

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
SUMMARY RECORD OF BUSINESS MEETING 21 JANUARY 2020
CONFERENCE ROOM, STORMONT HOUSE

ATTENDEES

Commissioners

Deirdre Toner, Chairperson
Sinéad Burns
Jim Scholes

Secretariat

Sarah Teer, Secretary
Amanda Martin
Heather Caulfield
John Murphy

WELCOME

1. The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Amanda Martin, recently appointed as Deputy Secretary.

SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION MATRIX OF JUNE BUSINESS MEETING

2. Commissioners agreed the Summary Record and action points of the 17 September 2019 meeting. Commissioners also noted that the September Summary Record would be published on Commissioners' website in due course.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND MATTERS ARISING

3. No conflicts of interest were declared in relation to the January business meeting agenda and papers. The Chairperson extended deepest sympathy to Jim Scholes on the recent passing of his mother.

SECRETARY'S REPORT (PAPER 1/20)

4. The Secretary presented the Secretary's Report and outlined the key outputs and activities since the last business meeting. Commissioners noted the following key points:
 - the 2018/19 Annual Report had been published;
 - revisions had been made to the Commissioners' Recruitment Code
 - engagement had taken place with NIO to revise the OSCS budget to reflect the Commissioners' role in chairing open SCS competitions.
 - engagement with NIO to move Commissioners over to 'Liberata' payroll system;
 - Briefings had been prepared for Commissioner meetings with NIAO and Ian Watmore;

- A DP (Deputy Secretary) competition had been completed. The Secretariat was currently operating at full capacity.
 - Appendix C data request to NICS HR had been issued; and
 - Engagement had been undertaken with NIO to progress the Data Sharing Agreement between OCSC and NICS HR.
 - The OCSC website had transferred smoothly to a new server.
5. Following discussion around the benefits of meeting with counterparts in other jurisdictions, Commissioners agreed that a meeting with the Public Appointments Service for the Republic of Ireland should take place on alternate years – the next meeting would therefore be convened in 2021. A meeting with the Civil Service Commission (GB) should be convened in November 2020, subject to this being deemed mutually beneficial by all parties.
 6. In response to comments made by the Minister for Finance, Conor Murphy MLA, in an earlier radio interview, Commissioners agreed that the Secretariat should research the Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics for SPADs and prepare a Paper on any possible implications for the OCSC.
 7. The Secretary updated Commissioners on ongoing Casework.
 8. Commissioners expressed disappointment that NICS HR had not responded to correspondence, particularly in relation to (i) Secondment Policy; (ii) Exceptions to Merit and Commissioners' requirements under Regulation 3 (b) and the Recruitment Code Para A.24; and (iv) Whistleblowing. It was agreed that further reminders be issued on these matters.

ACTION: Secretariat to:

(a) Review Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics for SPADs and prepare a paper on the potential implications for the OCSC of the recent changes to the appointments of SPADs;

(b) Reminders be issued to NICS HR in relation to the above outstanding correspondence.

BUDGET PAPER (PAPER 2/20)

9. Commissioners noted the Budget Report, including the current budget position for the third quarter.
10. The Secretary updated Commissioners that the Secretariat had sought and received additional funding from the November Monitoring exercise with NIO Finance. Commissioners noted that the projected year end (2019-20) budgetary spend position was on track.

11. The Secretary encouraged Commissioners to submit fees and expenses claims as soon as possible for processing.
12. Commissioners noted the 2020-21 budget profile which had taken into consideration the increased Chairing responsibilities and the anticipated upturn in the number of SCS competitions.

AUDIT AND REVIEW UPDATE (PAPER 3/20)

13. The DP (Audit) provided an update on audit and review matters and Commissioners noted the content of the audit and review update paper setting out the current position in relation to the progression of work under the 2019/20 Audit and Review Plan and ongoing work, including the 2018/19 Review of the 4-Stage Authorisation Process Documentation and Review of Recruitment-related complaints.
14. Commissioners agreed the Audit Plan 2020-21 (as contained in Annex A of Paper 3/20) and further agreed to write to NICS HR accordingly.
15. Commissioners noted the upcoming audit related meetings, namely the dedicated audit meeting scheduled for 3 March 2020 and the NICS HR audit engagement meeting on 10 March 2020.

ACTION : Secretariat to:

- (a) draft a letter for the Chief Commissioner informing NICS HR of the Commissioners' Audit Plan 2020/21**
- (b) prepare and circulate Agenda and briefing papers in advance of the above meetings.**

COMMISSIONERS' APPROVAL PROCESS FOR APPOINTMENTS TO SCS POSTS THROUGH OPEN COMPETITION (PAPER 4/20)

16. Commissioners were invited to consider a revised approval process which had been designed to reflect the recent amendment to the Recruitment Code which stated that *"The statutory duty placed upon Commissioners to ensure that the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition is maintained can best be discharged by Commissioners chairing all open SCS competitions."*
17. The Secretary highlighted that the revised process had been drafted for discussion taking into consideration the current process, the GB and other models.

18. Commissioners discussed the proposed revisions and it was agreed that the Secretariat would draft templates for further discussion.

ACTION: Revised template documents to be prepared, based on the above points, and that a meeting be convened on Friday, 14 February 2020 at 10am to agree same.

2020/21 BUSINESS PLANNING DOCUMENTS (PAPER 5/20)

19. Commissioners agreed as final the 2020-25 Strategic Plan and the 2020/21 Business Planning documents and noted that they would be shared with the NIO Sponsor Department and published on the OCSC website on 1 April 2020.

ACTION: Secretariat to pass documents to NIO and publish them on the website.

FEEDBACK ON SECRETARIAT (PAPER 6/20)

20. Commissioners noted the outcome of the 2019/20 Feedback in relation to support provided by the Secretariat and paid tribute to the efficiency and professionalism of officers in the Secretariat.

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