

Summary Minutes of Fourth Meeting of the EPA – RPII Merger Working Group (MWG)

Location: RPII Offices, Clonskeagh

Date: 1 May (9.30am – 12.30pm)

In attendance:

- Dr. Brian Cawley, IPA, Chair (BC)
- Ms. Laura Burke, Director General, EPA (LB)
- Dr. Ann McGarry, Chief Executive, RPII (AMG)
- Fiona Quinn, Principal Officer, DECLG (FQ)
- Terry Dunne, Principal Officer, DECLG (TD)
- Dr. Matthew Crowe, EPA (MC) (via video conference)
- Beatrix Aigner, DECLG (Secretariat)

1. Introduction to papers by Chair of PG (via VC)

It was acknowledged that the excellent cooperation between the members of the PG and the good working relationship that has been established formed an important part of the successful working of the PG. BC thanked the Chair and the PG and Secretariat for the work that was done on the revision and finalisation of the papers presented to the MWG.

On the papers, the Chair of the PG stated the following:

Communications Paper – The actions arising from this paper are being implemented.

Accommodation Paper – Implementation of actions has commenced as well, the key issue being the consultation with staff and unions.

Finance Paper – Main challenges are the different systems for financial management in place in the EPA and RPII, and the mid-year date of the merger in mid-2014, with the key focus on the processes and policies rather than just the systems.

IT Paper – MC pointed out that there has been a long standing interaction between the two organisations in this area. He described the paper as very detailed, covering a whole range of issues and providing commentary on all of them, and pointed out that significant resources are required for discharging some actions. The key communications issue is the phone system with the EPA are currently looking at replacing their system.

HR Paper – The PG had looked at the categorisation as requested and a new section was inserted regarding the process for reallocation of functions within the merged organisation which should be relevant to the consultation process. MC considered that proactive management would play an important role.

Board/Governance Paper – MC pointed out that work on this Paper was being finalised.

2. Updates

i. Progress on name of merged entity

It was noted that an options paper on the name of the merged organisation was being prepared for submission to senior management in DECLG / Minister, for final decision.

ii. Update on draft legislative provisions

Work on the merger legislation was progressing. Also, the imminent Miscellaneous Provisions Bill which will include two heads with regard to the merger, an amendment for the fifth Director and an addition to the list of expertise to be considered in the appointment of EPA Directors (to include reference to radiological expertise). The Group agreed to record that the absolute intention was to have the merger completed and implemented from 1 July 2014.

iii. Consultations/Other

The RPII has commenced consultation within the framework of Partnership meetings. The EPA consulted via the intranet and provided a questionnaire on the actions for discussion at Partnership. The EPA is also consulting directly with the union and with the regional management in the Dublin office.

It was recorded that a new Assistant Secretary, Mr. Ger Deering, had been assigned to DECLG's Finance and Central Services Division with effect from 1 May.

3. Discussion on:

3.1 Draft Finance Paper

The MWG agreed that this paper was well set out. The content of the paper, including the Action Plan, was discussed in detail, particularly issues such as the potential for efficiencies and shared services, the travel and subsistence system, payroll systems, binding contracts, and the estimates process. Arising from this discussion, it was agreed to request the PG to address a number of issues and revise the paper in certain areas.

3.2 Draft ICT Paper

The MWG agreed that this paper was well set out. It was agreed that the actions should be prioritised by the PG according to their importance/impact. It was further agreed that the narrative, the level of detail, and the rationale behind recommendations needs to be developed in certain areas of the paper. It was agreed to provide feedback and queries on a number of issues to the PG and to request them to prepare a further draft of the paper

4. HR and Governance Papers

The MWG Secretariat will make any additional changes to the HR and Governance papers, as agreed at the MWG meeting and circulate them to the PG as finalised papers. Separate consultation papers on both topics will be prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the HR managers in each organisation. Consultation on these Papers with staff/ unions will then be progressed by the EPA and RPII and with other Departments, as necessary, by DECLG

5. AOB

With regard to the Draft Action Plan, it was agreed to ask the PG to prepare a first draft, incorporating the actions from the various papers, a narrative surrounding the actions and also incorporating a risk assessment, for the next meeting.

It was also agreed to ask the PG Chair to outline at the next MWG meeting a summary of the work outstanding and a timeframe for completion.

6. Next Meeting

28 May, 2 – 5pm, DECLG, Custom House, Withdrawing Room