

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

BUSINESS PLAN: 2021-2022

*Ensuring appointment on merit
& supporting ethical standards*

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STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: COMMISSIONER FUNCTIONS

OBJECTIVE:

Commissioners will safeguard an impartial and independent Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) by maintaining the principle of selection on merit and considering and determining appeals made by existing civil servants under the NICS Code of Ethics.

KEY ACTIONS:	ASSOCIATED TASKS:	DESIRED OUTCOME:
1.1 Providing assurance that all civil servants are recruited on the basis of fair and open recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scrutinise and consider requests made by NICS in relation to appointments made by way of exception to the Merit Principle; - Undertake an annual audit of the management of the SCS Authorisation process; - Publish an Annual Report; - In response to the NIAO's report on Capacity and Capability in the NICS published on 18 November 2020, review how Civil Service Commissioners may contribute to the implementation of recommendation 3.4 – <i>“The NICS and 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”.</i> 	Public confidence in the independence and effectiveness of NICS appointments process.
1.2 Prescribe in General Regulations the permitted exceptions to the Merit Principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review General Regulations with a view to identifying any improvements. 	Clear and unambiguous General Regulations which are fit for purpose.
1.3 Prescribe and publish the Recruitment Code ensuring it remains fit for purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor and make revisions to ensure the continued effectiveness of the Recruitment Code. 	A Recruitment Code which is fit for purpose, ensuring the Merit Principle is upheld.

<p>1.4 Audit NICS recruitment policies and practices to establish whether the Recruitment Code is being observed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct audits and reviews in line with Commissioners' Audit and Review Guidance and publish the results in the Annual Report; - Monitor the implementation of all audit recommendations. 	<p>Public confidence that appointments to the NICS are made on merit.</p>
<p>1.5 Require the publication of NICS recruitment related information including information related to the use of permitted exceptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the requirements set out in Appendix C of the Recruitment Code in order to ensure that the information published by the NICS is relevant and effectively supporting Commissioners' Annual Report; - Require the NICS to publish relevant recruitment information in accordance with Appendix C of the Recruitment Code. 	<p>Enhanced public access to information about recruitment to the NICS and the work of Commissioners.</p>
<p>1.6 Consider and determine appeals under the NICS Code of Ethics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage the appeals process for the NICS Code of Ethics in line with the Commissioners' Guidance; - In light of the expected publication of the Revised NICS Code of Ethics, review the suite of Commissioners' Code of Ethics Guidance documents and the approach to dealing with Code of Ethics Appeals to ensure they are effectively supporting Commissioners' statutory role and meeting the needs of appellants. 	<p>Effective handling of appeals made under the NICS Code of Ethics.</p>
<p>1.7 Provide written approval for appointments to any situation in the Senior Civil Service, or to any situation prescribed by the General Regulations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scrutinise and as appropriate audit requests to provide written approval for appointments to any situation in the SCS made in accordance Article 6; - Consider and make a determination on all requests for appointments to be made as exceptions to the Merit Principle; - Report on the outcome of all requests for appointments to be made as exceptions to the Merit Principle. 	<p>Public confidence that appointments to the NICS are made on merit.</p>

1.8 Engaging with the NICS and relevant stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage with key stakeholders to ensure promotion of Recruitment Code and its embedding into NICS recruitment practices; - Engage with GB and Irish counterparts to share good practice and learning. 	Public confidence that appointments to the NICS are made on merit.
1.9 Chairing SCS competitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chair all open SCS competitions. 	Public confidence that appointments to the NICS are made on merit.

TARGETS 2020/2021

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TIMESCALE	ASSOCIATED ACTION (S)	CURRENT STATUS (RAG)
One compliance audit and one thematic audit completed	March 2022	1.4	
Commissioners chair all open SCS competitions in accordance with the Recruitment Code	Ongoing	1.9	
Appendix C data is reviewed and requested from the NICS	December 2021	1.5	
Updated General Regulations consulted upon and published	September 2021	1.2	
Satisfactory audit of the management of the SCS Authorisation process for the previous financial year	July 2021	1.1	
Agreed Annual Report published	September 2021	1.1	
Revised suite of Commissioners' Code of Ethics Guidance documentation published (subject to publication of Revised Code)	June 2021	1.6	
All Code of Ethics appeals dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner	Ongoing	1.6	

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

(This evidence will be considered and analysed by Commissioners on a regular basis)

- Requests made by NICS in relation to appointments made by way of exception to the Merit Principle;
- Outcome of audits and reviews undertaken;
- Publication of relevant recruitment data by NICS in accordance with Appendix C of the Recruitment Code;
- Number of Code of Ethics appeals received and considered by Commissioners.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: GOVERNANCE**OBJECTIVE:****Comply with sponsor department's governance and financial requirements and fulfill our obligations as a public authority**

KEY ACTIONS:	ASSOCIATED TASKS:	DESIRED OUTCOME:
2.1 Maintain effective business planning arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Publish the agreed 2021/22 Business Plan;- Deliver the Business Plan and monitor and report quarterly on progress;- Schedule a Business Planning day to identify priorities for 2022/23 Business Plan.	Commissioners efficiently and effectively supported.
2.2 Discharge all statutory obligations as a public authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Put in place the necessary systems and procedures to ensure compliance with Government Information Assurance, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements, Equality, Disability and Diversity and Health and Safety duties and requirements;- Implementation of Equality Action Plan, Disability Action Plan and Data Protection Policy.	Compliance with all statutory obligations.
2.3 Comply with the OCSC(NI) Framework Document with the sponsoring department	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Comply with the requirements of the OCSC(NI) Framework document and report to NIO bi-annually.	Good governance is maintained with no breaches of internal controls.
2.4 Comply with sponsoring department's financial requirements, to ensure all resources are allocated and managed effectively to support the discharge of Commissioners' functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ensure financial systems procedures and practices meet NIO requirements;- Monitor current and future resources requirements;- Work with NIO to identify and if appropriate implement any efficiency targets with agreed timescales;- Monitor profiling against expenditure and conduct mid-year reviews of expenditure and advise NIO at earliest opportunity of any need for in year bid or easement.	No breaches of internal procedures with services delivered within budget.

TARGETS 2020/2021

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TIMESCALE	ASSOCIATED ACTION (S)	CURRENT STATUS (RAG)
2021/22 Business Plan published	1 st week in April 2021	2.1	
Business Planning day to consider priorities and inform drafting and development of 2022/23 Business Plan; Risk Register; and Learning and Development Plan held	November 2021	2.1	
Submission of Annual Equality Section 75 Progress Report to ECNI	August 2021	2.2	
OCSC Stewardship statements completed and returned to NIO bi-annually	November 2021 March 2022	2.3	
Budget variance within NIO tolerance	Monthly	2.4	

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

(This evidence will be considered and analysed by Commissioners on a regular basis)

- Quarterly monitoring of Business Plan progress, risk register and L&D plan;
- Completion of OCSC stewardship statements to NIO;
- Number of FOIs responded to;
- Financial Risk Management Statement.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: PEOPLE**OBJECTIVE:****Support the development of Commissioners and appointment and development of members of the Secretariat**

KEY ACTIONS:	ASSOCIATED TASKS:	DESIRED OUTCOME:
3.1 Ensure suitable arrangements are put in place to assist effective succession planning for the appointment and induction of Commissioners and members of the Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ensure staffing levels are adequate to discharge the functions of the Commissioners;- Identify when vacancies are likely to arise and liaise with NIO with regard to replacements.	Adequate staffing levels to support Commissioners' to discharge their statutory duties.
3.2 Deliver effective strategic leadership and performance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ensure that the Chair carries out the appraisal of Commissioners and ensure that the Secretariat understands fully the commitments in the Plan and their role in contributing to its effective delivery as reflected in all Forward Job Plans.	Clarity of purpose leading to the achievement of business objectives.
3.3 Meet the learning and development needs of Commissioners and Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify the learning and development needs of the Commissioners and Secretariat;- Agree, implement and monitor quarterly the learning and development plan.	Commissioners and Secretariat all suitably trained to meet business and professional needs.

TARGETS 2020/2021

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TIMESCALE	ASSOCIATED ACTION (S)	CURRENT STATUS (RAG)
Vacancies advertised and progressed in a timely manner	Ongoing	3.1	
100% of Commissioner and Secretariat appraisals undertaken	April 2021	3.2	
Learning and Development Plan complied with and actioned in full	Ongoing	3.3	
SUPPORTING EVIDENCE (This evidence will be considered and analysed by Commissioners on a regular basis) - Secretariat vacancies; - Commissioner vacancies; - Budget spend on training.			