

**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**SUMMARY RECORD OF MEETING**

**BUSINESS MEETING 24 JANUARY 2017  
STORMONT HOUSE BUNGALOW CONFERENCE ROOM**

**ATTENDEES:**

**Commissioners**

Brian Rowntree, Chairperson  
Sinéad Burns  
Jim Scholes

**Secretariat**

Joanne Dowling  
Janet Carnduff  
Gemma Hughes  
Carmel McDowell

**Invitees**

Judena Leslie, Commissioner for Public Appointments (CPA)  
Pat Neeson, Chief Executive, CPANI

**WELCOME**

1. The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION MATRIX OF SEPTEMBER BUSINESS MEETING**

2. Commissioners agreed the Summary Record and Action Points from the September 2016 Business Meeting.

**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND MATTERS ARISING**

3. Commissioners confirmed that they had no conflict of interest in relation to the January Business Meeting agenda and papers.

**MEETING THE COMMISSIONER FOR PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS (CPA) [PAPER 1/17]**

4. The Chairperson introduced Judena Leslie and her Chief Executive Pat Neeson to the meeting. During discussion it was noted that:
  - while there are clear differences in the scope and delivery of the respective statutory roles, there was a shared commitment to seeking to promote and influence key stakeholders to develop a public sector that is more diverse and representative of the community it serves;
  - common issues included promoting equality and diversity, particularly in relation to appointments to senior positions i.e. within the NICS at SCS level; public bodies at board level; and public appointments;

- in terms of gender, 38% of boards are female, while only 23% of chairs are female. It was also noted that in the SCS 37% of positions in the NICS were filled by women and there were currently no female permanent secretaries;
  - following a recent meeting with Commissioners, Peter May, NICS Diversity Champion had advised that targets had been set as part of the NICS Diversity Strategy, in relation to increasing female representation in the NICS to achieve: 45% females within SCS by 2020; and 40% of females at G2/G3 level by 2023;
  - the NICS recruitment process results in a ranked merit list of appointable candidates, while the CPANI process results in an unranked group of appointable candidates being presented to a Minister for selection. It was acknowledged that in both cases, the list of appointable candidates results from a meritorious recruitment process;
  - outreach to secure a diverse applicant pool was necessary to ensure that the candidates who get through competitions are more diverse; and
  - CPANI has undertaken outreach work with women’s networks to encourage more women to apply for positions on boards. They have held workshops explaining the public appointments process and how women have an important role in terms contributing to public bodies. As a result they believe more women are now applying for positions on boards. Commissioners commended Judena and Pat on their success in this area.
5. It was agreed that it would be helpful to seek opportunities for engagement meetings at Secretariat level to explore areas of common interest.

**ACTION: Secretariat to seek a future meeting with the CPANI Secretariat.**

## **SECRETARY’S REPORT [PAPER 2/17]**

6. The Secretary presented the Secretary’s Report. Commissioners noted the updates, which included that:
- the report in relation to the Skills Gap Review in the NICS was circulated to Commissioners on 18 January 2017. As agreed, this will to be considered at the 7 February meeting;
  - there was a further submission from an individual under the Code of Ethics. Commissioners agreed to consider this matter under A.O.B.;
  - changes in staff are being managed with the appointment of a new Deputy Secretary – Janet Carnduff and a new EO is being recruited to replace Andrew Dodds; and

- the Business Planning Documents have been reviewed and updated for the third quarter of the year, and circulated to Commissioners.

### **FEEDBACK ON SECRETARIAT [PAPER 3/17]**

7. Commissioners noted the Feedback Review Summary Report and the the Secretary thanked Commissioners for their support and positive comments. During discussion Commissioners considered two issues highlighted in the feedback, regarding the timeliness and detailed legal advices from CSO; and the scope for refining some documents.
8. During discussion, it was noted that the Secretariat has always sought advice from CSO in a timely way, presented the issues clearly and maintained regular contact with CSO in relation to response times, however the provision of the advice was an area where Commissioners had limited control and was dependent on competing priorities within CSO. It was also noted that the Chairperson and the Secretary had met with the Crown Solicitor to discuss the issue. Following discussion, it was agreed that, in the hope that issues had been resolved, the matter would monitored, on a case by case basis going forward, before considering any other options.
9. Following discussion in relation to refining certain business documents, namely the Risk Register and the Audit Action Matrix, it was agreed that their current format was fit for purpose.

### **BUDGET POSITION [PAPER 4/17]**

10. Commissioners noted the budget update position and the Secretary's assurance that, subject to any unforeseen delays or decisions taken to defer anticipated activities, the OCSC spend for the year would be within the 1.5% NIO target.
11. Commissioners also noted that the 2017/18 agreed budget allocation of £274,000 had been profiled and submitted to NIO.

### **2017/18 BUSINESS PLANNING DOCUMENTS [PAPER 5/17]**

12. The final draft 2015-18 Strategic Priorities and 2017/18 Business Plan were presented to Commissioners for their approval, along with the 2017/18 Risk Register and 2017/18 Learning and Development Plan.
13. Commissioners agreed the documents which will be finalised and shared with the NIO in line with current governance arrangements.
14. The documents will be uploaded to the website on 3 April 2017.

**ACTION: Secretariat to send finalised business planning documents to NIO and prepare for their publication on the website in April 2017.**

## **UPDATE ON AUDIT [PAPER 6/17]**

15. Commissioners noted the Audit Update paper and the DP Auditor advised that there would be a more detailed discussion on the Audit Action Matrix at the dedicated Audit meeting taking place in the afternoon.
16. Commissioners were invited to note the assessment of estimated costs of providing the audit function 'in-house'. Commissioners were pleased to note that, although the assessment was based on estimates, it indicated, that the in-house audit provision presented value for money at an average cost of £8.7k per audit compared with an average of £14k per audit, when the function was outsourced.

## **AOB**

17. Commissioners were invited to consider an anonymous letter purporting to be from a departmental agency, making complaints about three members of staff from a regional agency office.
18. Following discussion, it was agreed that this was a matter for the NICS Department and that the letter should be forwarded to the Permanent Secretary at the relevant Department.

**ACTION: Secretariat to forward the anonymous letter to the relevant Permanent Secretary.**

19. Commissioners were invited to consider the latest correspondence received in a Code of Ethics case. Following discussion it was agreed that the correspondence did not provide any new information which would indicate that the concerns raised fell as a matter for Commissioners to consider under the Code of Ethics. Commissioners also suggested the response letter might include a reference for the complainant to consider bringing any new concern or information to the attention of his Department.

**ACTION: Secretariat to draft a response to the individual raising a concern under the Code of Ethics for Commissioners' approval.**

**Office of the Civil Service Commissioners  
for Northern Ireland**