

**MINUTES OF THE 457th MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD HELD AT
10.00 am ON THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2020
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

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

In Attendance:	Tom Evans	Chief Executive, (CEO)
	Don Leeson	Director, Corporate Services (DCS)
	Mark McAllister	Director, Employment Relations Services (DERS)
	Alison Wolfe	Minute Secretary
	Sarah Livingstone	Boardroom Apprentice

Members of the Board met 'in-camera' prior to the formal commencement of the meeting.

<i>Action</i>	
1. Apologies Apologies: Michelle McGinley.	
2. Conflicts of Interest No conflicts of interest declared.	
3. Chair's Opening Remarks The Chair welcomed Sarah Livingstone, the 2020/21 Boardroom Apprentice, to her first Board meeting. Sarah has already met her Board mentor, Michelle McGinley, had meetings with the Chair and SLT members and attended the most recent Finance & Personnel Committee and ARAC meetings. Sarah thanked everyone for the welcome and support she has received to date. As a newly qualified solicitor, she chose the Agency as she has a very keen interest in employment law. The Chair congratulated Don Leeson on his success in the recent CEO recruitment exercise. The Chair undertook to update the CEO on the discussions at the in-camera session. Don thanked the Board and said he was thrilled and privileged to be trusted with custodianship of the Agency. The Chair thanked the interview panel and HR team who worked very hard in challenging circumstances to complete the appointment process.	Chair

<p>The Chair reported that Board vacancies are likely to be advertised at the end of October with interviews held during January or February 2021. New Board members may not start before April, which may require a further extension to the tenure of some existing Board members.</p> <p>The Chair went on to reflect that Covid-19 continues to present difficult challenges and expressed her appreciation to SMT and staff for continuing to deliver services and support each other.</p> <p>The Chair outlined the agenda for the meeting, followed by a corporate planning workshop.</p>	<p>Chair</p>
<p>4. Chief Executive's Update</p> <p>The CEO welcomed Sarah to her first Board meeting. On behalf of the SLT he congratulated Don on his appointment and thanked the panel for their work.</p> <p>He went on to highlight the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Avril Alexander and Neill Wallace to join SLT for 4 months from October; ✚ The second Leadership Development Programme started; ✚ Acas has issued a joint statement with CBI on the potential tsunami of redundancies; ✚ Susan Clews, CEO Acas, wants to discuss the work of the NI Engagement Forum; ✚ WRC have cancelled some of their face-to-face services as a result of the spike in Covid-19 cases; ✚ DfE oversight meeting next week, CEO will seek DfE guidance on corporate planning and budget pressures/in-year bids; ✚ DfE EC Project Board meeting next week to discuss first year evaluation; ✚ CEO has confirmed with DfE that the Agency still requires Covid-19 bid to be met; ✚ HR survey has established staff working pattern preferences; no-one wants to return to the office full-time, more flexible working resonates with everyone; ✚ Social Media presence increasing, starting to put out posts on Facebook and LinkedIn targeting under-represented groups identified through the awareness survey; ✚ ICT – Civica progressing work on Phase 3 but some challenges remain for employers and their representatives in using our portal. <p>The Board noted the content of the Chief Executive's update.</p>	<p>CEO</p> <p>CEO</p> <p>DCS</p>
<p>5. Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting (1 September) (BP01-09/20)</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee (F&P) reported that Sarah Livingstone had attended the Committee meeting on 1 September and then presented the report from that meeting.</p>	

<p>He highlighted the presentation by a staff member on the proposals from the ERG Reward and Recognition group. The Chair of F&P acknowledged the importance of recognising the work of staff but was concerned that a number of the proposals have a financial element that could contravene NICS rules and good governance.</p> <p>Alison Millar declared a conflict of interest in this item.</p> <p>The Board agreed that it could not take any decision on the proposals until there is a clear understanding of what NICS rules allow in terms of reward and recognition. Chair stated that it was important to manage staff expectations and that the proposals may stray beyond what is allowable for public sector employees.</p> <p>CEO undertook to seek clarity on the issue and bring a paper back to the Board; Jill Minne agreed to provide a contact from her pay and reward team.</p> <p>The Chair of F&P also referred to a report prepared by HR on 2019 recruitment that identified the need to increase diversity. The report recommended that a Diversity Champion is nominated to lead this work on behalf of the Board. The Chair of F&P agreed to revisit that report and bring a firm proposal back to the Board.</p> <p>The Board noted the content of the report.</p>	<p>CEO Jill Minne</p> <p>Chair of F&P</p>
<p>6. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Meeting (14 September) (BP02-09/20)</p> <p>The Chair of ARAC highlighted a number of issues from her report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ IS Managed Services – approval to extend contract for another year; ✚ Head office dilapidations treated as a contingent liability. DCS has advised that this could be up to a year's rent; ✚ IT Manager reviewing the efficacy of all ICT platforms particularly from a security risk; ✚ NIAO comments added to RTTCGW; ARAC Chair to amend wording of her report to reflect in-camera discussion; ✚ ASM appointed as internal auditors; three-year audit plan approved with TOR for individual audits to be cleared by ARAC; ✚ Register of Policies indicates that by December 2020 all policies will be up-to-date. <p>The Chair of ARAC congratulated the DCS and his team for the work in updating all of the policies.</p> <p>The Board noted the content of the report.</p>	<p>Chair of ARAC</p>
<p>7. Disability Action Plan (Paper BP03-09/20)</p> <p>In presenting the Agency's Disability Action Plan, the CEO thanked Gary for his support to all of the staff involved in the development process, with special thanks from Patricia Coulter and the HR team.</p> <p>Gary said the DAP is an example of how an initiative benefits from strong staff engagement.</p>	

<p>The Chair thanked Gary for his input as the Agency's Health and Wellbeing Champion.</p> <p>The Board noted the content of the paper.</p>	
<p>8. Any Other Business</p> <p>None.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>
<p>9. Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Agency Board, Thursday, 29 October 2020 at 10.00 am by videoconference.</p> <p>Following the Board meeting, there will be an online meeting with the Equality Commission.</p> <p>While there is currently no facility to send hard copy Board papers, Board members asked to feedback any concerns around meeting arrangements.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>