

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

Location: DECLG, Custom House

Date: 7 March 2014 (10.00 – 12.00)

In attendance:

- Mr. Dave Walsh, Assistant Secretary, Environment Division, DECLG (DW) (Chair)
- Ms. Laura Burke, Director General, EPA (LB)
- Dr. Ann McGarry, Chief Executive, RPII (AMG)
- Ms. Emer Connolly, Principal Officer, DECLG (EC)
- Mr. Paul McDonald, Principal Officer, DECLG (PMD)
- Ms. Majella Byrne, EPA (MB) (items 2 and 3, via video conference)
- Mr. Jim Hurley, EPA (JH) (items 2 and 3, via video conference)
- Ms. Beatrix Aigner, DECLG (Secretariat)

Apologies: Micheál Ó Cinnéide, EPA

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the 11th meeting of the MWG were approved and the MPG was asked to publish them on the websites of both organisations.

2. Feedback and Update from Merger Project Group Project Manager via VC Link

The Chair invited MB to update members on the progress of the MPG on the High Level Implementation Plan and the Risks to the Merger.

i. High Level Implementation Plan

MB reported that all actions were on track and six had been completed so far. Good progress is being made across the thematic areas.

HR - The MPG provided an update on the CORE HR Project and a paper on the review of the Superannuation Schemes for consideration by the MWG.

With regard to the review of corporate resources MB advised that the aim is that structures should be finalised by the end of March.

Finance – Action 2 has been completed and the status will be changed to ‘complete’.

A paper was submitted by the MPG on Action 8 on the transitioning of budgets for questions and comments by the MWG.

Accommodation – Work is proceeding with regard to the provision of a single reception.

ICT – All actions are on track and work on Action 9 has commenced.

ii. Risks to the Merger

MB advised that the MPG reviewed the risks at their meeting on 12 February and addressed the issues raised by the MWG. No new risks have been identified to date and another review will take place at the next MPG meeting on 12 March.

The MWG queried the timeframe for consultations with staff on the review of HR policies and grading structures and next steps and timelines, in particular in relation to timing of consultation with staff, are to be identified and communicated with DG EPA/ CEO RPII. Areas of similarity should be communicated as soon as possible to staff.

With regard to Risk 5, it was suggested that the MPG consider whether there should be a separate risk relating directly to a harmonised grading structure, and to review the actions identified to mitigate this risk and ensure that these were sufficient.

3. Updates

i. Legislation

DW informed the Group that, at a recent meeting between the Secretary General, DECLG, and the Chief Whip and Chief Parliamentary Counsel to discuss Departmental legislation, it had been confirmed that the merger legislation is regarded as the Department's Number 1 legislative priority. The Radiological Protection (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (incorporating terms of Amendment of the CPPNM) now includes all the primary legislative provisions relating to the merger and will be brought forward separately to the Environment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

PMD advised that DECLG hopes to close off any outstanding issues on the merger legislation early next week and arrange a meeting with OPC to discuss an advanced version of the Bill. It is planned to get Government approval on the legislation before the Easter break.

ii. Finance

The MWG noted the paper on budget transition and management (Finance Thematic Action 8) and asked for the Action to be marked complete.

CEO of RPII will advise the RPII Board, at its next meeting on 19 March, regarding the intention to present the bi-monthly management accounts to the EPA Board.

The MWG also noted the Merger Cost update to end of February.

iii. HR

MB advised the MWG that the CORE HR Project was on track.

JH gave a brief summary of the paper on the review of the Superannuation Schemes (HR Thematic Action 2). There are three options to address the issue of what superannuation scheme(s) should be in place for staff post-merger:

- Option 1 - Create a completely new Superannuation Scheme for the post-merger EPA
- Option 2 - Continue existing Superannuation Schemes
- Option 3 - Transfer all RPII staff to the EPA Staff Superannuation Scheme

The MWG agreed to endorse Option 2 as the preferred option and the most acceptable and easiest to implement. DW suggested that a formal letter should issue to DECLG from DG EPA/CEO RPII, advising that the merged organisation intends to continue with the existing Superannuation Schemes, and DECLG would liaise as necessary with DPER on the matter. It was also suggested and agreed that, once this letter had been received and considered by DECLG, both organisations would advise staff on the issue.

It was agreed that JH should prepare the draft letter to DECLG.

4. Directions to MPG

It was agreed to ask the MPG to:

- Publish the minutes of the 11th MWG meeting on the websites of both organisations.
- Update the High Level Implementation Plan as follows:
 - Finance Action 2: Mark as complete.
 - Finance Action 8: Mark as complete.
 - HR Action 1: Next steps and timelines, in particular in relation to timing of consultation with staff, are to be identified and communicated with DG EPA/ CEO RPII. Areas of similarity re HR policies and procedures should be communicated as soon as possible to staff.
 - HR Action 4: Reporting comments should be broadened. Review of existing grading structures and promotions policies needs to be progressed and discussed between management in EPA/ RPII and DECLG in first instance and then will require discussions with DPER and staff/ Unions. Next steps and timelines, in particular timing of consultation with staff, are to be identified and communicated with DG EPA/ CEO RPII. Areas of similarity should be communicated as soon as possible to staff.
- Risks & Issues Log:
 - Risk 5 - MPG is asked to review the actions to mitigate this risk and ensure the actions are sufficient, and to consider whether there should be a separate risk relating directly to a harmonised grading structure.

The MWG noted the paper on transitioning budgets and the update on the CORE HR Project prepared by the MPG.

CEO of RPII to discuss the bi-monthly accounts with RPII Board at meeting on 19 March.

The MWG approved Option 2 of the Superannuation Review and asked the MPG/JH to draft a letter to DECLG advising that the merged organisation will continue the existing Superannuation Schemes.

5. AOB

No issues were raised under AOB.

6. Future meetings of the MWG

Friday, 4 April 2014, DECLG, 10.30 – 12.30

Friday, 2 May 2014, DECLG, 10.00 – 12.00