

**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
SUMMARY RECORD OF BUSINESS MEETING
16 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 10.00AM
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDEES:

Commissioners

Deirdre Toner, Chairperson
Sinead Burns
Jim Scholes

Secretariat

Amanda Martin, Secretary
Heather Caulfield
John Murphy

INTRODUCTION AND PRE-MEETING BUSINESS

1. The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting, once again convened via teleconference due to the Covid-19 restrictions, and began by congratulating Amanda on having been successful in the competition for the vacant Secretary post.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 1a. Commissioners agreed they would discuss the most recent piece of correspondence to them under AOB.

**SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION MATRIX OF JUNE BUSINESS MEETING
(PAPER 12/20)**

- 1b. Commissioners agreed the Summary Record and action points of the 23 June 2020 Business Meeting. The Secretary confirmed that all actions in the matrix were either completed or ongoing.

MATTERS ARISING AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 1c. No conflicts of interest were declared in relation to the September business meeting agenda and papers, nor any matters arising not already detailed on the agenda.

SECRETARY'S REPORT (PAPER 13/20 & PAPERS 13/20 ANNEXES A, B, D)

2. The Secretary presented the Secretary's Report and outlined the key outputs and activities since the last business meeting, which included:
 - Ongoing discussions with NICSHR and HRConnect on changes to the planned audit of a competition below SCS;
 - Engagement with NICSHR on revisions to the Article 6 authorisation procedures that came into effect on 1 September 2020;
 - Engagement with NICSHR on the use of casual employment;

- Response to the request for, and subsequent approval of, the request for stage D Authorisation for the 2016 HOCS appointment;
- Submission of the annual Equality Progress Report to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland;
- Preparatory research for new HOCS competition;
- Engagement with NIO on the Government Spending review, culminating in submission of OCSC bid for funding; and
- Discussions around a future review of the Recruitment Code.

The Secretary provided an overview of the present budget position to Commissioners, and reminded them that the second quarter of 2020/21 business planning documents would be circulated to Commissioners after the meeting.

Commissioners were updated on the progress of current and upcoming audits, due to commence w/c 28 September 2020, and were reminded of the dates for forthcoming Audit and Review meetings, i.e. 13 and 20 October 2020.

Action: Secretariat to circulate business planning documents to Commissioners.

Draft Article 6 Aide-Memoire for Panel Chairs (Paper 13/20 Annex B)

3. While discussing the new Article 6 approval process, the Secretary reminded Commissioners that the new paperwork would be used with any new competitions commencing after 1 September 2020. Commissioners discussed a draft aide-memoire that had been circulated to assist them in managing the risk of errors at Interview stage. Commissioners asked for a number of tweaks to be made to the document and for HR Connect's areas of responsibility to be omitted. Commissioners further asked for an additional meeting to be arranged to familiarise themselves with the new Article 6 approval documents.

Action: Secretariat to revise aide-memoire document.

Action: Secretariat to arrange familiarisation meeting around new Article 6 approval process.

Review of Recruitment Code

4. Commissioners discussed the proposed review of the Recruitment Code and agreed to include the item in the agenda for the operational meeting with NICSHR, scheduled for 29 September 2020.

Action: Secretariat to include review of Recruitment Code in agenda for upcoming operational meeting with NICSHR.

Draft Revised Code of Ethics (Paper 13/20 Annexes C, D)

5. Commissioners discussed recent engagement and correspondence from David Hughes, DoF, regarding the draft revised NICS Code of Ethics, and agreed that it would be beneficial to take up his offer of a meeting to discuss some of the proposed changes.

Action: Secretariat to arrange meeting between Commissioners and David Hughes.

Staffing

6. The Secretary updated Commissioners on current staffing arrangements, including the initiation of the competition to fill the now vacant Deputy Secretary post, and the impending completion of the staff officer's secondment. (It was noted that the NICS had placed an embargo on extensions to secondments).

Annual Report

7. The Secretary informed Commissioners that the Annual Report has now been printed, and a copy had been sent to Her Majesty the Queen on 16 September. A Press Release will be issued to announce the publishing of the Report on the OCSC website.

Action: Secretariat issue Press Release to announce the publishing of the Annual Report.

Equality Scheme

8. The Secretary reminded Commissioners that they are required under Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to review their Equality Scheme every five years, and so proposed that the review takes place as part of the agenda for Commissioners' planning day, scheduled for 24 November 2020.

Action: Secretariat to prepare for review of Equality Scheme and include it on Agenda for Commissioners' Planning Day.

ONGOING COMPLAINTS & OTHER CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER 14/20 AND PAPER 14/20 ANNEX A)

9. Commissioners were invited to note that during the reporting period they granted approval to a number of appointments by way of exception and extensions under Regulation 3.
10. The Secretary invited Commissioners to note that they responded to NICSHR regarding three separate proposals to fill appointments by internal trawl, and one request to fill a post from an existing Merit List.

11. Commissioners discussed one ongoing complaint into appointments to a post in DAERA and one request for clarification on the use of merit lists, both of which remain ongoing.

- Action: Secretariat to:**
- (a) draft responses to both items of correspondence, for Commissioners' comment and;**
- (b) draft correspondence to Jill Minne, NICSHR, (i) seeking her comments on an appointment made from a specific merit list; and (ii) raising the issue of the perceived increased use of merit lists generally.**

NIAO – STUDY ON CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY

12. Commissioners discussed the draft extracts of the NIAO Report on Capacity and Capability in the NICS. Commissioners agreed to issue a link to the Recruitment Code to the NIAO for their information.

Action: Secretariat to send link to Recruitment Code to NIAO

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