

PRESS NOTICE

16 July 2013

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2012-13

‘Recruitment of key skills hard and getting harder’ says Sir David Normington

The Civil Service Commission, the independent regulator of appointment to the Civil Service which ensures that appointments are made on merit after a fair and open competition, today published its annual report for 2012-13.

First Civil Service Commissioner, Sir David Normington said:

“The Government’s Civil Service Reform Plan, with its emphasis on raising the performance and skills of the Civil Service, has been a major focus for us this year. The Commission has sought to get behind the Plan through our chairing of over 100 competitions to fill senior posts, by producing new guidance on how to bring in fixed term appointees to address immediate skills gaps and by continuing to highlight the barriers, as we see them, to recruiting people at senior levels with the skills which are most needed.

“I commented last year on the difficulties of recruiting for key skills in some competitions because of the uncompetitive pay on offer. But on the basis of the past year I need to sound a more serious warning. In the past year the number of competitions for senior posts in which there has been no appointment or a limited field of candidates has grown. Some, but not all of them, have been in the critical areas of skill shortage identified in the Civil

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Service Reform Plan: IT, programme and project management, commercial and procurement, financial management. We are seriously concerned that without a complete rethink of the current approach to senior pay, the Civil Service will struggle to attract the very skills it needs and may find it harder to retain the talent it already has in critical areas.

“The Civil Service Reform Plan also contained proposals that Ministers should be able to choose their Permanent Secretaries from a list of appointable candidates. We are clear that Ministers must be fully involved in the appointments process but we are wary of any step which risks increasing political or personal patronage in senior appointments. The Commission, therefore, published new guidance on Permanent Secretary appointments in December. While this does not go as far as the Government wished by giving Ministers the final choice, it does make clearer than ever before the importance of active Ministerial involvement at each stage of the selection process. We have agreed with the Government that we will review how this new guidance has worked later in the year.

Sir David continued:

“There have been a number of think-tank reports, discussions and other proposals throughout the year on reforming appointments to the Civil Service and the Commission is keen to play its part in informing and progressing the debate about how we recruit and retain talent in challenging times. In our annual report I have set out the key tests that we will use for considering any proposals which impact on the Commission’s statutory responsibilities for ensuring that selection to an impartial Civil Service is on merit after fair and open. They are: whether the proposals will create a more effective civil service? Whether they put at risk the Civil Service’s impartiality? And whether significant changes to the Civil Service command broad political consensus and wider public support?”

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The annual report is available to download from the Commission's website:

<http://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/>

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.
5. Civil Service Commissioners are appointed by the Crown. They are appointed for a five-year non-renewable term of office. There are currently 11 Commissioners. 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.