

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: 2011 – 14 & BUSINESS PLAN: 2012/13

*Ensuring appointment on merit
& safeguarding ethics*

CONTENTS

	PAGE(S)
Context	3
Strategic Mission	5
Role and Responsibilities	5
Core Values	6
Balanced Scorecard – Strategic Priorities: 2011 – 2014	7
Balanced Scorecard – Annual Objectives: 2012/13	8
Policy & Outputs	9
People	13
Finance	16
Processes	18
Civil Service Commissioners' Secretariat	22
Budget Allocation: 2012/13	23

CONTEXT

This Plan has been prepared by the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland to set out the strategic direction for Commissioners over the 3-year period 2011 – 2014. It outlines the Commissioners' 3-year strategic priorities and provides details of the specific actions to be taken during 2012/13 that will contribute to the achievement of those priorities. All of the objectives, targets and actions contained within this Plan have been developed to support Commissioners to fulfil their statutory responsibilities to uphold the principle that selection for appointment to posts in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) should be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition and to consider and determine appeals under the Code of Ethics.

Commissioners discharge their statutory responsibilities by:

- maintaining the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition in relation to selection for appointment;
- making General Regulations which prescribe the circumstances in which the Merit Principle shall not apply;
- publishing and maintaining a Recruitment Code on the interpretation and application of the Merit Principle;
- auditing recruitment policies and practices followed in making appointments to the Civil Service to establish whether the Recruitment Code is being observed; and
- requiring the publication of such information as they may specify relating to recruitment and to the use of permitted exceptions to the Merit Principle.

The successful achievement of the strategic priorities represents a challenging and ambitious programme of work. This Plan takes account of the introduction of a revised Recruitment Code and the revised approach to audit, which will be implemented during this period; and changes in the wider political, business and social environment in NI and, therefore, the context for recruitment to the NICS. Key changes include the changing economic and employment environment and the impact of the Spending Review SR 2010. Delivering this Plan will be particularly challenging in the context of the efficiency savings required by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). A key priority in developing a realistic and achievable programme of work is to ensure we continue to discharge effectively our statutory roles and responsibilities and promote public confidence in recruitment to the NICS.

Commissioners view this Plan as a 'living document' which will be monitored and kept under regular review to enable Commissioners to respond appropriately to any changes in business need which occur over time. Commissioners will evaluate progress towards the strategic priorities and the annual objectives and targets on a quarterly basis and report formally on this in Annual Reports.

Commissioners are committed to working in close partnership with key stakeholders in order to achieve the strategic priorities outlined in this Plan. The NICS, and in particular the Permanent Secretaries of the NI Departments and representatives of Corporate Human Resources (CHR) in the Department of Finance & Personnel (DFP), have a shared interest in protecting the Merit Principle, safeguarding Ethics and promoting public confidence in recruitment to the NICS. Commissioners will continue to work closely with key stakeholders in order to achieve these common goals. Much can also be learned by sharing experiences with fellow Commissioners in other jurisdictions and this is an area we will continue to pursue actively.

MISSION

To fulfil effectively our statutory duties by:

- being an exemplary regulator;
- acting as guardians of the Merit Principle;
- promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity; and
- considering and determining appeals under the NICS Code of Ethics.

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland were first appointed by Royal Warrant in 1923. Commissioners are appointed under the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 which requires them to uphold the principle that selection for appointment to posts in the NICS should be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition (known as the Merit Principle). Commissioners prescribe and monitor appointments made by exception to the Merit Principle and may also consider and determine appeals made by, and consider taking complaints direct from, existing civil servants under the NICS Code of Ethics. Commissioners contribute to the development of an effective and impartial Civil Service by carrying out the duties imposed on them by the 1999 Order.

Commissioners are independent of the NICS and bring to the role wide experience from their different backgrounds, careers and interests. None is a serving member of the Civil Service.

The current Commissioners are:

Brenda McLaughlin (Chairperson)
Ruth Laird
Marion Matchett
Raymond Mullan
Vilma Patterson

CORE VALUES

In fulfilling their responsibilities under this Plan, Commissioners and the Secretariat will seek at all times to adhere to the core principles of public life, which are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

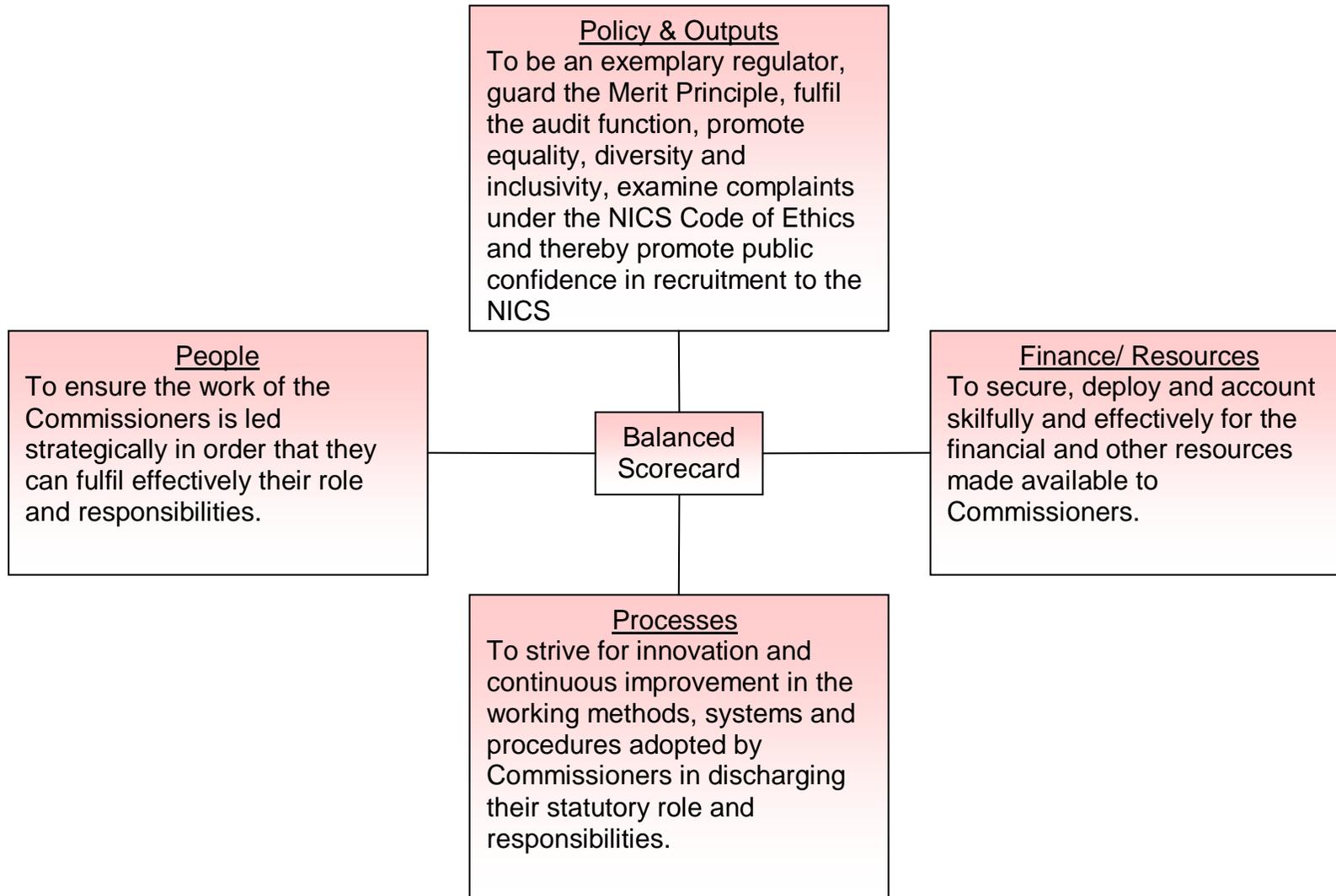
Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example. The Commissioners are fully committed to their duty of considering appeals under the NICS Code of Ethics which emphasises the core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality in the civil service.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: 2011 – 2014



ANNUAL OBJECTIVES: 2012/13

1. POLICY & OUTPUTS	2. PEOPLE
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To maintain the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. 2. To prescribe and publish a Recruitment Code on the interpretation and application of the Merit Principle. 3. To make General Regulations prescribing the circumstances in which the Merit Principle shall not apply. 4. To audit recruitment policies and practices followed in making appointments to the Civil Service to establish whether the requirements of the Recruitment Code are being observed. 5. To require the publication of information relating to recruitment and the use of permitted exceptions to the Merit Principle. 6. To consider appeals / complaints under the NICS Code of Ethics. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide effective strategic leadership and direction. 2. To provide appropriate training and continuous professional development. 3. To ensure the Chairperson and the Secretariat fulfil effectively their management responsibilities. 4. To comply fully with all relevant employment related legislative requirements. 5. To ensure effective succession planning in respect of Commissioners and the Secretariat.
3. FINANCE / RESOURCES	4. PROCESSES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To make best possible use of the reduced resources available to Commissioners during 2012/13. 2. To shape, steer and challenge the deployment and management of available resources so as to secure maximum efficiency and value for money in the achievement of business objectives. 3. To fulfil effectively all responsibilities to account for the expenditure of resources and performance against objectives. 4. To maximise the benefit of IT in delivering our work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To make sound and well-informed decisions based on high-quality advice and support. 2. To maintain effective partnership working with key stakeholders. 3. To ensure effective corporate governance and meet all NIO data management and information assurance requirements. 4. To fulfil all statutory equality obligations as a public authority.

1. POLICY & OUTPUTS

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
<p>1.1 To maintain the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.</p>	<p>During 2012/13, continue to exercise the Commissioners' independence and challenge function.</p>	<p>Continue to make effective use of the oversight tools at the Commissioners' disposal including the Recruitment Code; monitoring and, where appropriate, approving of appointments by way of exception to the Merit Principle; implementing the Audit Programme; and ensuring the publication of relevant information.</p>	<p>Enhanced status and recognition as a regulator.</p>
	<p>During 2012/13, ensure that appointments to the SCS are made in line with the Merit Principle.</p>	<p>Commissioners to chair all SCS open recruitment competitions and ensure commonality of approach by using the agreed Chairperson's Checklist.</p>	<p>Assurance that SCS appointments are made on merit.</p> <p>Enhanced knowledge and understanding of NICS recruitment policies and practices.</p>
	<p>Throughout the year ensure that the SCS recruitment process is in line with the 4-stage authorisation process.</p>	<p>Scrutinise requests under the 4-stage authorisation process and liaise with HRConnect to ensure there is a clear understanding of the requirements.</p> <p>Undertake an annual audit of the Secretariat's management of the 4-stage authorisation process.</p> <p>Following the launch of the Revised Recruitment Code, review and implement the 4-stage authorisation process.</p>	<p>Assurance that SCS appointments are in line with the 4-stage authorisation process.</p>

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
1.2 To prescribe and publish a Recruitment Code on the interpretation and application of the Merit Principle.	To promote understanding and awareness of the Revised Code	<p>Produce a final draft Code as agreed by Commissioners.</p> <p>Finalise the summary of responses to consultation and publish on the website.</p> <p>Arrange a launch event to promote the revised Code to key stakeholders.</p> <p>Meet with the Head of the NICS, Permanent Secretaries, Corporate HR, HR Directors and other key stakeholders, as appropriate to ensure a shared understanding and to help embed the revised Code into NICS recruitment practices.</p> <p>Continue to work closely with the NICS to understand key issues and use the Commissioners' influence to help shape and inform recruitment policy and practice.</p>	<p>An effective Recruitment Code.</p> <p>Greater awareness and shared understanding of the Code leading to enhanced interpretation and application.</p>
1.3 To make General Regulations prescribing the circumstances in which the Merit Principle shall not apply.	To ensure the Regulations governing appointments by way of exception to the Merit Principle are applied consistently and as intended under the Recruitment Code.	<p>Monitor and report on (in the Annual Report) all appointments made by way of exception to the Merit Principle and scrutinise and challenge any such requests which require Commissioners' approval.</p> <p>Identify and implement any learning and follow-up action as a result of the pilot</p>	<p>Shared understanding and appropriate use of relevant exceptions.</p> <p>Enhanced status and recognition as a regulator.</p> <p>Improved recruitment practice.</p>

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
		audit of appointments made by way of exception to the Merit Principle via secondment .	
1.4 To audit recruitment policies and practices followed in making appointments to the Civil Service to establish whether the requirements of the Recruitment Code are being observed.	<p>To maximise the effect and impact of the Audit Programme.</p> <p>To test the revised approach to auditing against the principle-based Code.</p>	<p>Work closely with the NICS stakeholders, including the Head of the Civil Service, Permanent Secretaries, CHR and / or HR Directors, to promote understanding and awareness of the revised approach.</p> <p>Implement the 2012/13 audit programme and publish key outcomes and recommendations in the Annual Report and on the website.</p> <p>Monitor the implementation of the audit findings and recommendations in relation to appointments made by way of secondments and ensure learning and follow-up action.</p> <p>Review the effectiveness of the revised audit process, identify learning and, as necessary, embed any changes to the process and guidance material.</p> <p>Continue to develop Commissioner and Secretariat capacity as a core part of the Commissioners' audit business. Engage with GB, ROI Commissioners and other stakeholder bodies, to share</p>	<p>Enhance status of the Commissioners' Audit Programme.</p> <p>Robust assessment and improved understanding of the NICS recruitment processes and policies.</p> <p>Increased NICS and public awareness of the Commissioners' regulatory role.</p> <p>Acceptance of audit outputs and implementation of key recommendations</p> <p>Increase effectiveness of the audit process.</p> <p>Improved recruitment practice.</p>

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
		knowledge, experience and expertise on issues relating to audit.	
1.5 To require the publication of information relating to recruitment and the use of permitted exceptions to the Merit Principle.	To secure timely NICS recruitment-related information to meet the Commissioners' information and data requirements.	<p>Liaise with CHR and NISRA to secure the required data and information by 30 June each year.</p> <p>To ensure the NICS / CHR are aware of the publication requirements placed on them.</p>	Robust information and data from which to seek to gain assurances that the Merit Principle is being upheld.
		<p>Ensure that the NICS publishes the information required under Appendix C to the Recruitment Code.</p> <p>Produce and publish an Annual Report by end October 2012.</p>	Enhanced access for the public to information about recruitment to the NICS.
1.6 To consider appeals / complaints under the NICS Code of Ethics.	To ensure a considered and timely response to any request to Commissioners in relation to potential complaints under the NICS Code of Ethics.	<p>Ensure all potential complaints are dealt with promptly in line with agreed procedures.</p> <p>Review and implement improved procedures for the handling of potential complaints under the Code of Ethics and, when finalised, arrange appropriate training for Commissioners and the Secretariat, as necessary.</p>	<p>Effective handling of Code of Ethics complaints.</p> <p>Updated and effective procedures.</p>

2. PEOPLE

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
2.1 To provide effective strategic leadership and direction.	By end of April 2011, ensure that the objectives for 2012/13 are finalised and communicated effectively to all Commissioners, the Secretariat and other key stakeholders.	Publish the 2012/13 Business Plan on the Commissioners' website no later than 1 April 2012. Ensure that the Secretariat understand fully the commitments in the Plan and their role in contributing to its effective delivery – this should be reflected appropriately in all Forward Job Plans.	A shared clarity of purpose leading to the achievement of objectives.
	Ensure regular and effective monitoring of progress towards agreed 2012/13 targets.	Undertake quarterly reviews of progress towards in-year targets for consideration by Commissioners.	
	Ensure effective and timely forward planning beyond 2012/13.	Facilitate a business planning day in Autumn 2012 to review and refresh the strategic priorities and develop annual objectives for 2013/14	
2.2 To provide appropriate training and continuous professional development.	By end April 2012, develop and begin to implement an appropriate training and development plan to meet the needs of Commissioners and the Secretariat.	By April 2012, identify training needs of Commissioners and the Secretariat including audit-specific training, and induction for new Commissioners / Secretariat and develop a Plan to address these during 2012/13 Monitor in-year changes in training needs and adjust Plan accordingly, paying particular attention to any emerging issues in relation to equality / legislative responsibilities.	Appropriate training and development of individuals to meet business needs.

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
2.3 To ensure the Chairperson and the Secretariat fulfil effectively their management responsibilities.	To ensure that all managers and staff fulfil effectively their responsibilities in line with NIO performance management processes.	<p>Chairperson to undertake regular reviews of performance with individual Commissioners in line with agreed NIO procedures</p> <p>Establish Forward Job Plans by 15 April 2012 then undertake in-year reviews and complete annual appraisals within agreed NIO timescales.</p> <p>Facilitate regular team meetings to review progress and provide guidance and support, as necessary, in the delivery of the Secretariat's responsibilities.</p> <p>Chairperson and line managers to provide support, recognition and guidance to individuals, as appropriate.</p> <p>New Commissioners and / or members of the Secretariat should be provided with effective induction training and, as appropriate, have Forward Job Plans agreed within 2 months.</p>	All individuals managed and supported in line with NIO requirements.
2.4 To ensure staffing levels are maintained.	To ensure effective succession planning in respect of Commissioners and the Secretariat.	To liaise regularly with the NIO to ensure staffing levels are maintained and any necessary succession planning is managed effectively.	Effective delivery of Commissioners' statutory duties and the Business Plan.

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
2.5 To comply fully with all relevant employment legislative requirements	To ensure the working practices and environment comply with legislative requirements for all staff and visitors.	<p>Ensure that all policies and procedures required by the NIO are in place and communicated effectively.</p> <p>Ensure that members of the Secretariat are trained, as appropriate, in Health and Safety requirements, and all necessary procedures and practices are understood and publicly displayed, as necessary.</p>	A safe and secure working environment
	To ensure compliance with relevant employment legislation.	Ensure that members of the Secretariat are aware of all relevant employment legislation and attend appropriate training in line with NIO requirements.	

3. FINANCE / RESOURCES

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
3.1 To make best possible use of the reduced resources available to Commissioners during 2012/13.	To secure the necessary resources to support delivery of the Commissioners' 2012/13 Plan.	Establish resource requirements. Monitor current and future resource requirements and provide early warning of potential problems.	Best use is made of reducing financial resources.
3.2 To shape, steer and challenge the deployment and management of available resources so as to secure maximum efficiency and value for money in the achievement of business objectives.	To operate within the reduced baseline allocation to ensure agreed efficiency savings are achieved.	Ensure agreed efficiency savings are achieved. Participate in any efficiency reviews required by the NIO.	Effective use of resources and compliance with NIO requirements.
3.3 To fulfil effectively all responsibilities to account for the expenditure of resources and performance against objectives.	To monitor progress against the achievement of objectives and report quarterly to Commissioners.	Review expenditure on a monthly basis. Comply with all appropriate financial monitoring requests from NIO within agreed timescales. Provide Commissioners with a quarterly report on progress towards annual business plan.	Effective planning and monitoring of resources and compliance with NIO budget management requirements.

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
3.4 To maximise the benefit of IT in delivering our work.	To continue to develop branch information processes to make best use of OASIS.	<p>Proactively keep up-to-date with developments in relation to the Oasis filing system and effectively manage and maintain the system.</p> <p>Maintain efficient monitoring and information retrieval arrangements.</p> <p>Maintain a professional web presence, regularly reviewing and updating content to ensure relevance, appropriateness and ease of access.</p> <p>Publish documents electronically where practicable.</p>	<p>Effective management of data and information in line with NIO requirements.</p> <p>Enhanced openness and transparency.</p>
	To ensure all paper and electronic files are updated and disposed of as necessary.	Periodically review / dispose of files in line with NIO guidelines.	

4. PROCESSES

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
<p>4.1 To make sound and well-informed decisions based on high-quality advice and support.</p>	<p>To have access to accurate and timely advice in relation to requests from the public, civil servants, the NIO, NICS Departments and others, as and when required.</p>	<p>Ensure the Secretariat produce high-quality submissions which take account of key issues and which at all times seek to protect and promote the Commissioners' integrity, independence and professionalism in regulating NICS recruitment and safeguarding the Code of Ethics.</p> <p>Obtain legal advice, as required.</p> <p>Record and monitor response times to ensure timely response times are maintained.</p>	<p>Effective Secretariat support to enable the achievement of business objectives.</p>
	<p>To have access to appropriate support to facilitate Commissioners' meetings.</p>	<p>Ensure access to appropriate accommodation for meetings.</p> <p>Ensure agendas, papers and briefing materials are produced and circulated no less than 3 days prior to meetings.</p> <p>Ensure draft summary records are produced and circulated promptly following meetings.</p> <p>Formally review the service delivery and support provided by the Secretariat on an annual basis and seek opportunities to provide informal feedback to the</p>	

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
		Secretariat throughout the year.	
	To ensure that Commissioners fulfil effectively their obligations in relation to Publication Schemes.	Undertake an annual review of the Commissioners' Publication Scheme.	Enhanced openness and transparency.
4.2 To ensure effective corporate governance and meet all NIO data management and information assurance requirements.	To maintain and implement effective corporate governance arrangements.	<p>By April 2012 agree a Risk Register for 2012/13</p> <p>Review the Risk Register, in terms of completeness and the status of risks on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Ensure that the Secretariat is trained in, and effectively operate, all appropriate NIO financial management procedures.</p>	<p>Effective corporate governance.</p> <p>Information Risk Register, Information Asset Register & quarterly reports to NIO.</p>
	To deal effectively with any Freedom of information requests within agreed NIO procedures and timescales.	Ensure the Secretariat is trained, as appropriate, in the handling of FOI requests.	

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
	To comply fully with NIO data handling requirements.	<p>Ensure compliance with all NIO Information Assurance requirements.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate use of protective markings on all data (both electronic and hardcopy) and ensure it is stored and transmitted securely in line with the relevant classification.</p> <p>Maintain a high level of awareness among both Commissioners and the Secretariat of the importance of this issue and, as required, provide NIO encrypted laptops and confidential storage facilities.</p>	Compliance with NIO Information Assurance requirements.
4.3 To fulfil all statutory equality obligations as a public authority.	To fulfil effectively all statutory equality responsibilities.	<p>By 1 May 2012, review, undertake a public consultation and publish a revised Equality Scheme.</p> <p>Review the Commissioners Disability Action Plan, and as necessary, undertake a public consultation on revised action plan.</p> <p>By end August 2011, submit to ECNI an Annual Report on the implementation of the Commissioners' 2010/11 Equality Plan and include a report on the implementation of the Commissioners' Disability Action Plan.</p>	Compliance with statutory requirements.

Objectives	Targets	Actions	Expected outputs / outcomes
	<p>To encourage the NICS to promote diversity, equality and good relations inclusivity via the recruitment process.</p>	<p>Continue to encourage the NICS to ensure that panels are equipped to address diversity considerations in selection and recruitment processes</p> <p>Review and, as necessary, comment on progress reports on implementation of the NICS Employment Equality & Diversity Plan insofar as it relates to recruitment.</p> <p>Where possible and appropriate, promote, to the NICS, the positive benefits of supporting and employing people from all Section 75 Groups.</p>	<p>Enhanced assurance that diversity issues are effectively considered during NICS recruitment.</p> <p>Enhanced awareness of the Commissioners' commitment to promoting the employment of people from Section 75 Groups.</p>

OFFICE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS – SECRETARIAT SUPPORT

It is envisaged that the Secretariat support available to Commissioners during 2012/13 will be as follows:

Heather Stevens (Mrs)
Grade 5 (Part-time – 0.8 FTE)

Joanne Dowling (Mrs)
Grade A (Part-time – 0.8 FTE)

Bernie Gray (Mrs)
Grade B1 (Full-time – 1.0 FTE)

Gareth Wright
Grade B2 (Full-time – 1.0 FTE)

Lynn Baird (Mrs)
Grade C (Part-time – 0.8 FTE)

Mae Hamilton (Mrs)
D1 (Part-time – 0.8 FTE)

BUDGET ALLOCATION: 2010/11 – 2013/14

ITEM	ALLOCATION 2011/12	ALLOCATION 2012/13	ALLOCATION 2013/14
Commissioners' Fees	£60.7K	£60.4K	£60.4K
Staff	£236.1K	£243.4K	£245.8K
Training	£12K	£2K	£2K ¹
Accommodation & Overheads	£73.2K	£73K	£19.8K ²
TOTAL	£382K	£378K	£328K

¹ Under review

² Commissioners' support team move to Stormont House