

COMMISSIONERS' BUSINESS MEETINGS: SUMMARY MINUTES

27-Mar-07		Attended: Commissioners: Brenda McLaughlin (Chair), Brian Carlin, Dame Joan Harbison, Alan Henry, Ruth Laird, Alan Lennon, Sid McDowell. Secretariat: Joanne Dowling (Deputy Secretary), Ena McKnight, Paul Lavery.
Agenda		
1. Introduction		The Chairperson welcomed Dame Joan's return after her recent accident. Dame Joan thanked everyone for their kind wishes and for the flowers she had received during her recovery. The Commissioners noted the transfer of one of their Secretariat, Helen McLarnon, to the Youth Justice Agency. They acknowledged Helen's contribution over the past few years and asked that their appreciation be conveyed to her together with their best wishes for the future. The Commissioners acknowledged the high standard of papers produced for their meetings by the Secretariat, especially in light of the continuing vacant Secretary post. The Chairperson advised Commissioners that Tom Frawley, Northern Ireland Ombudsman, and his deputy, John McQuarrie, would be joining them for a working lunch to discuss issues of mutual interest.
2. Minutes of Meeting held on 6 February 2007		Agreed as drafted.
3. Matters Arising	Matrix detailing action on points arising from the previous meeting	Position noted
4. Restricted eligibility of current and former NICS employees		Noted that the Chairperson and Deputy Secretary had met with CPG on 27 February to discuss Commissioners' concerns on this issue. It was agreed the matter would be discussed further at the next meeting with CPG to be held on 28 Mar 07. Action: Commissioners/Secretariat
5. Disability Action Plan: application for exemption		Receipt of the application has been acknowledged by the Equality Commission.
6. Senior Appointments	Tied Scores	Commissioners considered a draft policy to deal with tied scores prepared by the Secretariat. Agreed subject to two amendments. Policy to be forwarded to CPG for comment. Action: Secretariat
	Update on Senior Appointment competitions	Current status noted
	Update on SCS secondments made as exceptions to the Merit Principle and from the RPA-affected group	Noted that five appointments had been approved.

7. Business Planning	2006/07 End of Year Reports	Considered documents detailing anticipated end of year position against the targets and objectives for 2006/07. Commissioners expressed approval of the progress made.
	Business Planning 2007/08	Commissioners approved the following documents - Business Priorities for 2007/08, Statement by Chairperson; 2007/08 Business Plan; 2007/08 Communications Strategy; 2007/08 Training and Development Strategy; and 2007/08 Risks Register. All documents to be placed on the website from 2 April 2007 and a press release issued to inform the public that the documents were available. Action: Secretariat
8. Audits	Attracting Candidates audit and Diversity sub-group findings	Diversity sub-group members were thanked for their helpful and thorough analysis of the Attracting Candidates audit. A draft letter to the Permanent Secretary, DFP, to accompany the final report once it had been cleared for factual accuracy, was agreed. Action: Secretariat.
	2007/08 Audit Programme	Commissioners were advised that a new audit contract was currently out to tender; it was expected the new contract would commence in early May 2007. Two audits were agreed for the 2007/08 programme: (1) to quality assure action taken by the NICS to address findings and recommendations in previously completed audits; and (2) to examine selection processes deployed by the NICS, including the format and content of job and person specifications. Secretariat to consult with CPG on the 2007/08 audit programme. Action: Secretariat.
	Commissioners' audit of SCS appointments approved by the Secretariat	Dr Lennon advised the Commissioners that he had carried out the annual audit of the Secretariat's approval role in senior competition. There had been no direct compliance issues but he had made a few suggestions to improve procedures. Action: Secretariat. The Chairperson suggested it would be helpful for Commissioners chairing senior competitions to have a checklist of all points the Chairperson must confirm with the panel, and/or record, at the end of the selection stage (Stage C) of a competition. Secretariat to produce a suitable proforma. Action: Secretariat.
9. Equality Scheme Implementation Plan		Commissioners noted, and were content with, progress against the Equality Scheme Implementation Plan. It was noted that a review of the Commissioners' Equality Scheme would be necessary on receipt of guidance from the Equality Commission. It is anticipated the guidance will be available in June 2007.
10. Budget update		Commissioners considered and noted a report detailing OCSC's anticipated end of year position for 2006/07.

12. Any Other Business	Meeting with CPG 28 March 2007	Commissioners considered the topics on the agenda for the meeting and agreed lead roles. Action: Commissioners.
	Links meetings	Noted.
	HRConnect meeting with Capita	Commissioners noted that the HRConnect project would be implementing the recruitment and selection function in early summer 2007. Agreed to meet Capita as soon as possible to learn how the scheme will operate and seek assurances that the new service provider will adhere to the Recruitment Code and maintain the Merit Principle as required by the Commissioners. Action: Secretariat.
	Meeting with the Public Appointments Service	Commissioners agreed that the meeting had been very useful. They had been very interested in the PAS' research and development of several areas of good practice in the recruitment and selection process.
	Reimbursement of travelling expenses	A letter had been received seeking Commissioners' views on the NICS policy not to reimburse travelling expenses to candidates attending tests and/or interviews. Agreed that this was properly a matter for DFP, in line with their responsibility for management and control of the NICS, and not an issue for the Commissioners. Draft response approved for issue to applicant. Action: Secretariat.
	Information Papers	Noted.
13. Dates of future meetings		Meeting with CPG 28 March 2007; Diversity Training 30 March 2007; next Business Meeting 17 May 2007; Age Discrimination Training, early June 2007; Meeting with CPG, early June 2007; next Business Meeting, end June 2007. Meetings with PSG sub-group and with Capita re HRConnect to be confirmed. Action: Secretariat.
14. Working lunch with Tom Frawley, Northern Ireland Ombudsman		General discussion of areas of mutual interest. Discussed also the Ombudsman's procedures for handling complaints. It was agreed the Secretariat would contact Mr McQuarrie to explore more fully the procedures and processes used by the Ombudsman's Office. Action: Secretariat.