

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND AUTHORITY FOR UTILITY REGULATION (THE 'AUTHORITY') HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 8 APRIL 2020 BY TELECONFERENCE AT 11.00 A.M.**

**Present:**

Bill Emery (Chairman), Jenny Pyper (Chief Executive), Jon Carlton, Alex Wiseman, Teresa Perchard, David de Casseres, Claire Williams

**In attendance:**

SMT – Donald Henry, Tanya Hedley, Kevin Shiels, Colin Broomfield, Roisin McLaughlin, John Mills, Elaine Cassidy, Greg Irwin

Ian Campbell (agenda items 4 and 5), Sarah Brady and Patricia Stewart (agenda item 6)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 None.

1.2 The board convened to consider three items prior to a board advisory forum meeting.

**2. FIRE DRILL**

2.1 The board was informed of the evacuation procedures which apply in the event of a fire.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 None.

**4. COVID-19 OUTBREAK ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW**

4.1 Jenny Pyper introduced this item which provided an overview of action taken to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2 The board was apprised of steps taken to support all staff to work remotely during the period of restriction. Activities initiated to ensure that there was effective communication with external stakeholders and staff were also outlined. The board was also briefed on the governance arrangements introduced to effectively oversee the organisation's work, principally through daily leadership team meetings.

4.3 Each of the Directors then provided an overview of key COVID-19 issues arising in their part of the organisation and the actions taken. In terms of the key issues these included: arrangements to support vulnerable consumers to access utility services during the pandemic, the potential for rising levels of consumer debt, financial risks impacting on utility companies and the impact of the pandemic on the operation of generators and the markets. The board noted the extensive engagement of the executive team in a range of fora established to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The board also took the opportunity to clarify and comment on the range of issues raised.

4.4 In noting overall the potential impact on workstreams it was agreed that a review of Forward Work Programme projects and timings would be necessary with a paper to be presented at the next meeting of the board.

4.5 The board expressed its gratitude for the comprehensive overview and the extensive work undertaken to date by all staff in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **5. COVID-19 BUSINESS CONTINUITY ARRANGEMENTS**

5.1 The board was also provided with a briefing on business continuity arrangements.

5.2 The focus of the discussion was on information management requirements in the context of all staff working remotely. Board members were also apprised of government guidance regarding access to networks.

5.3 The board noted the briefing and expressed support for ongoing efforts to optimise staff access to the network and asked for a further update regarding any significant issues as soon as possible.

## **6. NISEP REVIEW**

6.1 Sarah Brady introduced this item which provided an update on the NISEP review and sought the board's endorsement on next steps.

6.2 Board members discussed the outcome of the review and, in particular, the proposed short and medium terms changes around quality monitoring and innovative approaches and in respect of the off gas grid area. The wider strategic context and the timing of a further extension was also discussed.

6.3 The board approved extending the NISEP scheme until 2025 which would enable the Department for the Economy time to consider alternative energy efficiency provision in the context of developing and implementing its energy strategy. The intention to also consult on changes to the NISEP framework document was also endorsed.

6.4 There being no other business, the board meeting concluded and a meeting of the board advisory forum was convened.