

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

Location: DECLG, Custom House

Date: 9 June 2014 (14.00 – 17.30)

In attendance:

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

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the 14th 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 Chair and Project Manager

The Chair invited MOC 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

MOC reported that work across all thematic areas is well advanced, with 14 actions now completed and all others on track.

Board/Governance – it was suggested and agreed to revise the reporting comments on item 5 to reflect requirement for actions beyond the enactment of the Merger legislation.

HR - The MPG submitted papers on HR Action 1a - Phase 1 HR Policy Review, HR Action 1b - Phase 2 HR Policy Review and HR Action 4 – Grading Structures for approval by the MWG.

Finance – The MWG agreed that in item 1b the delivery date should be amended to 30 June 2015.

MOC asked the MWG to note the Merger Implementation Cost Statement to the end of May as 59% of the budget has now been spent or committed which is an indication of the high level of activity. He advised that in the HR area the allocated budget would not be fully spent.

Accommodation – MOC suggested that in item 3b the date should be split into interim and long-term deliverables. This was agreed by the MWG.

The MWG agreed to ask the MPG to review the High Level Implementation Plan with regard to revising the action lead/ownership arrangements post-merger.

ii. Risks to the Merger

MOC advised that the MPG at their last meeting identified and added a risk under item 9 to reflect the potential for the quality of relationships in the merged organisation to be impacted by delays in addressing employee relations issues.

Further to discussion, the MWG agreed to ask the MPG to reflect the broader risk regarding delivery of statutory functions and business in the merged organisation in addition to the risks to the quality of relationships in the Risk Event and Outcome.

The MWG agreed to change the likelihood on item 1 - delay in merger legislation - from “medium” to “low”.

3. Updates

i. Legislation

PMD informed the MWG that the Radiological Protection (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2014 has now been published. The Second Stage will be introduced on Thursday 12 June and the Bill is expected to proceed to Committee Stage the week after. He confirmed that the legislation is on track for finalisation and enactment by mid-July 2014.

He suggested setting the official Merger date for 1 August and the MWG agreed to this.

ii. HR

The MWG noted the paper and the progress on HR Action 1a - Phase 1 HR Policy Review and approved the “Next Steps” outlined in the paper, subject to the addition of the extra step as outlined in the discussion.

The MWG noted the paper on HR Action 1b - Phase 2 HR Policy Review and approved the “Next Steps” outlined in the paper, agreeing that dates should be included at the last three points in the table.

The MWG noted the points made in the paper on HR Action 4 - Grading Structures and agreed harmonising of the merging organisations to the EPA’s integrated grading structure using the principle of proximity of salary maxima as the criterion.

With regard to Technician grades, while recognising that it is the aim to harmonise, and ultimately integrate, these grades against the EPA integrated scale, Level 1 to Level 6, the MWG acknowledged that outstanding matters remain to be considered and resolved, and in the short term, agreed that Technician grades would remain within the Technician grading structures, pending further examination by the HR Thematic Group of further options on harmonisation with a view to reporting back to the MWG within 6 months. Further to discussion, the MWG confirmed that educational requirements for progression could be waived for existing staff, i.e. Lab Technician (RPII), and directed that such clarifications be reflected in the relevant staff notes to be circulated.

It was noted that, following the merger, any and all future appointments will be made to current EPA grade levels.

The MWG directed the HR Thematic Group to prepare a staff note on grading issues, for circulation to the MWG by 24 June for comments/sign-off by 27 June, with the aim of issuing this paper to staff in parallel with the outcome of Phase 1 HR Policies.

iii. Finance

The MWG noted the Merger Cost update to end of May and the underspend in the HR area.

4. Directions to MPG

It was agreed to ask the MPG to:

- Publish the minutes of the 14th MWG meeting on the websites of both organisations.
- Review the High Level Implementation Plan with regard to:
 - Board/Governance – revise reporting comments on item 5 to reflect requirement for actions beyond the enactment of the Merger legislation,
 - Financial Matters – in item 1b, amend delivery date to 30 June 2015,
 - Accommodation – with regard to item 3b, split the date into interim and long-term deliverables, and
 - Revising the action lead/ownership arrangements post-merger.
- Revise the Risks & Issues Log to:
 - Change the likelihood on item 1 – delay in merger legislation from “medium” to “low”, and
 - With regard to item 9, in the Risk Event and Outcome, reflect the broader risk regarding delivery of statutory functions and business in the merged organisation in addition to the risks and impacts arising from the quality of relationships.
- HR
 - Insert suggested dates at points g, h and i in the “Next Steps” table outlined in HR Action 1b - Phase 2 HR Policy Review.
 - Arrange for the HR Thematic Group to prepare a staff note on grading issues, for circulation to the MWG by 24 June for comments/sign-off by 27 June, with the aim of issuing this paper to staff in parallel with the outcome of Phase 1 HR Policies.

5. AOB

No issues were raised under AOB.

6. Future meetings of the MWG

Friday, 11 July 2014, DECLG, 10.00 – 12.30