

**Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland
Summary Record of Business Meeting
10.00am, Monday 12 June 2023
Erskine House, Belfast**

ATTENDEES:

Commissioners

Deirdre Toner, Chairperson

Sinead Burns

Dr Lesley Carroll

Secretariat

Amanda Martin Secretary

Joanne Wray, Deputy Secretary

Heather Caulfield

Jayne Logan

APOLOGIES:

None

INTRODUCTION AND PRE-MEETING BUSINESS

1. The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 1a. No items were raised as additional business.

ACTION MATRIX OF APRIL BUSINESS MEETING (Paper 13/23)

- 1b. Commissioners agreed the Summary Record and action points from the 5 April 2023 Business Meeting.

MATTERS ARISING AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 1c. No conflicts of interest were declared in relation to June's business meeting agenda and papers.

SECRETARY'S REPORT (Paper 14/23 Annex A, B, C & D)

2. The Secretary presented the Secretary's Report and outlined the key outputs and activities in addition to routine and ongoing activities (key management information presented in Annexes A, B, C & D) since the last business meeting on 5 April 2023 that included:

- Submission of End of Year Stewardship Statement to NIO on 31 March 2023;
- Meeting with People & OD about recording Conflict of Interests during SCS Recruitment Competitions;
- Meetings of Recruitment and Selection Policy Development Group on 4 April 2023 and 6 June 2023;
- Preparation of Annual Report 2022-23;
- Correspondence with CCEA asking them to correct their Whistleblowing Policy;
- Arrangements for meeting with the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) and the Public Appointments Service (PAS) in Dublin on 7 June 2023;
- Arrangements for meeting with UK Civil Service Commission in London on 11 September 2023;
- Meeting with National Autistic Society NI and Disability Action on 5 May 2023;
- Meeting with Dr John Kelly, Fingerprint Learning and Terence Brannigan OBE, to discuss “EntreBRAINeur” findings on 12 May 2023;
- Review of and revisions to Commissioners’ Code of Ethics Guidance document;
- Attendance at People & OD led Meeting of Group to consider Policy on Reasonable Adjustments in the NICS on 24 April 2023;
- Data Sharing Agreement (OCSC NI and NICS Departments – Code of Ethics) drafted, consulted on, approved and distributed to Permanent Secretaries. The Agreement has now been signed off by all Permanent Secretaries;
- Review of Recruitment Code and Ministerial Involvement;
- Review of Corporate Risk Register; and
- Review of Register of Recommendations.

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

2023/24 Budget Report

3. The Secretary referred Commissioners to the table detailed within the report that provided an overview on the current financial position.

4. Commissioners noted the decline in SCS recruitment competitions and that this trend was likely to continue given the current economic climate.
5. The Secretary continued by providing assurances that the budget was proactively monitored and expenditure forecasted on a monthly basis.

2023/24 Business Planning Documents

6. The Secretary updated the Commissioners on the quarterly progress of the Business Planning documents.

Commissioners noted the following:

- **Business Plan:** on track to achieve all Q1 targets and objectives in the 2023/24 Business Plan with one exception.
- **Risk Register:** The Secretary stated that the Secretariat had recently reviewed and updated the Corporate Risk Register and highlighted changes made to the status of several risks and sought Commissioners' views. The Commissioners discussed and endorsed the recommendations/changes.
- **Learning and Development Plan:** All Q1 targets and objectives were on track to be achieved with the majority of training sessions being delivered online.

Actions: (i) Update the Corporate Risk Register to include a newly identified risk regarding oversight of the Merit Principle;
(ii) Liaise with NICSHR to explore opportunities for Commissioners to observing or participate in the process for competitions below SCS level; and
(iii) Secretary to draft a programme of research, learning and development.

Register of Recommendations from Reports including NIAO Report on Capacity and Capability in the NICS and PAC Report

7. Following on from a request made at the Business Meeting in April 2023, a "Register of Commissioners' Actions in Response to the NIAO/PAC/Other Recommendations" (for internal use) had been compiled was circulated for comment.
8. Commissioners were content with the format of the Report and agreed that it provided a useful means of charting progress against recommendations.

2022/23 Annual Report

9. The Secretary referred Commissioners to the draft Civil Service Commissioners (CSC) logo for consideration. After some discussion and deliberations, the Commissioners agreed on a potential logo and asked for some minor changes to be made before final approval.
10. Commissioners were keen for the Secretariat to investigate the costs for refreshing/ updating the website.

**Action: (i) Share the updated draft logo with Commissioners once received from the design company for final approval; and
(ii) Secretariat to investigate the costs associated with updating the OCSC website.**

REVIEW OF RECRUITMENT CODE – MINISTERIAL INVOLVEMENT

11. The Secretary referenced the correspondence between Commissioners and the Director of People & OD on the current provisions for Ministerial involvement in the Recruitment Code.
12. It was noted that this was an item on the agenda for the meeting later that day with the HOCS and NICS Board.

RECRUITMENT & SELECTION DEVELOPMENT GROUP (RSDG)

13. The Secretariat and Commissioners reviewed the recent RSDG meeting (6 June 2023)
14. Commissioners were advised that the final version of the Terms of Reference (ToR) had since been agreed and their amendments accepted. The updated ToR included a change to the group's name from the Recruitment & Selection Policy Group (RSPG) to the Recruitment & Selection Development Group (RSDG). This change of name reflected the broader development remit of the group.
15. The RSDG group now had the ability to set up policy related sub-groups to focus on specific recruitment related objectives. The first sub-group, which had been set up to focus on Reasonable Adjustments, met on 24 April 2023.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT – LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Future Meeting – Racial Equality

16. Commissioners provided dates of their availability for an autumn meeting to meet with the NICS' Racial Equality Champion and other bodies that oversee racial equality, good relations and inclusion in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to employment, recruitment and selection.

Action: Set up autumn meetings with the Racial Equality Champion and external groups to discuss racial equality as outlined above.

Equality and Diversity Training

17. An update of the on-line courses attended by the Secretariat was provided. This covered areas such as flexible working, age equality and reasonable adjustments in recruitment and selection. Commissioners expressed an interest in several areas and asked that any reference material be shared with them.

Action: Share reference material from on-line courses with Commissioners

CASEWORK UPDATE

Fellowship Schemes

18. Commissioners noted the Fellowship scheme was similar to an apprenticeship model with placements lasting for a specified period of time with no option for permanent employment. They were content that these did not constitute an Exception to Merit.

Appointments by Way of Exception

19. Commissioners noted that no appointments made by way of exception during the reporting period.

Code of Ethics

20. The Secretary advised that no Code of Ethics concerns had been received during the reporting period. Three concerns had been received but fell outside the scope of Commissioners' statutory remit. The complainants had been duly informed.

Complaints and Queries

21. Commissioners reviewed the table detailing the complaints/queries and noted the actions by the Secretariat.
22. Commissioners requested that future updates include additional information regarding how/why complaints fell outside the scope of their statutory functions.

Action: Commissioners requested that data provided by the Secretariat include details of why complaints fall outside the scope of Commissioners' remit

Requests for Information

23. The Report advised that no Freedom of Information requests had been received.

RECENT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

24. Commissioners noted the table of recent and future meetings and provided details of their availability in the coming weeks to facilitate additional meetings.

Action: To set up meetings, on suitable dates.

AUDIT REPORT (Paper 15/23 and Annex A)

25. The Chairperson invited the DP Audit to present the Audit Report.

Outstanding Audit Recommendations

26. The DP referenced the Audit Report and advised that the outstanding actions from the:
 - 2018/19 Review of the 4-Stage SCS Authorisation Process;
 - 2020/21 Desktop Compliance Review of Competitions below SCS; and
 - 2021/22 Review of the NICS processes for Managing and Monitoring the tenure of Inward Secondments

had all been addressed by the NICS and were now marked as complete.

27. It was agreed that the on-hold recommendations in relation to communication with candidates should be discussed with the NICS at the next Audit and Engagement meeting.

Progress against 2023/24 Audit and Review Plan

Audit of Competitions below SCS

28. Commissioners noted the nine recruitment competitions below SCS which have been selected for audit and that this audit is underway.

Article 6 Compliance Audits

29. The DP referred to the two competitions that had been selected for the Article 6 Compliance audit. Work would commence on these shortly.

30. The DP noted that the findings from both audits would be presented to Commissioners for discussion at the dedicated audit meeting on 12 October 2023.

Agency Workers in the NICS

31. Commissioners noted the paper on Agency Workers in the NICS.

REPRESENTATION BY COMMISSIONERS ON WORKING GROUPS/KEY THEMES FOR DEVELOPMENT

32. The Secretary referred to the Reasonable Adjustments Working Group introductory meeting that she attended on behalf of Commissioners. She advised the Terms of Reference (ToR) would outline the scope of the Group's work and sub-categorise work areas. The ToR would be circulated to Commissioners once received

33. Going forward it was agreed that Dr Carroll would attend future meetings of that Sub-Group and provide Commissioners with a high-level summary of the topics discussed and decisions taken.

34. It was further noted that Commissioners may wish to be represented on other similar working groups in due course.

Action: (i) People & OD to be notified that Dr Carroll will attend future meetings of the Reasonable Adjustments Working Group

HOUSEKEEPING

35. Commissioners were reminded that mileage should be calculated via the AA route planner and car parking and/or public transport receipts forwarded to the Secretariat for record keeping purposes.

REGISTER OF INTERESTS (Paper 16/23)

36. Commissioners were reminded to provide any updates to the Register of Interests in writing/by email to the Secretariat.

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