



Business Planning meeting

Annual audit of OCSC work on senior competitions

Information papers

Draft Disability Discrimination (NI) Order

1998 Code of Ethics appeal

Dates of Future Meetings

Attended: Commissioners: Mrs J Eve (Chair), B Carlin, Mrs M Elliott, A Henry, S McDowell, J Steele. Secretariat: J McKeown (Secretary), Mrs J Dowling, Mrs E McKnight, P Lavery.

Agreed as drafted.

The recently appointed Commissioner for Public Appointments NI met with Commissioners to effect introductions and discuss their respective roles.

Decided that, due to time constraints, this item should be put back to November 05 for detailed consideration. Secretariat to arrange for an independent person with expertise in the field to facilitate the discussion and advise Commissioners.

Commissioners considered requests from DHSSPS for approval to extend three secondments originally made as exceptions to the merit principle. They noted that additional information was awaited from DHSSPS. On the information available, Commissioners decided the three secondments should be regarded as transitional i.e. falling within 3 months of introduction of their revised Recruitment Code on 20 June 2005, but that no formal decision would be made until they were in receipt of the information requested from DHSSPS.

Commissioners considered a draft Code of Practice prepared by the Secretariat. Whilst agreed in principle, the Secretariat was asked to obtain a specimen Declaration of Interests Register for urgent consideration. It was agreed not to take a formal decision on the issue of open meetings, pending appointment of four new Commissioners in 2006.

Commissioners shared their experiences to date in this new role. It was agreed they should give further consideration at their Business Planning meeting in November to agreeing, collectively, their expectations in relation to the chairing of senior competitions.

Main findings and recommendations noted. Report approved, subject to any amendments necessary arising from the ongoing factual accuracy check with departments.

Commissioners noted with pleasure the positive feedback comments received on their recently published report.

Noted the findings of the assessment exercise carried out by the Secretariat to establish whether it was necessary to carry out a full Equality Impact Assessment of the Commissioners' appeal function under the NICS Code of Ethics. Concluded that the appeal function and related policies had no significant implications for equality of opportunity and, therefore, that a full EQIA was not necessary.

Paper considered and endorsed. Commissioners noted that summary minutes of their meetings were now available on the website. They instructed that the website should carry also a link to the NICS Code of Ethics, together with the names and contact details of their Secretary and Deputy Secretary.

Proposed Agenda agreed.

Programme and agenda agreed for the Commissioners' meeting on 17 October 05 with the Commission for Public Service Appointments.

Agreed to resume the programme of meetings with NI departmental Permanent Secretaries. Secretariat to arrange.

Topics for discussion to include: managing risk and preparation of a Risks Register; chairing senior competitions; and strategic objectives for the 06/07 Business Plan.

Mrs Eve agreed to conduct this audit on behalf of the Commissioners.

Noted

Commissioners considered additional proposals for a draft Disability Discrimination (NI) Order issued for consultation by OFMDFM: as a designated public authority, they would be subject to the provisions of the Order. It was the opinion of Commissioners that significant elements of a duty proposed by the Order would have no relevance to their role and responsibilities. The Secretariat was instructed to advise OFMDFM of this opinion, and to request OFMDFM to consider whether the proposed new duty was universally applicable to all public authorities in NI, without consideration of their individual responsibilities.

Noted an extract from the Annual Report of the NI Audit Office which referred to progress on NIAO recommendations on a case the Commissioners had dealt with in 1998 as a Code of Ethics appeal.

Noted: visit from the RoI Commission for Public Service Appointments - 17 October 05; Business Planning meeting - November 05; next Business meeting - December 05.