



## **PRESS NOTICE**

### **CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION RESPONDS TO GOVERNMENT'S REFORM PLAN PROPOSALS ON PERMANENT SECRETARY APPOINTMENTS**

The Civil Service Commission – the independent statutory body charged with ensuring that appointments to the Civil Service are made on merit after fair and open competition – has today responded to the Government's proposal in the Civil Service Reform Plan that Ministers should have a greater role in Permanent Secretary appointments.

The Commission explains its approach to Ministerial involvement in Permanent Secretary appointments in a new explanatory note, published today. That makes clear that the relevant Secretary of State should be consulted at each stage of the appointment process. This includes:

- consultation at the outset about the outcome of the job, the skills required and the selection process;
- meeting each of the short-listed candidates and giving feedback to the selection panel on any strengths and weaknesses to be probed at final interview; and



- possible further involvement after the final interviews, where the panel is uncertain about the relative merits of the leading candidates.

The Commission, however, stops short of allowing the Secretary of State to choose from a list of appointable candidates. The final decision on who to recommend remains with the independent selection panel chaired by the First Civil Service Commissioner. The Prime Minister may decide not to appoint the recommended candidate, but in that case the selection process starts again.

Sir David Normington, First Civil Service Commissioner, said

“We welcome the Government’s determination to raise Civil Service performance and share its ambition to get the best people into the top jobs. That, after all, is what the legal requirement for selection on merit to a non-political Civil Service is all about.

“We believe this is best achieved, not by the decision of any one person, but by competitions overseen by independent panels, drawing on a wide range of evidence. We agree that Ministers should have significant influence on the appointment of senior civil servants with whom they work closely; and, as more senior jobs are opened up to competition, we have developed a more active role for Ministers in top appointments than is generally understood. This is reflected in the detailed note we have published today.



“We have looked hard at how we might strengthen Ministerial involvement. However, our practice stops short of allowing Ministers to choose from a list of recommended candidates, requiring, as now, that the final recommendation of the best candidate should be made by the selection panel, drawing on all the evidence. In our view this maintains the essential balance between involving Ministers fully in the process, while safeguarding a non political Civil Service, selected on merit.”

The Commission is also publishing today a short explanatory note on the flexibility which exists within the current legal framework to make short term, time-limited appointments without full open competitions. This responds to a proposal in the Civil Service Reform Plan to allow Departments to make short-term appointments to meet urgent business needs. Such appointments are possible with the Commission’s approval under the existing framework and the Commission does not believe any change is needed as a result of the Government’s proposal.

### **Notes to Editors**

1. **Media enquiries about the work of the Commission should go to Maggie O’Boyle on 07880 740 627.**
2. Further information about the work of the Civil Service Commission is available at <http://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk>
3. The Civil Service Commission is independent of Ministers and the Civil Service. It is responsible for maintaining the principle of recruitment to the Civil Service through selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Commission also advises Departments on the promotion of



the Civil Service Code and hears and determines appeals from civil servants under it.

4. The Civil Service Commission was established as a statutory body in November 2010 under the provisions of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. Commissioners are appointed under Schedule 1 Part 1 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 which specifies that Commissioners are appointed by Her Majesty on the recommendation of the Minister for the Civil Service and that selection for recommendation must be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.
5. The Commission comprises senior figures from the private, public and third sectors. Civil Service Commissioners are appointed by the Crown for five-year non-renewable terms of office. Sir David Normington is the senior Commissioner, known as the First Commissioner. His five year term as First Civil Service Commissioner began on 1 April 2011. Sir David Normington was also appointed Commissioner for Public Appointments on 1 April 2011. He is the first person to be appointed as dual post-holder of these two positions.