



Department for
Communities

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Department für
Commonities

www.communities-ni.gov.uk

Libraries NI Board Competition

Councillor & Non-Councillor Members

Candidate Information Booklet

Completed applications must be returned to DfC Public Appointments
no later than 12 noon (GMT) on Monday 10 June 2024



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Equality of Opportunity and Diversity

The Department for Communities (DfC) is committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified people irrespective of religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation or whether or not they have dependants.

We would particularly welcome applications from women, disabled people, young people and people from minority ethnic groups.

An e-version application pack is available from publicappointments@communities-ni.gov.uk. This material will be made available on request in other formats such as Braille, large print, audio etc. All reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants with a disability.

Privacy Notice

DfC will only process the personal data you provide us for the purpose of recruiting Members to the Board of the Northern Ireland Library Authority (Libraries NI) under the Libraries Act (Northern Ireland) Act 2008, and in line with the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI Code of Practice. For more information, please see our Privacy Notice at www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/supplementary-privacy-notices-dfc-business-areas.

Contact

If you require further information about the appointment process or progress of your application, please contact Public Appointments as below:

028 9081 9417

publicappointments@communities-ni.gov.uk

Public Appointments, Governance Unit Level 5,
Causeway Exchange, 1-7 Bedford Street, Belfast, BT2 7EG

Under the terms of the Libraries Act (NI) 2008, MLAs cannot be Board Members.

For candidates applying for the Councillor Member positions, please note that these appointments are only applicable to Councillors currently serving on a local district council.

For candidates applying for the Non-Councillor Member positions, please note that these appointments are only applicable to members of the public and not to local Councillors.

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Dear Applicant,

Libraries NI - Appointment of Board Members

Thank you for your interest in joining the Board of Libraries NI.

Libraries NI is an arms-length body of the Department for Communities, with its primary duty being to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for persons living, working or studying in Northern Ireland. Libraries have a range of roles - cultural, educational, recreational and community – and they help people develop interests and enrich their lives.

Libraries are community hubs that provide free, inclusive, shared, accessible and trusted spaces. They are embedded in communities and used by people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds. With 89% of the population living within two miles of a branch library or mobile library stop, there is tremendous potential for libraries to provide local access to, and support for, a range of citizen-focused services.

The Department is now seeking new Councillor Members and Non-Councillors Members to the Board of Libraries NI who have a keen interest in the modern library service and a strong desire to contribute to its leadership and oversight.

If you would like any further detail on these positions, please contact Fionnuala Elliott (museumslibraries@communities-ni.gov.uk) in DfC Museums & Libraries Branch.

I hope the information enclosed encourages you to apply. Please remember to complete the documentation fully and return it by the required closing date.

Tony O’Neill

Head of Museums and Libraries Branch, DfC

Section 1

Background Information



1. This competition is for the appointment of three Councillor Members and two Non-Councillor Members to the Board of Libraries NI. It is anticipated that all appointments will be from 1 September 2024 for a period of four years, or until such other date as the Department may determine.

Libraries NI Information

2. Libraries NI is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by DfC. It was established on 1 April 2009 as a result of the Review of Public Administration with its functions set out in the Libraries Act (NI) 2008:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/2008/8/contents>

3. Libraries NI is responsible for the public library service, not including independent libraries or those in higher and further education. The organisation is required to:

- ensure that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to library materials sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements of adults and children (whether by keeping adequate stocks, by arrangements with other bodies concerned with library services or by any other means); and
- have regard to the desirability of:
 - encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service;
 - providing advice as to the use of the library service and making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using the service;
 - promoting literacy and lifelong learning;

- maintaining a collection of library materials relevant to our cultural heritage;
- making library premises available for cultural and community activities; and,
- meeting any special requirements of adults and children by any appropriate means.

4. Despite the current challenging financial position, Libraries NI continues to offer a wide range of programmes and services for children and adults. E-services continue to attract users. Programmes such as ‘Rhythm and Rhyme’ and the Summer Reading Challenge are designed to attract families and young children into the libraries. IT programmes, such as ‘Go ON!’, are designed to help people in the local community to improve their IT skills and to use library IT services. Libraries NI also runs a number of activities to encourage people in local communities to come to libraries in order to learn more about how they can improve their health and well-being and tackle issues such as stress, mindfulness and nutrition. Libraries NI also continues to provide free internet access either through on-site public access computers or free WiFi for users with their own devices.

5. In addition, Libraries NI also provide Homecall and mobile library services which not only provide stops for the general public to use but also a number of primary schools, mainly in more rural areas, to enable children who live some distance from a branch library to use the book lending facility.

6. Libraries NI currently provides a service through 96 libraries and 2 heritage libraries, 16 mobile libraries and 9 Homecall vehicles. Approximately 580 staff are employed in the library service, and it has a resource budget of circa. £31.8m for 2023/24 and a capital budget of circa. £7.5m.
7. Further information about the work of Libraries NI, including its Board, can be found at www.librariesni.org.uk
9. The NI Executive has introduced targets for the equal representation of men and women on public body boards.
10. If you are interested in applying for this competition, further information about public appointments, including how to complete an application form, can be found at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/public-appointment-application-process>
11. CPA NI periodically hosts a series of free, half-day workshops that aim to explain the Public Appointments process. Further information on these workshops, including upcoming dates, can be found at: <https://www.publicappointmentsni.org/workshops>. If you are unable to attend a workshop, the CPANI website hosts useful public appointment information.

Public Appointments Information

8. These appointments are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPA NI) and the competition may be examined by CPA NI for compliance with the Commissioner's Code of Practice.

Section 2

Role Profile



Role and Responsibilities of the Board

12. The Board of Libraries NI comprises a Chair and a number of Members, the majority of whom are councillors of local authorities. The Board's primary responsibility is to represent the Minister's interests, including delivering on Ministerial policies and priorities.
13. The purpose of the Libraries NI Board is to provide effective leadership and strategic direction to the organisation and to ensure that the policies and priorities set by the Minister for DfC are implemented. It is responsible for ensuring that the organisation has effective and proportionate governance arrangements in place and an internal control framework which allow risks to be effectively identified and managed. The Board will set the culture and values of the organisation and set the tone for the organisation's engagement with stakeholders and customers.
14. The Board is responsible for holding the Chief Executive to account for the management of the organisation and the delivery of agreed plans and outcomes. The Board should also however support the Chief Executive as appropriate in the exercise of their duties.
15. All Board Members, including those who are locally elected, must act solely in the interests of Libraries NI and must not use the Board as a platform to champion their own interests or pursue personal or political agendas. All information discussed within the confines of the Libraries NI Board must be treated confidentially.

They occupy a position of trust and their standards of action and behaviour must be exemplary and in line with the seven principles of public life (Nolan principles). Libraries NI has a Code of Conduct for Board Members and there are mechanisms in place to deal with any Board disputes/conflicts to ensure they do not become wider issues that impact on the effectiveness of the Board. A Board Register of Interests is maintained, kept up to date and is publicly available to help provide transparency and promote public confidence in Libraries NI.

16. Communication and relationships within the Board are underpinned by a spirit of trust and professional respect. It is also for the Board to decide what information it needs, and in what format, for its meetings/effective operation. The minimum information requirements for each Board meeting are set out in the Board Operating Framework.

Governance Arrangements

17. Good governance is essential to achievement of an organisation's strategic objectives and demonstration of accountability and transparency in the use of public funds. It is therefore an important area of focus for the Board. The Board is committed to high standards of corporate governance. It is responsible for ensuring that the organisation has effective and proportionate governance arrangements in place and an internal control framework which allow risks to be effectively identified and managed.

18. The Libraries NI Board structure is supported by four Sub-Committees. These are the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee; the Business Support Committee; the Remuneration Committee; and, the Services Committee. Further information on corporate governance can be found within the Libraries NI Annual Report which is available on its website.

Integrity, Conflicts of Interest & Conflicts of Loyalty

19. DfC must ensure that the individual appointed is committed to the principles and values of public service. These principles are: **Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership** and are described more fully at **Annex A**. Any private or personal interests that a potential appointee may have and that may be relevant to the work of Libraries NI must be declared publicly and to the Board.

20. DfC must take account of actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest or conflicts of loyalty. Conflict of loyalty is a particular type of conflict of interest, in which an individual's loyalty or duty to another person or organisation could prevent the individual from making a decision only in the best interests of the organisation.

21. Therefore, applicants must disclose in their application form information or personal circumstances which, if they were to be appointed, could lead to a conflict or be perceived as such. Conflicts may not be a barrier to appointment but both real and perceived conflicts must be discussed with all candidates by the selection panel.

This is to ensure that the public can have confidence in the Board's independence and impartiality and the integrity of the potential appointees.

22. Please refer to **Annex B** for further information on this subject. The Northern Ireland Audit Office has issued a Good Practice Guide on Conflicts of Interest which can be viewed at: <https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/conflicts-interest-good-practice>

Remuneration, Term of Appointment and Time Commitment

23. Members receive remuneration of £3,225 per year and the time commitment is at least 15 days per year including attendance at Board sub-committee meetings and other associated obligations. These appointments are for a period of four years from 1 September 2024, or until such other date as the Department may determine. For Councillor appointments, the length of term will be dependent on the outcome of any elections which may occur during this four-year period.

24. The Board meets bi-monthly, with Board and Sub-Committee meetings held at Lisburn City Library, or in other local libraries. Board meetings are held in-person. By applying for the post, it is assumed that you can meet the time commitment. This topic will be further discussed at interview for those shortlisted.

Appraisal

25. Members performance will be appraised on an annual basis by the Chair. This will be in line with current Libraries NI Board assessment processes.

Previous Appointments to the Libraries NI Board (the Two Terms Rule)

26. Under the CPA NI Code of Practice, appointments for the same position are restricted to two terms. Please indicate on the application form if you have previously served as a Libraries NI Board Member.

Section 3

Person Specification



Person Specification

27. Applications are welcome from a wide range of individuals who have an interest in public service. DfC wishes to recognise less traditional career paths and experiences such as community involvement or charitable and voluntary work, as well as those experiences found from within the business community, the third sector and wider public sector.
28. Candidates will be assessed against a number of set criteria. Details of each criterion and examples of the type of evidence the selection panel will be looking for in each instance are detailed below.

Selection Criteria

29. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate in their application form and - if shortlisted - at interview specific examples that show they are able to satisfy the essential criteria and have the skills, experience and knowledge required.

Note: The term 'organisation' can be defined as a body operating in the public, community, voluntary or private sectors.

Essential Criteria

1. Organisational Direction

Ability to make a contribution to an organisation's or team's overall direction.

Examples of the type of evidence the selection panel will be looking for are outlined below. You do not have to describe activities which meet each and every one of these bullet points, and you can draw on any personal experience:

- Ability to identify key issues that will impact on an organisation or team;
- Ability to plan an organisation's or team's objectives for the medium to long term ensuring targets are met;
- Understanding of, and considering the effect of, current and future internal and external factors when planning for the future of the organisation or team;
- Knowledge of the political, economic and social environment in which an organisation or team operates and why this is important;
- Consideration of potential future scenarios that may impact on the organisation or team and planning how they should be addressed;
- Involvement in the development and implementation of business or corporate plans to deliver on the aims of an organisation or team.

2. Governance

Experience of good governance within an organisation.

NB Governance refers to the way in which an organisation is directed and controlled. This includes how objectives are set, how resources are used, and how performance and risks are monitored and assessed.

Examples of the type of evidence the selection panel will be looking for are outlined below. You do not have to describe activities which meet each and every one of these bullet points, and you can draw on any personal experience:

- Identifying, evaluating and managing risks which may have an adverse impact on an organisation's performance;
- Using risk management systems / audit functions to manage risk;
- Developing / implementing / monitoring of key governance and risk documents / policies;
- Understanding your role in the promotion of good governance including how to reduce any potential reputational damage or fraud;
- Constructively challenging decisions, policies or procedures on the basis of gathering relevant evidence;
- Holding people to account for decisions reached;
- Demonstrating standards of behaviour that gain a reputation of trust and integrity within a team / organisational environment.

3. Relevant Experience

The Libraries NI Board requires a strong mix of skills and experiences to be successful. Candidates with experience in one of the below areas are sought. Therefore using one of the below areas please demonstrate, by way of example (or examples), the skills you possess that the Board would benefit from. Please ensure that you complete only the area that you are providing an example(s) for:

3(a) Volunteering/Community Experience

Experience of undertaking a development role in relation to a community or range of communities in order to expand the influence/reach of an organisation.

Examples of the type of evidence the selection panel will be looking for are outlined below:

- Evidence of working with diverse groups to ensure a broad and equitable engagement with an organisation or service;
- Experience of enhancing accessibility within an organisation to maximise the diversity of stakeholders;
- Experience of working with groups of stakeholders to enhance and develop strong interfaces with broad communities;
- An understanding of the issues faced by organisations and individuals with respect of equality and diversity matters;
- Ability to act in an ambassadorial role to champion the work of an organisation.

3(b) Property Management

Experience of effective property management within an organisation.

Examples of the type of evidence the selection panel will be looking for are outlined below:

- Sound estate and property management experience within an organisation including identification of issues through to resolution;
- Ability to using evidence, experience and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional property advice;
- Experience of making decisions relating to property management activity and performance;
- Awareness and understanding of economic, social and environmental considerations relating to estate and property management;
- Experience of introducing plans, strategies and/or models to support all related activities.

3(c) Financial understanding

Ability to analyse, understand and challenge financial statements, documents and budgets.

Examples of the type of evidence the selection panel will be looking for are outlined below.

You do not have to describe activities which meet each and every one of these bullet points, and you can draw on any personal experience:

- Financial management experience within an organisation or team;
- Experience of making decisions relating to financial activity and performance;
- Ability to forecast financial trends and anticipate strategic business issues;
- Ability to analyse financial statements, business plans, corporate plans and budgets;
- Ability to identify key financial issues and achieve efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

Section 4

Application, Selection and Assessment



How to Apply and Contact Details

30. All applications must be made on the form provided. Hard copy or electronic versions are acceptable, although you are encouraged to return your application via e-mail. Completed application forms can be delivered by hand, post or email to:

Email:

publicappointments@communities-ni.gov.uk

Post:

Public Appointments
Governance Unit
Department for Communities
Level 5
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast, BT2 7EG

Telephone:

028 9081 9417

If you have any queries regarding the appointment process or any other aspect of this competition, please contact Ruth McNeill via the above contact details.

31. Applicants must demonstrate clearly in the application form how and to what extent their personal experience is relevant to the selection criteria. In the application form, examples may be used from applicants' working or personal life, e.g. part-time or leisure activities, including any voluntary or community work they are or have been involved in. Applicants should take full advantage to provide practical evidence and example(s) of how they consider that they meet the requirements for these appointments. Further advice and guidance

can be found within the application form and the Public Appointments Guide which is available at:

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/public-appointments-guide-overview-public-appointments-northern-ireland-and-helpful-information>

32. To ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants:

- only completed application forms will be accepted;
- applicants must ensure their completed application form is legible, whether this is completed electronically or handwritten;
- the number of words is limited to 350 per criterion;
- applications will not be examined until after the closing deadline; and
- application forms will be anonymised for sift purposes.

33. It is the **applicant's responsibility** to ensure that their application form is complete.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

34. DfC is required to monitor a number of areas including gender, ethnic origin, community background and disability of applicants to ensure that equal opportunities measures are effective. Applicants are therefore asked to complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring form included in the application pack. The information is purely for monitoring purposes. It is not made available to the selection panel and does not play any part in the decision-making process.

Timeframe for Process

35. **The deadline for receipt of all applications is 12 noon (GMT) on Monday 10 June 2024.** It is the responsibility of the applicant, taking into account their chosen method of delivery, to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for their application to arrive with the Department, on or before the deadline. **Late applications will not be accepted.**
36. Applicants who send their application form electronically should note that the date and time at which the application was received as recorded by DfC's IT system will be used to determine whether an application sent electronically is received before or after the closing date/time.
37. Once your application has been received, it will be acknowledged within 3 working days.

Sifting and Shortlisting of Applications

38. The selection panel will meet to consider applications by 24 June 2024 and will carry out a sift exercise, against a rating scale, to assess how the skills, knowledge, experience and other qualities presented in your application meet the selection criteria. Applications provided to the selection panel will be anonymised, which means that it will not include your name or personal details.

39. Only those applications that meet the essential criteria will be considered for interview. If a high number of applications are received, the panel reserves the right to apply a rating system to further shortlist applicants for interview, so that the top scoring candidates for both Councillor and Non-Councillor Members progress to interview. In addition, if there is a high number of applicants the Department may introduce a 'sift panel' which will consist of a Departmental representative, and two CPANI Independent Assessors. This panel will conduct the sift exercise, with the Departmental representative and the lead CPANI Assessor also taking part in the interview stage.
40. All applicants sifted out will be provided with feedback based on the selection panel's agreed assessment of their application, if requested, as well as having the option of asking for a review of the selection panel's decision.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS)

41. The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability who meet all of the essential criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place.

Interviews and Outcomes

42. Interviews are scheduled to take place on 24, 25 and/or 26 July in Causeway Exchange, Bedford Street, Belfast. Further details will be provided to candidates invited for interview.

The selection panel members are:

- Tony O'Neill: Head of Museums & Libraries Branch, DfC (Chair);
- Bonnie Anley: Chair of Libraries NI (Panel Member); and
- Raymond Mullan: Commissioner for Public Appointments NI Independent Assessor (Independent Panel Member).

43. The interview will be criteria based which means that all the questions asked by the selection panel will be linked to the criteria and you will be asked to provide specific examples. The selection panel will score your answers against pre-determined criteria and indicators. Candidates invited for interview are eligible for reimbursement of reasonable travelling expenses incurred within the UK and Ireland only.

Candidates are asked to advise DfC Public Appointments if they anticipate difficulties attending on the dates specified.

44. The selection panel will score candidates at interview against an agreed pass mark and those found to have achieved the pass mark will be recommended for appointment. All candidates will be updated on the outcome of their interview, with feedback on their performance provided upon request. The Minister for Communities has stipulated that appointments will be made on the basis of unranked (alphabetical) lists of candidates.

45. A 'candidate summary' will be agreed by the panel. This will provide an objective analysis of each candidate's skills and experience, based on the information provided by each candidate during the appointment process and the panel's assessment of that candidate, and inform the final appointment decision. The summaries will be presented in an unranked order to the Minister.

Appointment

46. The candidates selected as either a Councillor Member or Non-Councillor member will have their appointment confirmed formally in writing. Those candidates not selected will also be advised in writing of the outcome.
47. Before appointment, a cross-departmental check will be carried out on the probity and performance of candidates who currently hold or have held public appointment roles.
48. Reserve lists for these positions may be created should an unforeseen vacancy arise within 12 months from when the appointments are made.

Publicising Appointments and Diversity

49. A press release will be published to announce the appointments with the appointees required to complete a political activity form and approve a short biography for publication. The biography will be based on information provided throughout the competition process.
50. The press release will include:
 - The appointee's name;
 - A short description of Libraries NI;
 - A brief summary of the skills and knowledge they bring to the role;
 - The length of the appointment term and detail on remuneration;

- Details of all other ministerial public appointments held and any related remuneration received; and
 - Details of the appointee's response to the political activity question.
51. DfC is committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified people irrespective of religious belief, gender, disability, ethnic origin, political opinion, age, marital status, sexual orientation or whether or not they have dependants. Applications are particularly welcome from women, people with a disability, young people and people from minority ethnic groups as these are under-represented across public appointments.
 52. All public appointments must be made on the basis of merit. Only those individuals judged to best meet the requirement of the post will be recommended for appointment.

Induction and Training

53. The candidates appointed will be expected to attend appropriate induction and training courses as a condition of appointment. Further information will be provided upon appointment.
54. **Every effort will be made to provide whatever reasonable support is needed to help the new appointees carry out their duties.**

Complaints

55. If you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of this appointments process, you should in the first instance contact DfC's Head of Governance and Public Appointments who will manage your complaint.

FAO Head of Governance and
Public Appointments
Department for Communities
Level 5, Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast, BT2 7EG

Email:

CGU@communities-ni.gov.uk

Telephone:

028 90819192

56. If you remain dissatisfied you may then write to:

Commissioner for Public
Appointments Northern Ireland

Email:

info@publicappointments.org

Section 5

Other Relevant Information



Double Paying (Candidates from the Public Sector)

57. Candidates who already work in the public sector need to be aware that:

- they may be ineligible for consideration for this appointment if in DfC's view there is a conflict of interest, the perception of a conflict or a potential conflict, between the appointment and their existing commitments;
- they will be asked to confirm that they have permission from their employer to take up an appointment if one is offered and the employer will be asked to confirm this.
- there is a general guiding principle that an individual should not be paid twice from the public purse for the same period of time. As a result applicants who already work in the public sector may not be entitled to claim remuneration including expenses for this position if the duties are undertaken during a period of time for which they are already paid by the public sector. If in doubt contact your employer for advice.

In the interests of minimising the potential for double paying to occur the Department reserves the right to contact your employer regarding your candidature.

Former Civil Servant

58. Any former civil servant applying for this position must comply with the relevant approvals from section 6.1 Annex 4 of the NICS HR Handbook – Standards of Conduct, i.e. for SCS to seek approval for any appointment up to two years following leaving the service, and following one year for G6 and below. This should be ascertained in advance of any application being submitted.

ANNEX A



The Seven Principles of Public Life

Public appointees are expected to uphold the seven principles of public life as set by the Committee on Standards in Public Life:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

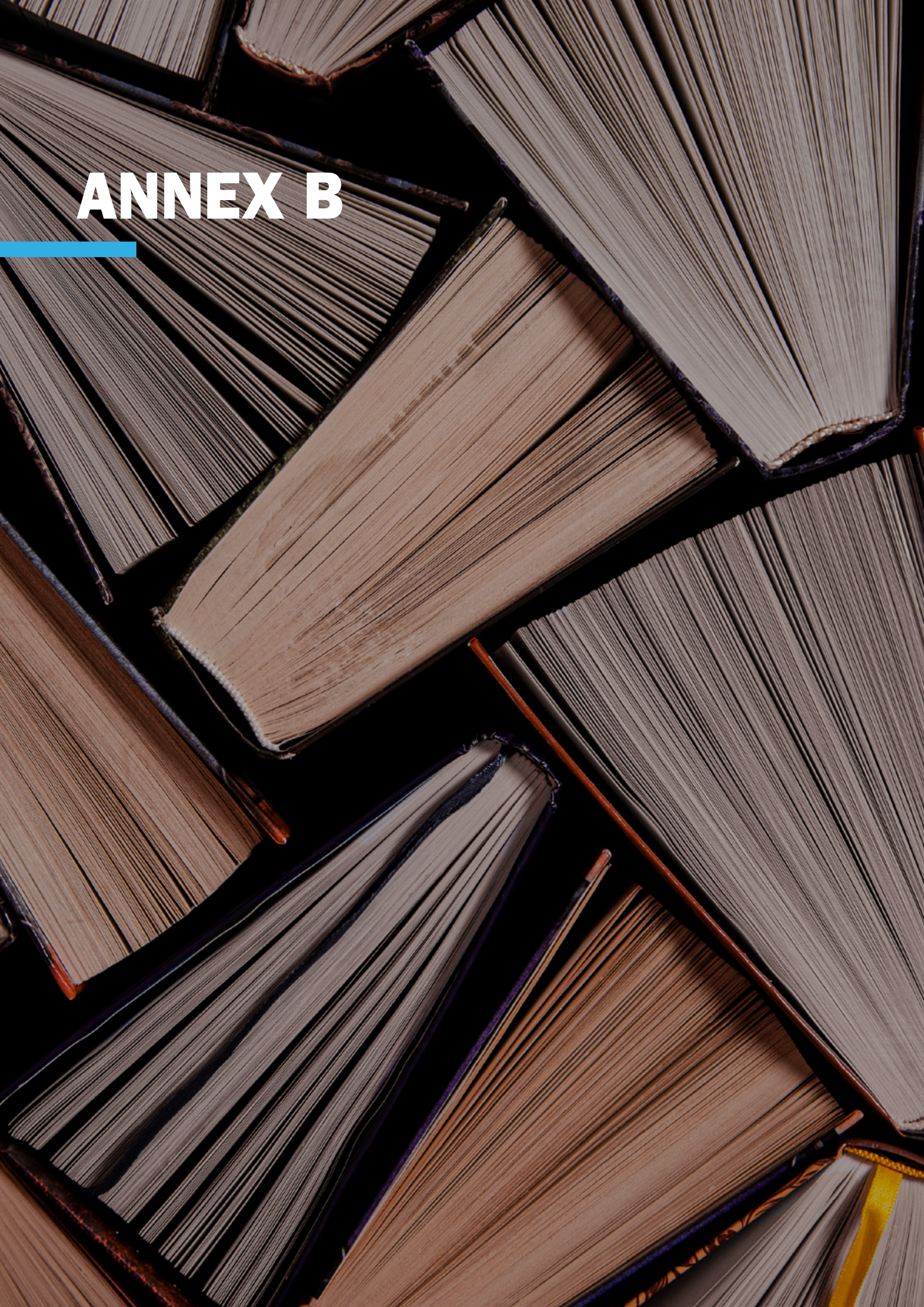
Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

ANNEX B



Integrity and Conflicts of Interest – Guide for Candidates

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the information contained in the leaflet “Guidance on Conflicts of Interest, Integrity and How to Raise a Complaint” produced by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, Northern Ireland, which provides examples of the types of issues that may give rise to conflicts of interests.

All candidates who put themselves forward for a public appointment must be able to demonstrate their commitment to the principles and values of public service. One of the issues which might arise in relation to this is that of conflict of interest.

What is a conflict of interest?

1. Public Appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared. There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasions, be as damaging as the existence of a real conflict.
2. No-one should use, or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private interests. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and receives a lot of media attention. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

Surely a perceived conflict is not a problem, as long as I act impartially at all times?

3. The integrity of the individual is not in question here. However, it is necessary for the standing of the individual and the board that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of a board member can be extremely damaging to the body's reputation and it is therefore essential that these are declared and explored, in the same way as an actual conflict would be. The fact that a member acted impartially may be no defence against accusations of potential bias.

What should I do if I think I have a conflict of interest?

4. You will find a section on conflicts of interest in the application form for you to complete. This asks you to consider and declare whether or not you have a real, or perceived, conflict. If you are unsure if your circumstances constitute a possible conflict, you should still complete this section, in order to give the Selection Panel as much information as possible.

If I declare a conflict, does this mean I will not be considered for appointment?

5. No - each case is considered individually. If you are short-listed for interview, the Panel will explore with you how far the conflict might affect your ability to contribute effectively and impartially on the board and how this might be handled, if you were to be appointed. For example, it may be possible to arrange for you to step out of meetings where an issue is discussed, in which you have an interest. However, if, following the discussion with you, the Panel believes that the conflict is too great and would call into question the probity of the board or the appointment, they can withdraw your application from the competition.

6. The report on the outcome of the interview process which is put to the Minister and/or Department will include clear written reference to any perceived or actual conflicts of interest or integrity issues connected to any candidate put forward as suitable for appointment. It will include sufficient information to ensure that the Minister and/or Department is fully aware of any of these matters and can make an informed decision.

What happens if I do not declare a known conflict, which is then discovered by the Department after my appointment?

7. Again, each case would be considered on its merits, but the Department may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached the Seven Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public Life and may terminate your appointment.

What happens if I do not realise a potential conflict exists?

8. This situation may arise where the candidate is not familiar with the broad range of work which a body covers and therefore does not realise that a conflict might exist. In some cases, the Panel, with their wider knowledge of the body, might deduce that there is a potential conflict issue, based on the information on employment and experience provided by the candidate in the application form. They will then explore this at interview with the candidate.

What happens if a conflict of interest arises after an appointment is made?

9. This could arise for two main reasons. The first is that the member's circumstances may change, for example, they may change jobs and in doing so, a conflict with their work on the board becomes apparent. The second is where a member is unfamiliar with the range of the work of the body, but after appointment, it becomes clear that a conflict exists where none had been envisaged during the appointment process.
10. In both cases, the issue should be discussed with the Chair of the board and the Chief Executive of the body concerned, in consultation with the Sponsoring Department, to decide whether or not the member can continue to carry out their role in an appropriate manner and each case is considered individually.
11. It may be that the conflict is such that it would be impractical for the member to continue on the board, if they would have to withdraw from a considerable amount of the body's routine business. In such cases, the member may be asked to stand down from the board.

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