

**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
SUMMARY RECORD OF BUSINESS MEETING
FRIDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2022, 10.00AM
ERSKINE HOUSE, BELFAST**

ATTENDEES:

Commissioners

Deirdre Toner, Chairperson
Sinead Burns
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. It was agreed to discuss chairing responsibilities for the forthcoming Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer (DCVO) competition at the end of the meeting.

SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION MATRIX OF JUNE BUSINESS MEETING (Paper 20/22)

- 1b. Commissioners agreed the Summary Record and action points of the 14 June 2022 Business Meeting. The Secretary reviewed the matrix and confirmed that all actions were either completed or ongoing.

MATTERS ARISING AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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

SECRETARY'S REPORT (Paper 21/22 and 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 14 June 2022 which included:

- Publication of Revised Recruitment Code (Version 14) – 1 July 2022.
- Publication of Equality Screening Documents for the above revisions.
- Publication of Commissioners' Disability Action Plan 2022-2027 following a public consultation.
- Publication of Equality Screening Documents for the new Disability Action Plan.
- 5 Year review of Commissioners' Equality Scheme and preparation of updated Equality Action Plan. Currently with the Equality Commission for feedback.
- Review of Emergency, Response, Recovery and Business Continuity Plan.
- Review of Data Protection Policy.
- Publication of Equality Screening Documents for the Data Protection Policy.
- Engagement with NICS HR (Recruitment and Selection Transformation Group) to further the delivery of Recommendation 3.4 of the NIAO Report as outlined below:

The NICS and the Civil Service Commissioners should work in partnership, taking account of how other models operate, to explore how they can best support the delivery of the transformation agenda and the changes needed to reform the recruitment and selection process throughout the NICS.

- Engagement with NICS HR on issues relating to:
 - Updated Recruitment Code (Version 14);
 - Secondment Policy – Launch of Policy and Guidance on 26 July 2022;
 - The use of Annex 4 of NICS HR's Recruitment Policy and Procedures Manual v.18 – Protocol for the Use of Consultants in SCS Recruitment Competitions and arrangement of Pre-CIM meetings with Chairing Commissioner and Permanent Secretaries;
 - The role of Consultants in two specific live competitions;
 - Equality Monitoring Proposal;
 - Revision of protocol for engagement with NICS HR;
 - Information on Agency Workers;
 - Review of Article 6 Templates (also with HR Connect);
 - Templates for submission to Commissioners when requesting an exception to appointment on merit – Regulation 3(a), 3(b), 3(c) and 3(e);
 - Appointment of new Commissioner;
 - Recruitment Competition for Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer.

- Arrangements for Chairperson to meet with new First Commissioner, UK Civil Service Commission in London on 21 June 2022.
- Response to Invitation to Chairperson (and all Commissioners) to meet in Belfast with First Commissioner, and senior officials in November 2022.
- Associated discussions with the UK Civil Service Commission about the above meeting.
- Engagement with NIO generally on:
 - Arrangements for the appointment of new Civil Service Commissioner, Lesley Carroll and retirement of Jim Scholes;
 - Review and sign-off of NIO Framework Document and letter of Delegated Authority;
 - Financial Management and Budget Forecasting;
 - Preparation of Paper to Finance Partners on 5% Contingency Saving Options;
 - Possible changeover to Liberata Payroll System;
 - Chairperson position – Term due to finish in April 2023;
 - Resilience issues;
 - Evacuation Plans for Erskine House.
- Engagement with UK Civil Service Commission on 2 August 2022 – Introduction of Commission’s recently appointed Chief Executive.
- Work on Annual Report 2021-22.
- Harkin International Disability Employment Summit was attended by Deirdre Toner and Sinead Burns on 7 and 8 June 2022.
- Preparation of New Commissioner’s Induction Pack and Induction Meeting.
- Arrangements for return of outgoing Commissioner’s NIO-issue equipment and safe, compliant disposal of confidential waste.
- Arrangements to activate office procedures on Chairing of SCS Competitions to address Commissioner unavailability at short notice to Chair interviews in relation to two competitions.
- Review of Office Procedure – Chairing of SCS Recruitment Competitions – Commissioner Unavailability at Short Notice. To be reviewed at this meeting, alongside associated Corporate Risk (CR7) on the Risk Register.

- Engagement with NICSHR regarding the Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer competition.
- Review of Commissioners' Code of Practice (amended to take into account use of Social Media and other relevant matters).
- Consideration of Declarations of Interest and how they may be recorded within the Article 6 Process.
- Completion of Information Assurance Statement.
- Return of Annual Progress Report to Equality Commission for NI.
- Significant Audit work to evaluate working practices and ensure internal processes and governance arrangements are being adhered to effectively.

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

2022/2023 Budget Report – Quarter 2

3. The Secretary referred Commissioners to the table contained within the report which provided a summary of the current financial position and give a detailed overview of expenditure to date.
4. The Secretary continued by outlining the format of monthly budget meetings with the NIO Finance Business Partner. Assurances were given that the Secretariat was proactively monitoring the budget and updating forecasted expenditure on a monthly basis to ensure any potential overspend was identified at an early stage. This could then allow for a reprioritisation of the budget.

Requirement to Make Contingency Savings of 5%

5. The Secretary referred to the workshop held earlier in the year where a number of options were explored to identify 5% contingency savings (if required). A summary of these options was provided during the meeting and noted by Commissioners.
6. Commissioners were also assured that budgetary pressures were detailed on the Corporate Risk Register and regularly reviewed.

2022/23 Business Planning Documents

- 7 The Secretary reminded Commissioners that the quarterly business planning documents would be circulated to Commissioners in the coming days following the meeting.

8. Commissioners noted the following:

- Business Plan: on track to achieve all Q2 targets and objectives in the 2022/23 Business Plan;
- Risk Register: all 8 risks were currently assessed as 'managed effectively'. It was noted by Commissioners that the RAG status of corporate risk CR7 had been increased and would continue to be monitored, along with all other corporate risks by the Secretariat.
- Learning and Development Plan: Equality and Disability Awareness training session was scheduled for Friday 23 September.

Actions: Secretariat to circulate business planning documents to Commissioners.

Commissioners' Strategic Priorities 2020-25

9. It was acknowledged that the Secretariat would continue to review the 2022/23 Business Planning documents to ensure clarity around roles, responsibilities and successful implementation of the Business Plan.

New Commissioner

10. Lesley Carroll had been appointed as Commissioner from 1 July 2022 for a period of 5 years following the end of Jim Scholes' term as Commissioner, (after a period of 10 years) on 30 June 2022.

Staffing – Update

11. The Secretary provided an overview of the staffing arrangements and advised that the secondment of the EO paid post had ended on 30 June 2022 and that the position would not be filled due to budgetary pressures.

12. The secondment of the Deputy Secretary would come to an end in early 2023 and it was planned to extend the secondment for another year.

2021/22 Annual Report

13. Commissioners were furnished with a hard copy of the report for their consideration and comment. An update on the information outstanding was provided along with details of how this would impact the OCSC's timeline for publication.

14. Commissioners noted the revised timetable for the completion of the report.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION TRANSFORMATION GROUP – REVIEW

14. The Secretariat and Commissioners discussed the activity of the Group and noted the minutes from the previous meeting were still outstanding (but due shortly). Commissioners discussed the agenda and Recommendation 3.4 from the NIAO Capacity and Capability report. It was agreed that a separate item would be placed on the agenda for the September meeting requesting an update on all outstanding actions/work to date.
15. It was also agreed that the Terms of Reference would be placed on the November agenda for review to ensure the objectives and responsibilities were current and relevant to the Northern Ireland Audit Office recommendations.

Action: (i) Additional item placed on the agenda for the September meeting and (ii) Place Terms of Reference on the November agenda

NICS INWARD AND OUTWARD SECONDMENT POLICY - UPDATE

16. Commissioners noted that the NICS revised Secondment Policy had been implemented and that the Commissioners' Recruitment Code (V14) had been amended to reflect this. The NICS had further ended its embargo on Outward Secondments.

RECRUITMENT CODE

17. Consideration was given to the Recruitment Code (V14) and the need to consider additional wording regarding conflicts of interest and chairing responsibilities.

CASEWORK UPDATE

Appointments by Way of Exception

18. Commissioners noted that during this quarter one request under Regulation 3(a) had been received and approved.

Recruitment Code Related Complaints and Queries

19. Commissioners reviewed the table detailing the complaints/queries and noted the actions by the Secretariat.

Requests for Information

20. The Secretariat advised that one Freedom of Information request had been received, which related to Multi-Functional Devices and printing/scanning services contract(s). A response had been issued within the statutory time frame of 20 working days.

ENGAGEMENT WITH UK CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

21. The Secretariat provided an overview of the discussions with the outgoing and incoming Chief Executives of the UK Civil Service Commission. The purpose of the meeting, held on 2 August 2022, was primarily an introductory meeting and discussions progressed to include roles and responsibilities, policy sharing, and budgets and finances. It was agreed that both Secretariats would meet on a quarterly basis and several topics for discussion were considered.
22. It was agreed to invite the UK Civil Service Commission to visit the Commissioners at Erskine House, Belfast in the future.

Action: Arrange for an invitation to be issued to the UK Civil Service Commission inviting them to Northern Ireland.

EQUALITY AND DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT WITH ECNI

23. Commissioners were referred to the forthcoming training event that was planned for Friday 23 September and the topics that would be covered during the awareness session.
24. After consideration Commissioners requested another item regarding agency staff be added to the agenda.

Action: Add an additional item to the agenda and email the the updated agenda to the Equality Commission.

RECENT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

25. Commissioners were referred to the table of recent and future meetings and were asked to provide details of their availability in the coming months to facilitate further meetings.
26. Commissioners were also advised that meetings planned for Monday 19 September 2022 would be reorganised if this date was declared a Bank Holiday due to the death of Her Majesty The Queen.

Action: Re-organise meetings planned for Monday 19 September 2022 if day is declared a Bank Holiday.

AUDIT REPORT (Paper 22 and Annex A)

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

Outstanding recommendations: 2020/21 Audit and Review Plan

28. The DP referred to the *2020/21 Desktop Compliance Review of Competitions below SCS* and provided an update on the work ongoing to address the one outstanding recommendation. Commissioners were advised that NICSHR intended to send a revised equality monitoring proposal in the coming weeks with a sample of completed competitions for their consideration. This will be an agenda item for the Workforce Review/Equality monitoring meeting due to be held with Commissioners on 29 November 2022.
29. It was also agreed to discuss the related outstanding recommendation from the *2020/21 Review of Evidence* which underpins the DoF Permanent Secretary Statement of Compliance at this meeting.

Outstanding recommendations: 2021/22 Audit and Review Plan

30. The DP referred to correspondence between the Commissioners and NICSHR regarding the review of NICS Processes for Managing and Monitoring the Tenure of Secondments. The most recent correspondence from NICSHR, dated 31 August 2022, was discussed which confirmed that one central record management system is now in place. The letter also advised Commissioners that a validation exercise, to ensure the accuracy of the information, is intended for the near future. Commissioners discussed their proposed response to this correspondence.

Action: Commissioners to respond to NICSHR previous correspondence.

Progress against 2022/23 Audit and Review Plan

31. The DP noted that good progress had been made in relation to two audits below SCS level and that the Article 6 Compliance Audit had been completed. A date was agreed with Commissioners for a dedicated audit meeting to review the findings.
32. It was also agreed that an Audit and Engagement Meeting should be arranged with NICSHR and a proposed date was agreed.

Action: DP to organise audit meetings.

Agency Workers in the NICS

33. Commissioners reviewed the breakdown of agency workers within the NICS detailed in Annex A and agreed to discuss the out-workings of the data with NICSHR at the next Recruitment and Selection Transformation Meeting.

Action: Agency workers within the NICS to be added to R&S Transformation Group Agenda.

Other outstanding actions

34. The DP provided Commissioners with an update in relation to the NICS draft Internal Consultancy Paper and advised that due to annual leave over the summer period it was not yet complete. Once the document was received by NICSHR they would share the document with the Commissioners.

OFFICE BUSINESS PROCEDURES (Papers 23/22 and 24/22)

a) Emergency, Response, Recovery and Business Continuity Plan

The Secretariat advised that the Continuity Plan provided details on how the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners (OCSC) would ensure business processes were maintained if the office building or IT infrastructure was affected by an adverse event.

Commissioners were provided with a hard copy of the document and asked to keep this in a secure location due to the confidential and personal nature of the information detailed within.

b) Data Protection Policy

Commissioners were given a high level overview of the changes to the policy and advised that the NIO would be forwarded a copy of the document for comment.

Action: Secretariat to forward the Data Protection Policy to NIO for comment.

REVIEW OF POLICY ON CHAIRING OF SCS COMPETITIONS (Paper 25/22)

35. Commissioners were referred to the attached paper and proceeded to discuss potential scenarios regarding the appropriateness of continuing with scheduled interviews if a Commissioner was unavailable to chair due to illness or another emergency situation.
36. It was agreed that the policy needed to be amended:
- a) to address how parties would contact the OCSC at short notice;
 - b) to reword the 4th bullet point to say “both parties are content”; and
 - c) make it clear that the use of the policy would be in exceptional circumstances.

Action: Secretariat to amend the wording of the above policy to incorporate the Commissioners decision.

HOUSEKEEPING

37. Commissioners were advised that mileage should be calculated via the AA route planner and to ensure all car park receipts were retained for record keeping purposes. Commissioners were also asked to forward their fees in a timely manner to ensure prompt payment.
38. Commissioners were also advised to use their daily rate discount card at Victoria Centre carpark when parking in Belfast as this was the most cost effective method.

REGISTER OF INTERESTS (Paper 26/22)

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

AOB

39. Commissioners progressed to discuss the forthcoming DCVO competition and their role as an independent chair and regulator.

PHOTOGRAPH OF COMMISSIONERS FOR WEBSITE

40. A photograph of the three Commissioners was taken to allow the website to be updated.

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