

## COMMISSIONERS' BUSINESS MEETINGS: MINUTES

<b>19-Sep-06</b>	Attended: Commissioners: Brenda McLaughlin (Chair), B Carlin, Mrs M Elliott, A Henry, S McDowell, J Steele. Apology: Mrs R Laird. Secretariat: J McKeown (Secretary), Mrs J Dowling (Deputy), P Lavery.	
<b>Agenda</b>		
1. Introduction		The Chairperson paid tribute to Margaret Elliott and John Steele, who were standing down as Commissioners in the near future, and wished them well for the future. Seconded by the Secretary on behalf of the secretariat. Mrs Elliott and Mr Steele conveyed their appreciation of the sentiments expressed.
2. Minutes of Meeting held on 30 May 2006		Agreed as drafted.
3. Matters Arising	Matrix detailing action on points arising from the previous meeting	Noted
	Article 55 Report	The Secretary advised that this Report had not been published.
	Proposed meeting with the Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission	Mr Collins has agreed to meet the Commissioners over lunch at one of their Business meetings. Secretariat to write formally inviting him to the next meeting in November 2006. <b>Action:</b> Secretariat
4. Chairperson's meeting with DFP		Chairperson reported that the meeting had been positive and constructive.
5. Senior Appointments	Protocol on use of consultants	Amended draft Protocol considered. Commissioners felt paragraphs 15-20 required further clarification. Secretariat to re-draft taking account of Commissioners' comments and return to Commissioners for comment/agreement. <b>Action:</b> Secretariat
	Chief Executive, NHS (GB)	Commissioners noted the process followed in making this appointment.
	Issues from Recruitment/Interviewing training 31 July 06	Commissioners agreed that the list compiled by the secretariat covered the issues raised on the training day.
	Update on Senior competitions	Current status noted.
6. Audit Programme	Merit Lists in Volume Competitions	Preliminary findings from the audit were considered. The draft final report will be available from the auditors by the end of September at which stage it will be sent to Departments for factual accuracy check. Commissioners agreed to discuss the final report at their next Business meeting in November.

Feedback Audit update	Commissioners were advised that departments had agreed the factual accuracy of this report. It had been made final and issued to departments at the end of June 06. A letter accompanying the report had emphasised that the Commissioners expected to see action on the recommendations in the report and would be seeking a progress report from departments in December.
ToR for 'Attracting Candidates' audit	Draft ToR agreed by Commissioners. The audit will commence at the beginning of October.
7. Amendment to Commissioners' General Regulations 2005	Commissioners were agreed that the General Regulations required amendment to reintroduce an exception (removed in the 2005 Regulations) permitting a civil servant to be reinstated, but limited to a situation where a civil servant had resigned to pursue parliamentary candidature or membership. Secretariat to take appropriate action to amend the General Regulations and the Recruitment Code. <b>Action:</b> Secretariat
8. Update on departmental requests to make appointments as exceptions to the merit principle	Noted. It was noted also that further requests may arise in the context of implementation of the Review of Public Administration.
9. Review of the Risk Register	Commissioners agreed that a 4th potential cause, that of "insufficient training", should be added to Risk 1 (i.e. NICS appointments not made in accordance with the merit principle). They also agreed that Risks 4 and 7 should be transposed, as should Risks 8 and 9. Secretariat to make the desired amendments. <b>Action:</b> Secretariat
10. In-Year Reviews	Commissioners content with progress against objectives in the Business Plan, Communications Strategy, Good Relations Strategy and the Training & Development Strategy. Potential budget pressures of £48k were noted for the current financial year, mainly in respect of increased accommodation costs. This had been brought to the attention of the Office's sponsor division within the NIO. Commissioners agreed to support any bid for additional resources which may become necessary.
11. Launch of the NICS Code of Ethics	Commissioners agreed that the Chairperson should write to the Permanent Secretary, DFP. <b>Action:</b> Chairperson
12. Commissioners' 2005/06 Annual Report	Noted acknowledgements/comments from recipients.
13. Any Other Business Forthcoming Meetings	Draft agendas considered for forthcoming meetings with the Permanent Secretary Group (PSG) and the UK Civil Service Commissioners. Commissioners to advise the secretariat of any additional items they felt should be included. <b>Action:</b> Commissioners/Secretariat.

Update of Section 75 reviews by the Equality Commission	The Equality Commission advise that feedback on the 5-year review of the Commissioners' Equality Scheme should be received from the Commission in November 2006. It is also likely that all public authorities will be invited to a seminar in December 06 at which general feedback from the 5-year review will be provided.
Business Planning Day	Venue to be settled by the secretariat bearing in mind availability, cost and parking facilities. <b>Action:</b> Secretariat.
Information Papers	Noted
14. Dates of future meetings	Meeting with UK Commissioners, October 06; meeting with full PSG, PSG sub group and the next Commissioner Business meeting, November 06; and Commissioners' Business Planning day for 07/08, December 06.
15. Working lunch with RIR representatives	Representatives of Rights and International Relations Division, OCSC's sponsor division in NIO, joined the Commissioners for a working lunch. It was agreed to establish a more formal management arrangement between RIR and OCSC. RIR will forward a framework for OCSC consideration. Commissioners were assured that such a framework would not encroach on their role or function or affect their independence. Similar meetings to take place annually and RIR and OCSC representatives to meet on a more regular basis. <b>Action:</b> RIR/OCSC.