee who would reach the end of their terms of office in December. Arrangements would be made for the Chair and CEO to meet the two new members in the near future. They would also be invited to the AGM/public meeting/lecture in November.</p> <p>The Chair formally congratulated Alison Millar who had agreed to become Vice Chair of the Agency when Sally McKee ended her tenure at the end of December. In her capacity as Vice Chair Alison would also take on the role of Chair of the Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee. In relation to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee, Deirdre Fitzpatrick had agreed to take on the role of Chair at the end of Gordon Parkes tenure as a Board member and Chair of that Committee. The Chair thanked both the incoming and outgoing Board members for their participation in discussions and for serving and supporting each other.</p>	<p align="center">Ch/CEO/Sec</p>
<p>1. Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from Deirdre Fitzpatrick, Pauline Shepherd and Gary McMichael.</p>	<p align="center">Secretary</p>
<p>2. Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>There were no interests declared.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of 24 September 2015 Meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2015 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	<p align="center">Secretary</p>
<p>4. Matters Arising from 24 September 2015 minutes</p> <p>4.5 Board Sub-Committees</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that Gary McMichael had accepted the role of Chair of the Research Committee. A meeting of the Research Committee had been arranged for Thursday, 17 December at 9.30 am (prior to the Board meeting).</p> <p>A meeting of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee had been arranged for 3 December at 2.30 pm. The next meeting of the Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee would be held on 26 November, in the Spires Conference Centre, commencing at 2.00 pm.</p> <p>5.3 Annual Report/Accounts</p> <p>The annual public meeting will take place on Thursday, 26 November in the Spires Conference Centre, commencing at 11.30 am. The meeting will be preceded by a Board workshop commencing at 9.30 am with presentations on ICMS and the CIPFA governance standard. Following the public meeting Kieran Mulvey, CEO of the Workplace Relations Commission, RoI will deliver the annual lecture. The Chair and CEO would be issuing an invitation to Kieran to join them for dinner on 25 November; there may be an opportunity for Board members to join them.</p> <p>6. Budget Performance to end August 2015</p> <p>In line with the Board's request that the Chair and CEO seek an early meeting with Derek Baker, DEL Permanent Secretary, a meeting has been arranged for Wednesday, 4 November to discuss restructuring and integration of government departments, the non-introduction of the Employment Bill and the recent Tribunal</p>	<p align="center">CEO/DAS/Sec</p> <p align="center">CEO/DCS/Sec</p> <p align="center">Ch/CEO/Sec</p>

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<p>opportunity to promote the Agency and the importance of good industrial relations.</p> <p>The Chair and CEO also attended the FSB 30th Anniversary dinner which provided a good networking opportunity.</p> <p>The Chair, CEO and members of the SMT and staff had attended the UU Business Support Clinic on 15 October. The DAS explained that the Agency, along with Belfast City Council, UU Small Business Unit, the Health & Safety Executive, the Equality Commission, DEL and Invest NI had been asked to participate in the event which had been organised by UU Small Business Unit. The event had been chaired by Judith Cochrane, MLA and addressed by Arlene Foster, Minister for Enterprise, Trade & Investment who had spoken about showcasing the work of all the agencies involved. Those attending had been representative of small businesses mainly seeking advice on finance, employment relations and marketing. The event had provided an opportunity to promote the Agency which had been represented in 3 areas of the clinic. It was recognised that it was important to have information available for different sizes of business. The Agency was working in partnership with the other agencies involved and was trying to strengthen its relationship with INI, particularly at an operational level. A meeting had been arranged to look at other areas of joint working particularly in times of reduced budgets.</p> <p>The Agency was also in contact with local government academic development officers. It was recognised that local councils had more power in academic development. Jill Minne indicated that Belfast City Council was developing an investment portal which she would be happy to discuss with the DAS.</p> <p>The CEO reported that he and the DAS met with representatives from Belfast Metropolitan College around building an employment relations model into vocational courses. It was agreed to develop a model on a pilot basis from January 2016 with a view to embedding a more substantial input in the new academic year. The CEO suggested meeting with Marie Therese McGivern and DEL to discuss further. Also mentioned meeting Gavin Boyd to discuss an input into LLW curriculum/teaching young people about the Agency and employment relations matters. The Agency was working with the Electrical Contracting Industry explaining their rights as employers, responsibilities as employees and their rights as an employer if they start a small business; introducing apprentices into the world of work and building this into the curriculum. This would now be rolled out to further education. The Agency was keen to have an employment relations model recognised and incorporated into the school/further education curriculum and would be raising this with the new department.</p>	<p>DAS</p> <p>BM/DAS</p> <p>CEO/DAS</p>
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<p>6. Budget Performance to end August 2015 (Paper 22/15 – updated)</p> <p>A substantial discussion took place at the Board meeting in September when Board members were advised that because of the threat of a 10% cut the Agency was not filling staffing gaps and set out potential underspend. The current paper reflected the position to the end of September and the measures which were being put in place to fill staff vacancies. Decisions were still required around the Board away day, governance standards and a staff conference which would impact on the budget. Dependent on the pay round the Agency may have to undergo an equal pay audit. The SMT were looking at expenditure on fixtures and fittings and on renovating the Belfast office, the signage and CCTV. An upgrade to IT networking could not be made fully functional until the Regional Office premises are upgraded. The Agency website was being replaced at a cost of approx. £10K. The Agency was about to commence an audit of records management. The Board agreed that the actions being taken were in line with Board priorities.</p> <p>With regard to premises the CEO met with Colm Boyle of Land & Property Services who was sending a District Valuer out to look at the premises. An assessment of rent and projected property values and rental values would be prepared. It was noted that a rent review was due. It was agreed to keep the Board apprised of the situation.</p>	<p>Ch/CEO</p>
<p>7. Business Plan Performance Report (Paper 24/15 - updated)</p> <p>The CEO presented the updated 2015/16 Business Plan Performance Report indicating that the Agency was on target for the vast majority of objectives with some targets already met. There was difficulty in terms of progressing some targets due to the Employment Bill not being introduced. Further work had been completed on a resources paper around early conciliation; another issue was the feasibility of the introduction of neutral assessment. The CEO and DCA will follow up on the Agency's input to the DEL review of the Statutory Arbitration Scheme. As reported earlier work was progressing work in terms of developing links with the FE sector. It was intended to invite Andy Cook to the next meeting of the Roundtable to inform members of the work of the ERI.</p> <p>Directors also provided updates on specific areas, notably the Agency's success with liP and ISO accreditation. The liP assessors report would provide some direction with the HR Strategy while the ISO accreditation indicated that the Agency had a robust environment for computerised records. Some concern still existed around paper records and the Agency is about to embark on a records management audit.</p> <p>The DCA and ERM are scheduled to deliver a presentation on early conciliation at a Solicitors Conference in November and would take the opportunity to get feedback and highlight the issues which should be considered. The Conciliation section was currently experiencing an increase in all of its services. The section was currently working with some staff vacancies due to budget constraints but the DCA was hopeful that this would be resolved in the near future. There would also be some changes to staff and a restructuring of the management team but the focus was on delivering services. The section was on target to embed Phase 1 of ICMS. The internal audit of the section had been postponed until February due to an on-going review of operational guidelines. The DCA also reported on her recent visit to Acas where the focus this year was on trying to increase productivity through good employment relations which the SMT had discussed.</p> <p>The DAS reported that for the first time this year he had a full complement of staff in</p>	<p>CEO/DCA</p> <p>CEO</p> <p>CEO/DCS</p>

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<p>11. Carecall Report (Paper 27/15)</p> <p>The CEO reported that he had agreed with TUS that the Carecall report should be provided to the Board for information purposes. TUS had requested that the Agency adopt the recommendations in the report and agree an action plan to be taken forward. The Agency had undergone a very positive process around lIP and coaching and the CEO wished to take the report forward positively. The CEO will be attending team meetings to discuss the report and was positive that an action plan would be agreed with TUS. It was noted that the report was historical. The Board needed to ensure that the action plan was being addressed and all recommendations implemented.</p> <p>It was agreed to take the report forward through the JNCC and that the Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee should receive regular updates on the progress of the action plan.</p>	
<p>12. Employment Law Update</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the update.</p>	
<p>13. Any Other Business</p> <p>None.</p>	DCS/Sec
<p>14. Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Agency Board will take place on Thursday, 26 November 2015 at 9.30 am in the Spires Conference Centre, Assembly Buildings, 2-10 Fisherwick Place, Belfast. The meeting will take the form of a Board workshop and will be followed by the annual public meeting and annual lecture.</p>	Secretariat

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