

LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM HELD AT 10.00am ON 15 MARCH 2022 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Present:	Don Leeson	Chief Executive (Chair)
	Paul Lowe	Director of Corporate Services
	Fionn Davey	NIPSA Branch 180 Chair
	Elaine Clarke	Employment Relations Manager (ERM)
	Mary O'Brien	Employment Relations Manager (ERM)
	Alison Wolfe	Minute Secretary

Apologies: Mark McAllister
Pamela Robinson

The Chief Executive welcomed Elaine Clarke and Mary O'Brien to their first SLT meeting under the 'Give SLT a Go' initiative.

It was noted that this is Alison Wolfe's final SLT formal meeting before retirement. The SLT acknowledged the huge contribution made by Alison and thanked her for her 39 years of service to the Agency.

Declarations of Interest: no conflicts of interest were declared.

1. Minutes from the Senior Leadership Team meeting held on 15 February 2022

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting (paper SLT 01-03/22) held on 15 February 2022 were agreed for publication on the Agency's website subject to the following revision:

"4.3 The Director of Corporate Services provided an update on plans for the migration of the IT server environment to the Regional Office and the need to co-ordinate this in a way that avoids any loss of IT services in Head Office. Separate discussion to be arranged between the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, and the IT Manager to agree timeline."

Action: Secretary

2. Actions arising from the previous minutes

- 2.1 The Agency awaits the WRC report on the International Agencies virtual conference (paragraph 2.3 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).

2.2 An update on disability awareness training for staff will be provided at the April 2022 SLT meeting (paragraph 2.10 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).

Action: Chief Executive/Secretary

2.3 It was noted that places are still available for the next cohort of the Leadership Development Programme. Directors were reminded to encourage staff, particularly those in more junior grades, to participate in the Programme (paragraph 2.12 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).

Action: Directors

2.4 The Chief Executive will seek an update from the Communications Manager about progress with contacts in learning area networks to discuss providing information to young people about their employment rights (paragraph 2.14 of the minutes of the last meeting refers).

Action: Chief Executive

2.5 It was noted that other actions listed in the minutes will be dealt with under Directors' Updates.

3. Chief Executive's Update

3.1 The Chief Executive reported on recent meetings with NIPSA and NASUWT to discuss the future of the Independent Appeals Service. A meeting with the Arbitration Secretaries will be scheduled to discuss next steps.

Action: Secretary

3.2 A special JNCC is scheduled for 30 March 2022 to receive feedback from the Trade Union Side (TUS) on the draft Hybrid Working Policy.

3.3 It is likely that the Agency's employment relations conference will now not take place until February 2023 because of scheduling venue availability with that of key note speakers.

Action: Chief Executive

3.4 Following allocation of a budget, consideration will be given to recruiting a secretariat to the Roundtable.

Action: Chief Executive

3.5 The outcome of an Independent Appeals Hearing associated with an internal grievance is awaited.

Action: Chief Executive

3.6 It was noted that the Board has agreed that the Agency will set its budget for 2022-23 based on forecast requirements, rather than the baseline. Additional bids for funding will be submitted as part of June Monitoring. This allows current temporary staffing arrangements to be retained where required. Directors are arranging for effected staff members to be informed of how this impacts on them individually.

Action: Directors

3.7 The draft budget for 2022-23 will be presented to the May 2022 Board meeting.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

3.8 Preparation of the Annual Report and Accounts for 2021-22 to commence.

Action: Chief Executive/Secretary

4. Directors' Updates

4.1 Directorates provided updates on current activities.

4.2 Action to reduce the backlog of independent appeal hearings will be discussed at the meeting with the Arbitration Secretaries (see 3.1 above).

Action: Chief Executive/Director of Employment Relations Services

4.3 An update on promoting the Employment Documentation Toolkit will be provided at the next meeting.

Action: Director of Employment Relations Services

4.4 The Director of Corporate Services reported progress in completing outstanding work on CMRS and the transition to new support arrangements.

4.5 It was noted that the formal transition process to IT Assist is underway, with arrangements being made to move contingency servers into an IT Assist datacentre. It was further noted that potential security clearance time lags have been overcome. An update in respect of the business case for this work, including the upgrade to Office 365, will be sought from the IT Manager.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

4.6 In light of a delay to the refurbishment of James House, relocation has been postponed until 15 August 2022. However, momentum in terms of preparation will be maintained. It was noted that the Accommodation Project Manager met with Translink in relation to travel options available to staff. Information sessions will be arranged in due course.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

- 4.7 The Business Support Manager reported on preparations for the forthcoming Customer Service Excellence re-assessment.
- 4.8 The internal communications framework was discussed at SMT and the Employment Relations Group (ERG); feedback from ERG consultation with staff is awaited.
- 4.9 Dignity at Work training is being designed, alongside a review of the policy. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Champion and Women's Network will be involved in the preparation of these. The TUS Chair congratulated the EDI Champion for her work on the Agency's successful application for the Diversity Mark Bronze award.
- 4.10 The Director of Corporate Services is revising the Service Level Agreement between the Agency and the Certification Office. Consultation will take place with the Certification Officer and a regular process established to review the Agreement.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

5. Transformation Update

- 5.1 The Chief Executive reported on the Leadership Development Alumni event held on 14 March to discuss transformation. Feedback from participants indicated that the timing for staff to engage with the transformation programme is too soon; staff are focused on hybrid working and relocation. It was noted timing will be critical in terms of further engagement. Next steps in the transformation process will be discussed at an SLT workshop on 26 April 2022.

Action: Chief Executive/Directors

- 5.2 It was noted that there has been only limited contact to date with the consultant engaged to support the process review. The Director of Corporate Services will follow-up on this.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

- 5.3 A paper will be prepared for the March 2022 Board regarding the transformation programme.

Action: Chief Executive

6. Board Matters

Actions arising from the last Board meeting

- 6.1 The SLT noted the actions arising from the last Board meeting (paper SLT 02-03/22).

Preparation for the next Board meeting

6.2 The key agenda items for the March 2022 Board meeting were noted (paper SLT 03-03/22). The Chief Executive thanked Directors for their comments on transformation paper.

6.3 The draft Business Plan 2022-23 will be submitted to DfE for informal comment before being presented to the Board meeting.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

7. People Matters

7.1 The SLT noted the HR Metrics (paper SLT 04-03/22).

7.2 The continuing impact of Covid-related and other staff absences on services, and arrangements to mitigate this, were noted.

7.3 Preparations for the staff health and wellbeing week are progressing.

7.4 Terms of reference for ERG have been amended to allow for a two-year term. Staff have been asked for expressions of interest in joining ERG.

8. Business Plan Performance Report for the period ending 28 February 2022

8.1 The SLT noted the Business Plan Performance Report (paper SLT 05-03/22).

8.2 It was agreed that, as the March 2022 Board meeting will be on the last day of the financial year, and given the volume of more pressing agenda items, the Business Plan Performance Report will not be presented at this meeting, but will be available on request. The year-end outturn will be reported in the draft Annual Report and Accounts, which will be presented at the next Board meeting.

9. Finance Matters – Management Accounts for the period ended 28 February 2022

9.1 The Director of Corporate Services presented the Management Accounts for the period ended 28 February 2022 (paper SLT 06-03/22).

9.2 It was agreed that, as the March 2022 Board meeting will be on the last day of the financial year, and given the volume of more pressing agenda items, the Management Accounts will not be presented at this meeting, but will be available on request. The year-end outturn will be reported in the draft Annual Report and Accounts, which will be presented at the next Board meeting.

10. Corporate Risk Register

10.1 The SLT noted the Corporate Risk Register (paper SLT 07-03/22).

10.2 A revised Corporate Risk Register format will be presented to the March 2022 Board meeting for approval. A risk workshop is being organised with ARAC and SMT focusing on the new Risk Register.

Action: Chief Executive/Secretary

11. Any Other Business

11.1 None.

12. Date of Next Meeting

12.1 The next formal SLT meeting will be on 12 April 2022 at 10.00 am, by videoconference.

Action: Secretary