

<b>11-Apr-06</b>	Attended: Commissioners: Mrs J Eve (Chair), B Carlin, Mrs M Elliott, A Henry, S McDowell, J Steele. Secretariat: J McKeown (Secretary), Mrs J Dowling (Deputy), Mrs E McKnight, P Lavery.
<b>Agenda</b>	
1. Introduction	The Chairperson noted that this was her last meeting as Chair as she was retiring from office on 30 April 2006.
2. Minutes of Meeting held on 14 February 2006	Agreed as drafted.
3. Matters Arising Risks Register	Commissioners noted a report summarising the 2005/06 end of year position. Discussed and agreed risks for 2006/07; these will be reviewed regularly throughout the year.
4. Thematic Audits Audit on Feedback Processes	Considered preliminary findings from the audit. The draft audit report should be available by end April when it would be sent to the relevant Departments for factual accuracy check.
Audit on Use of External Recruitment Agencies	The report was now with relevant Departments and Agencies for factual accuracy check.
5. Approach to Auditing under the revised Recruitment Code	Advised that the secretariat had met a representative of the Commissioners' auditors and, subsequently, DFP to conclude a satisfactory agreement on the approach to auditing under the revised Code. Future audits will focus on how the NICS has performed against the Commissioners' expectations as set out in the revised Code.
6. 2006-2007 Audit Programme	Agreed two issues to be audited in 2006/07 - (1) Management of Merit Lists in Volume Competitions; and (2) Attracting Candidates to Apply for NICS Posts. Item (2) requires further work to develop both methodology and terms of reference. Secretariat to address and Commissioners to consider prior to commencement of this audit.
7. Five Year Review of the Equality Scheme	Draft report agreed without further amendment. Secretariat to finalise and send to the Equality Commission. Report to be posted on the Commissioners' website.
8. Good Relations Strategy	Draft endorsed without amendment. Strategy to be placed on the website and kept under review.
9. Business Planning (end year review Business Plan 05/06)	A successful and productive year. Commissioners were gratified that so many objectives had been achieved.
Communications Strategy 05/06	Agreed that the Strategy had helped to raise the Commissioners' profile.
Training and Development Plan 05/06	Noted. Training received by Commissioners in relation to chairing senior competitions to be recorded in the Plan.

10. Code of Ethics		Mrs Elliott and Mr Steele were thanked for their work in formulating responses to the consultation exercises being run by the Cabinet Office (on the GB Civil Service Code) and DFP (on the NICS Code of Ethics). Concern that the new procedure allowing appeals to be made direct to the Commissioners may have resource and staffing implications.
16 Any Other Business	Exceptions to the Merit Principle	Request from DHSSPS to extend three secondments. Two were granted extensions to 30 June 06. Further information on the third application suggested the person may have been appointed under the merit principle therefore Commissioner approval may not be necessary. DHSSPS to take legal advice.
	Induction of new Commissioners	Commissioners considered a draft Induction Pack prepared by the Secretariat. Agreed a dedicated Induction Day for new Commissioners in June 2006.
	Nationality	Update. Lord Lester of Herne Hill has introduced to Parliament a Bill which includes changes to the nationality requirement. It is likely the Bill will fall but Cabinet Office may take the lead in the 2nd session of Parliament. That could predicate a resolution of the nationality issue within the next two years.
	Commissioners' new Website	Commissioners satisfied with the content and format of their new website.
	Commissioners' Annual Report	Commissioners were advised that, following a tendering exercise, a contract had been awarded to print the 2005/06 Annual Report. Views were expressed on four sample cover designs. Secretariat to liaise with the contractor.
17. Dates of future meetings		Next Business Meeting: May 2006. Induction Day for new Commissioners: June 2006. Meeting with Permanent Secretary Group (PSG), June 2006.
18. Tribute to Judith Eve, CBE		On behalf of the Commissioners, Mrs Elliott paid tribute to Mrs Eve for her work as both Commissioner and Chairperson over the years. She wished Mrs Eve well for the future. Seconded by the Secretary on behalf of the secretariat.