

MINUTES OF THE 479TH MEETING OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY BOARD
HELD AT 21 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 1.00PM
AT LABOUR RELATIONS AGENCY, 2-16 GORDON STREET, BELFAST, BT1 2LG

Present: Gordon Milligan (Chair)
Mark McAllister - Acting Chief Executive
Geraldine Alexander
Clare Duffield
Deirdre Fitzpatrick
Kevin McCabe
Michelle McGinley
Daire Murphy
Jill Minne
John Taylor
Lee Wilson

In Attendance: Paul Lowe Director of Corporate Services
Christine Magill Boardroom Apprentice
Oliver Murray Executive Assistant
Claire Webb Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Michelle McLaughlin Employment Relations Manager

Apologies: Don Leeson Chief Executive

This was a hybrid meeting, with some Board members attending in person and others by videoconference.

Board members met 'in-camera' prior to formal commencement of the meeting. The key points from this discussion are recorded at agenda item 1, where appropriate.

Declarations of Interest: None.

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed **Claire Webb**, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, who will be giving a presentation on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and **Michelle McLaughlin**, Business Support Manager, who is also on the Boardroom Apprentice programme with Supporting Communities and this will give her a "compare and contrast" opportunity between the two boards.
- 1.2 The Board expressed their best wishes for Chief Executive **Don Leeson**, who is currently on leave due to medical reasons.

Mark McAllister, Director of Employment Relations Services, will be the acting Chief Executive in Don's absence.

- 1.3 The Chair remarked on the recent Business Eye Awards, where the Agency was represented by members of staff and the Board, and sponsored the Employer of the Year award, which was won by Lidl NI.

2. Minutes of Previous Board Meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2022 (paper BP01-11/22) were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and for publication on the Agency's website.

Action: Executive Assistant

3. Action Points from Previous Board Meetings

- 3.1 The Chief Executive introduced the progress report on actions from previous Board meetings (paper BP02-11/22), which was noted by the Board.

- 3.2 The Chief Executive noted that a follow-up was made with DfE regarding the draft Partnership Agreement. This matter was discussed at the Oversight and Liaison meeting on 11 November 2022. DfE has indicated a revised draft will be available for review by the Agency in the coming weeks. This issue will be raised at the ARAC meeting on 5 December 2022.

Action: Chief Executive

- 3.3 The Chief Executive reported that there is progress on current cyber security protections, with a local supplier on NCSC's list being contacted. Costings and timetable are being awaited.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

- 3.4 The Chief Executive reported that Counsel opinion is being sought on proposals in respect of the Agency's future role in facilitating independent appeals. The legal advice will be reported to the Board when received.

Action: Chief Executive

4. Chief Executive's Report

- 4.1 The Chief Executive presented the report (paper BP03-11/22), which was noted by the Board.
- 4.2 Progress on developing 10X framework was noted, the acting Chief Executive will be attending a workshop with DfE on incorporating aspects of the 10X framework into future business plans.

Action: Chief Executive

5. EDI Strategy Presentation

- 5.1 Claire Webb presented the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which has been developed to support delivery of the Agency's Corporate Plan 2021-25 (paper BP04-11/22).
- 5.2 Detailed discussions took place regarding the information presented in the report, including the underpinning rationale for deciding which EDI categories to engage with as part of the outreach programme.

Action: Chief Executive

6. Employment Relations Roundtable/NI Engagement Forum Future

- 6.1 The Chief Executive presented the report on the future of both the Employment Relations Roundtable and NI Engagement Forum. Board members were referred to the report by Richard Johnston (paper BP05-11/22).
- 6.2 It was noted that meetings for the NI Engagement Forum do not happen regularly, as the group was set up over the Covid-19 pandemic, which has now eased significantly.
- 6.3 A summary of the results of the Roundtable survey were examined, this focused on the opinions of key stakeholders (including Roundtable and/or Forum members and senior Government officials) on the way forward.
- 6.4 The results showed that stakeholders were generally in favour of continuing an Agency-facilitated forum. Potential for expansion, to include other sectors was discussed.
- 6.5 The Board approved the report.

Action: Chief Executive

7. Finance and Personnel Committee – Report on the Meeting held on 1 November 2022

- 7.1 The Chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee presented the report on the Committee meeting held on 1 November 2022 (paper BP06-11/22), which was noted by the Board.
- 7.2 The Knowledge Management function, which has been in place for just over a year now, is moving from strength to strength. A presentation showcasing this was given by **Patricia Coulter** at the most recent Committee Meeting.
- 7.3 Appreciation was given to the work of Diane Edgington as Accommodation Project Manager, the Accommodation Project team and all staff involved in the move to James House.
- 7.4 An update on the James House move was given – with an IT systems test taking place on 28 November 2022.

8. Business Plan Performance Report for the Period Ended 31 October 2022

- 8.1 The Business Plan Performance Report for the period ended 31 October 2022 (paper BP07-11/22) was noted by the Board.
- 8.2 Trends in the biggest issues brought to the Agency were noted. This will be something that the Agency will be paying attention to over the coming months.
- 8.3 The likelihood for industrial action in sectors such as Nursing and Health generally, as well as Education and other public services were noted.
- 8.4 James House site visits for staff are going well, with staff impressed with the new building. IT tests for model office environment will be conducted on the week commencing 28 November 2022.
- 8.5 Plans for the upcoming staff conference on 24 November were discussed and a verbal report will be given to the November Board.

Action: Acting Chief Executive

9. Management Accounts for the Period Ended 31 October 2022

- 9.1 The Management Accounts for the period ended 31 October 2022 report (paper BP08-11/22) were noted by the Board.

10. Review of the Meeting

10.1 Board members confirmed that they were content with the papers, discussions and decisions taken at the meeting.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 No other business was noted.

12. Dates of Next Meetings

12.1 The next Board meeting will be on 15 December 2022, with James House confirmed as the location.

Action: Executive Assistant