

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION BUSINESS PLAN 2015-06

Foreword

The Commission's Business Plan has been drawn up against the background of several external factors that have the potential to influence significantly the work of the Commission over the coming year and which may require the Business Plan to be amended in-year.

The first of these factors is the Triennial Review into the Civil Service Commission commissioned by the Government. The Review report recommended a number of additions to the Commission's role. The Commission will be working with the Government to agree next steps in respect of the recommendations over the coming months. This may lead to changes to the objectives in the Business Plan.

The second factor is the decision announced in the Government's *Civil Service Reform: Progress Report* that, in future, there would be a presumption in favour of external advertising for Senior Civil Service posts below Permanent Secretary grade, a change that is due to come into effect in April 2015. This is likely to lead to a significant increase in the number of senior competitions at the levels where Commissioners are usually directly involved in recruitment. The impact on the Commission's workload and resources arising from this may affect our ability to meet other objectives. We will need to keep this under review.

Finally, a third factor that might affect the Business Plan is the forthcoming General Election and the approach that any incoming Government might take towards the Commission and its work.

**Civil Service Commission
March 2015**

THEME ONE: To be firm on principles but pragmatic on process

| Objective | Performance Indicators/Targets |
|--|---|
| We will continue to support departments in their application of the Recruitment Principles. We will particularly engage with Civil Service Resourcing to ensure that centrally supplied HR services are compliant with the Recruitment Principles. | Meetings with CSR at least four times in the year. |
| We will work with those specifically recruiting for specialisms to seek to ensure that this recruitment is compliant and takes advantage of the Recruitment Principles flexibilities. | Meetings with Government Digital Service at least twice in the year. Meeting with the relevant recruitment team in CSR at least twice in the year |
| We will review the exception relating to Extended Ministerial Offices (EMOs), and the new arrangements for Permanent Secretary appointments. | Assess the use and effectiveness of the new arrangements for Permanent Secretary appointments by March 2016. EMO review completed by December 2015 |
| We will conduct an in-depth review of the use of exceptions to the requirement for selection for appointment on merit following fair and open competition, to assess the need for further guidance. | Review completed, July 2015 |
| Through our compliance-monitoring contract, put in place arrangements to enable a move to real-time data collection by the end of 2015-16. | Timetable agreed by May 2015 Guidance to Departments issued by September 2015 Roll out in place by March 2016. |
| <i>We will ensure that we meet the urgent business needs of Departments by responding flexibly and promptly to requests for exceptions to the normal arrangements for recruitment on merit following fair and open competition.</i> | <i>95% of requests for new exceptions to be turned round within five working days or less (average response time < 48 hours) and to a standard that no reconsideration requests are required. 95% of requests for extended exceptions to be turned round within five working days or a longer deadline as agreed with the Department in the context of the existing exception expiry date</i> |

THEME TWO: To work with the Civil Service to improve recruitment practices and help achieve better outcomes

| Objective | Performance Indicators/Targets |
|--|---|
| We will work with organisations to improve the standard of recruitment below the senior level, as assessed by the compliance monitoring process. | All data reviews involving Departments using CSR completed by December 2015. Board to consider emerging trends from compliance monitoring data, ongoing. |
| We will develop tailored programmes of support for high-risk departments to help improve their compliance and capability. | At least one support visit for each 'red' or 'amber-red' Department during 2015-16. |
| We will work with Civil Service Resourcing (CSR) and Civil Service Employment Policy (CSEP) to consider the requirement for guidance on how to record uses of exceptions etc as compliant with the revised Recruitment Principles. | Any areas for guidance identified by July 2015 with guidance agreed by October 2015. Review policy on 'internal plus' competitions by June 2015. |
| <i>We will maintain close working relationships with those responsible for recruitment within departments, to ensure that the Commission is, and is seen as, a facilitator for improvement in outcomes.</i> | <i>Quarterly meetings between Commission and senior HR Directors and CSR. Link Commissioners to maintain appropriate contact with linked departments. Secretariat teams to hold at least one round of meetings with departmental contacts. Chief Executive to hold at least quarterly meetings with senior CSR contacts. Meetings with CSR specialist recruitment team at least four times in the year.</i> |
| <i>We will handle all complaints made under the Recruitment Principles in line with published guidance.</i> | <i>Up to date guidance published on Commission website on a regular basis.</i> |
| <i>As agreed with the Cabinet Office, we will continue to review the recruitment practices of accredited NDPBs [on a three-yearly-cycle] and encourage a wider policy-led consideration of the scheme.</i> | <i>One third of accredited NDPBs to be reviewed by March 2016.</i> |

THEME THREE: To improve understanding of the Commission's purpose and approaches

| Objective | Performance Indicators/Targets |
|--|--|
| To review the information and assets on the website targeted particularly at departmental contacts to see they are comprehensive and user friendly. | Review completed by August 2015, with revisions implemented by December 2015. |
| We will run a series of training workshops for Departmental staff to increase understanding and awareness of the revised Recruitment Principles. | 3 workshops run by end July 2015. At least 3 more workshops run by end March 2016 |
| We will organise at least one Open Week event; either virtual, physical or a combination. | Open Week to be held by March 2016. |
| <i>We will act as a source of advice and expertise on recruitment within the Civil Service and on the Civil Service Code and values.</i> | <i>Respond to 95% of departmental queries about Commission policies within three working days . Provide information, as required, to members of the public and representatives of non-UK bodies.</i> |
| <i>We will publish regularly information about the Commission's work.</i> | <i>Annual Report & Accounts published and laid in Parliament by summer recess 2015 and in the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly in similarly timely manner. Monthly update of transparency data on website (covering the outcomes of competitions chaired by Commissioners, the details of senior exception appointments approved by the Commission and the outcome of Code and Recruitment Principles complaints). Publication of compliance results shortly after reviews take place Regular publication of Board minutes and papers (where appropriate).</i> |
| <i>We will respond to requests for information in line with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 1998; taking into account Information Commissioner and Ministry of Justice guidance, and the views of our legal adviser.</i> | <i>Acknowledge receipt within 3 working days. Respond to request within 20 working days unless extra time needed to consider the public interest under one of the relevant exceptions. If required, to complete consideration of public interest and provide a response within a further 20 working days.</i> |

THEME FOUR: To support an effective and diverse Civil Service that reflects and has the confidence of the people it serves

| Objective | Performance Indicators/Targets |
|--|---|
| <p>Through our chairing of senior competitions, we will seek to improve both the diversity of the fields of applicants in competitions for the most senior posts within the Civil Service and the proportion of applicants completing diversity returns.</p> | <p>Regular monitoring of the diversity of the applicant pool and the successful candidates in senior competitions with the aim of supporting Departments to achieve year on year improvement in both the diversity of their appointments and the proportion of candidates completing diversity returns</p> <p>Review the diversity monitoring returns of search consultants used in Commissioner chaired competitions by Oct 2015 and meet with firms to increase awareness/quality of returns. Further review by March 2016 to plot progress of improvement.</p> |
| <p>Through our compliance monitoring audit, we will assess the diversity of applicant fields, and the state of diversity monitoring, in competitions below the level chaired by Commissioners</p> | <p>Assessment complete and further action by Sept 2015</p> |
| <p>We develop and support (with Cabinet Office) an effective network of Nominated Officers in departments dealing with Civil Service Code cases, and ensure that the information on our website meets their needs.</p> | <p>Implement a package of measures to support Nominated Officers, ongoing to June 2015.</p> <p>Arrange at least one roundtable discussion between members of the Commission and Nominated Officers, by November 2015.</p> |
| <p><i>We will handle all complaints made under the Civil Service Code in line with published guidance.</i></p> | <p><i>Acknowledge receipt within three working days.</i></p> <p><i>Complete initial assessment (whether it is within scope) within 15 working days.</i></p> <p><i>Design and meet appropriate investigation timetable on a case-by-case basis.</i></p> |

5. BUILDING OUR CAPABILITY

| Objective | Performance Indicators/Targets |
|---|---|
| We will work closely with the Cabinet Office in taking forward those recommendations in the Triennial Review falling to the Commission. | Hold a scoping meeting with the Cabinet Office in March 2015 after the board has considered the relevant recommendations in the Triennial Review Taking forward relevant recommendations, with HM Government as appropriate, within an agreed timescale. |
| We will work with Cabinet Office to agree a revised Memorandum of Understanding/Framework Document. | New MoU/Framework Document drawn up and put in place by end September 2015. |
| We will recruit and induct 4 new Commissioners. | 4 new Commissioners to be recruited by May 2015 (subject to ministerial approval after the General Election) Induction plan for new Commissioners to be completed by 31 July 2015 (subject to recruitment) |
| <i>Maintain appropriate continuous professional development and peer support for Commissioners to share best practice and ensure consistency of approach across competitions.</i> | <i>Commissioners to determine individual targets in connection with their own personal development to take forward the objective.</i> |
| <i>We will comply with the requirements in the MoU with regard to staff development.</i> | <i>Full compliance.</i> |
| <i>We will use our funds appropriately and efficiently, and account for it accurately and transparently, in line with the 2010 Act, Managing Public Money, and the MoU.</i> | <i>Accounts to be submitted to Comptroller & Auditor General and laid before Parliament by July 2015. Audit & Risk Committee, auditors and Sponsor Department Finance Director to be content with financial management arrangements.</i> |