

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

BUSINESS PLAN 2016-17

The Commission Board agreed that it should not produce a new Strategic Framework (to replace the 2012-16 one) until the new First Civil Service Commissioner was appointed, to allow him/her the opportunity to shape the future direction of the organisation. The Business Plan is therefore based on our statutory functions (*all legislative references are to the Constitutional reform and Governance Act 2010 unless otherwise stated*)

The themes running through all of this remain, for the time being, those set out in the 2012-16 Strategic Framework:

- To be firm on principles but pragmatic on process
- To work with the Civil Service to improve recruitment practices and help achieve better outcomes
- To improve understanding of the Commission’s purpose and approach
- To support an effective and diverse Civil Service that reflects and has the confidence of the people it serves

Section 9: Complaints by civil servants under the Civil Service Code		
	1.1 We will review our Code complaints guidance and the information we provide on our website relating to the Code and the Commission’s role.	By December 2016.
	<i>1.2 We will handle all complaints made under the Civil Service Code in line with published guidance.</i>	<i>Acknowledge receipt within three working days. Complete initial assessment (whether it is within scope) within 15 working days. Decision Notice published on website (unless particular circumstances make that impossible).</i>
	<i>1.3 We will act as a source of advice and expertise on the Civil Service Code and values.</i>	<i>Respond to 95% of departmental queries about Commission policies within three working days (average response time < 24 hours). Provide information, as required, to members of the public and representatives of non-UK bodies.</i>

Sections 10 & 11: Setting standards (in the Recruitment Principles) for selection for appointment to the Civil Service¹

	<p>2.1 We will work with Civil Service Learning to scope the possibility of developing an online training package to increase awareness and understanding of the Recruitment Principles.</p>	<p>Scoping exercise to be completed by September 2016. Implementation (if progressed) by March 2017.</p>
	<p><i>2.2 We will run a series of training workshops for Departmental staff to increase understanding and awareness of the Recruitment Principles.</i></p>	<p><i>6 workshops run over course of the year. Approximately three will be department specific and three will be open invitation: this balance may change according to demand.</i></p>
	<p><i>2.3 We will maintain close working relationships with those responsible for recruitment within departments and Civil Service-wide, to ensure that the Commission is, and is seen as, a facilitator for improvement in outcomes and that the Recruitment Principles are interpreted in a pragmatic way.</i></p>	<p><i>Meeting with the Civil Service Chief People Officer and the Cabinet Office's Executive Talent Team on a regular basis. Meetings with CSR senior leadership and specialist recruitment teams at least four times in the year to work with them to ensure that the developing offering for departments is compliant with the Recruitment Principles</i></p>
	<p><i>2.4 We will act as a source of advice and expertise on recruitment to the Civil Service.</i></p>	<p><i>Respond to 95% of departmental queries about Commission policies within three working days (average response time < 24 hours). Provide information, as required, to members of the public and representatives of non-UK bodies.</i></p>

¹ Strictly speaking, our role is dealt with only in section 11, which relates to the Recruitment Principles. But since the legal requirement - merit/fair/open - is fundamental to the writing of the RPs, we've cited both authorities here.

Section 12: Approving appointments (through competition or exception)

	3.1 We will review our policy on chairing senior competitions, taking account of resources and risk assessment.	By October 2016.
	3.2 We will work with the Government to respond to the recommendations of the Bridge Report on increasing socio-economic diversity within the Civil Service.	Ongoing.
	<i>3.3 Our chairing of senior selection panels will be consistent and pragmatic, adding value to Departments' efforts and supporting them to identify the best candidates through a fair process and from a strong and diverse field.</i>	<i>Commissioners allocated to competitions promptly following Departmental request within 3 working days (average response time < 48 hours). Authorisation reports delivered within 48 hours of competition conclusion. Regular discussion of competition issues and insights at Board meetings, to share best practice and ensuring consistency of approach.</i>
	<i>3.4 Through our chairing of senior competitions, we will encourage Departments to improve 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.</i>	<i>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.</i>
	<i>3.5 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 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.</i>

Section 13: Complaints about selection for appointment

	4.1 We will review our recruitment complaints guidance and the information we publish on our website about the Commission's role in recruitment complaints.	By December 2016.
	<i>4.2 We will review, on a six monthly basis, the Departments in respect of which we have received the most complaints, to develop a tailored support programme.</i>	<i>By October 2016 and March 2017.</i>
	<i>4.3 We will handle all complaints made under the Recruitment Principles in line with published guidance, following up upheld complaints to support Departments in improving their recruitment practices.</i>	<i>Acknowledged within three working days. Decision reached within 15 working days. Decision Notice published on website (unless particular circumstances make that impossible). Follow-up carried out in line with targets set in Decision Notices.</i>

Section 14: Compliance monitoring

	<p>5.1 We will review of the diversity data for recruitment in competitions below the level chaired by Commissioners and make recommendations on ways in which this might be improved.</p>	<p>By December 2016</p>
	<p><i>5.2 We will collect and analysis data on Departmental recruitment activity on a quarterly basis, to assess risk of Departments failing to recruit in line with the legal requirement for selection on merit following a fair and open competition.</i></p>	<p><i>Board to consider emerging trends from quarterly compliance monitoring reviews, ongoing. Status reports to the Board in June, September and December 2016 and March 2017.</i></p>
	<p><i>5.3 We will develop tailored programmes of support for high-risk departments to help improve their compliance and capability.</i></p>	<p><i>All red rated organisations to have at least one follow up review visit and one tailored awareness session during 2016-17. All amber red rated organisations to have a follow up review visit during 2016-17 focusing on relevant area of risk.</i></p>

Section 17: Additional functions agreed with the Government

	<p>6.1 NDPB Accreditation: We will review our policy relating to NDPB accreditation, including arrangements for audit and implications for resources, in discussion with the Cabinet Office.</p>	<p>Review of policy, and recommendations for future operation (if any) agreed by September 2016. New arrangements rolled out by December 2016.</p>
	<p>6.2 NDPB Accreditation: <i>In parallel with the first objective in this section, 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></p>	<p><i>Move to new NDPB accreditation tracking system run jointly with CSR by end of June 2016. Eliminate historic NDPB accreditation backlog by June 2016. Maintain up to date NDPB accreditation process through the year to March 2017, if not modified by objective above.</i></p>
	<p>6.3 Senior Appointments Protocol: <i>We will chair selection panels for internal competitions at Permanent Secretary and Director General level, under the Senior Appointments Protocol, applying the same standards and pragmatism as we do for senior external competitions.</i></p>	<p><i>Commissioners allocated to competitions promptly following Departmental request within 3 working days (average response time < 48 hours). Authorisation reports delivered within 48 hours of competition conclusion. Regular discussion of competition issues and insights at Board meetings, to share best practice and ensuring consistency of approach.</i></p>
	<p>6.4 Promoting the Civil Service Code and values: <i>We will continue to support Departments in promoting the Civil Service Code and values, focusing particularly on support for the network of Nominated Officers.</i></p>	<p><i>Advice for Nominated Officers on website to be reviewed and updated as necessary by October 2016.</i></p>
	<p>6.5 Secretariat support for ACOBA, HOLAC & OCPA: We will review the terms on which we provide secretariat support for the three other independent offices currently supported by our joint secretariat.</p>	<p>Initial assessment by July 2016</p>

Schedule 1: Governance and accountability (including obligations under other legislation)

	7.1 We will agree a revised Memorandum of Understanding with the Cabinet Office.	TBC Subject to Cabinet Office but aiming to complete by July 2016.
	7.2 We will provide support and an in-depth induction programme for the new First Civil Service Commissioner (and support for the interim First Commissioner pending a substantive appointment)	TBC dependent on timing of appointment
	7.3 We will review the information and assets on the website to make sure they are comprehensive and user friendly.	Ongoing, throughout the year with reports to the Board in September 2016 and February 2017.
	7.4 We will review our data handling and retention practices.	By November 2016.
	7.5 We will recruit new Commissioners, to take over from the three whose term of office expires on 31 March 2017.	By March 2017.
	<i>7.6 We will organise at least one Open Week event and look at ways of increasing our outreach to key stakeholders.</i>	<i>Open week in November 2016.</i>
	<i>7.7 We will use our resources appropriately and efficiently, and account for it accurately and transparently, in line with the 2010 Act, Managing Public Money, the MoU and best practice for NDPB governance and transparency.</i>	<i>Annual Report & Accounts submitted to Comptroller & Auditor General and laid before Parliament by summer recess 2016 and in the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly in similarly timely manner. Audit & Risk Committee, auditors and Sponsor Department Finance Director to be content with financial management arrangements. Regular publication of Board minutes and (where appropriate) papers.</i>
	<i>7.8 We will respond to requests for information in line with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 1998 and in accordance with Information Commissioner guidance.</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>