

# **CHAIRPERSON OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

## **INFORMATION PACK**

This pack is a guide to assist you in providing the relevant information when completing the application form.

The appointments of Commissioners are made by Her Majesty the Queen on the recommendation of the Secretary of State. We are seeking to appoint a new Civil Service Commissioner who will also act as Chairperson at meetings of the Commissioners. The Chairperson will take office in May 2012.

The Chairperson has a considerable liaison role with the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners, his/her fellow Commissioners and senior officers within the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

## **POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland were first appointed in 1923 and derive their powers from prerogative Orders made by the Secretary of State. They are appointed by the Crown to uphold the principle that selection for appointment to posts in the Northern Ireland Civil Service should be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.

The Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, sets out the principle that – "...a person shall not be appointed to a situation in the Civil Service unless...the selection...was made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition." The Order gives Commissioners the responsibility to maintain this important principle, known as 'The Merit Principle'.

The Order provides for the Commissioners to discharge their responsibilities by:

- publishing and maintaining a Recruitment Code setting out the essential principles and procedures on which recruitment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service must be based;
- making General Regulations prescribing certain 'Exceptions' to the principle of selection on merit on the basis of fair and open competition;
- approving the procedures for appointment through open competition to senior positions in the Northern Ireland Civil Service;
- auditing the recruitment policies and practices followed by Departments and Agencies in making appointments to the Northern Ireland Civil Service, to ensure that they meet the Commissioners' requirements in regard to the Merit Principle; and
- requiring Departments and Agencies to publish information about their recruitment activity.

Under the terms of the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, Commissioners also have the power to consider, and make decisions on, appeals to them under the Northern Ireland Civil Service Code of Ethics which is published by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Commissioners engage with the Head of the Civil Service, the Permanent Secretaries Group and individual Permanent Secretaries to explore current issues relevant to the work of the Commissioners and to obtain a greater understanding of any relevant recruitment issues in departments and the wider NICS. By agreement with the Northern Ireland Civil Service, externally advertised competitions for Senior Civil Service appointments are chaired by a Commissioner.

The Commissioners maintain and enhance relationships with their counterparts in London and the Republic of Ireland. They meet annually to share experiences relating to their roles and responsibilities.

Further information about the Commissioners and their responsibilities can be found on the website at [www.nicscommissioners.org](http://www.nicscommissioners.org).

## **CHAIRPERSON OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS – APPOINTMENT INFORMATION**

This appointments process aims to appoint a Chairperson of the Civil Service Commissioners in May 2012.

**Commitment:** The post is offered on a part-time basis. Expected involvement/commitment for the Chairperson role equates to around one day per week. The successful candidate will also be expected to commit to a further 4-9 days per year chairing Senior Civil Service competitions.

**Location:** Belfast

**Remuneration:** £16,000 per annum for Chairing Civil Service Commissioner meetings and participating in Commissioner's business as required by the Civil Service Commissioners (NI) Order, plus £300 per day attendance chairing Senior Civil Service competitions.

**Term of Appointment:** One term of five years from the date of appointment.

### **PERSON SPECIFICATIONS**

The Chairperson of the Civil Service Commissioners must have exceptional leadership and representational skills. He or she must be able to give strategic direction to the work of the Commissioners; unite and lead a team of Commissioners from diverse backgrounds; forge good working relations with

partner organisations across the public sector; maintain proper corporate governance and support the Secretary of the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners in ensuring that the work of the Commissioners runs efficiently and effectively. The post requires judgment, resilience, sensitivity and vision.

## **THE ROLE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS**

The Civil Service Commissioners have a responsibility to:

- establish the overall strategic direction of the work of the Commissioners;
- adopt collective responsibility and decision-making in a way that is open and transparent and in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, regularly placing in the public domain information about their activities and publishing an annual report;
- exercise their role as Commissioners in accordance with any protocols, guides and frameworks they have collectively agreed;
- adopt and adhere to any government policies and guidelines as required, in particular Information Security, Internet and e-mail usage, data handling and gifts and hospitality policies and procedures;
- in reaching decisions, take into account any guidance issued by the sponsor department; and
- seek to preserve the reputation and independence of the Commissioners and to ensure they do not misrepresent the views or actions of the Commissioners.

## **THE ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON**

As well as his or her role and responsibilities as a Commissioner, as outlined above, the Chairperson is responsible for providing effective leadership, encouraging high standards of propriety including adherence by Commissioners to their Code of Practice, and has a particular responsibility for:

- providing strategic direction for the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland in the effective and efficient performance of their statutory duties;
- taking part in the appointment of Commissioners, as appropriate, and ensuring that new Commissioners are briefed on appointment;
- formally representing the views of the Commissioners to Ministers, the general public and others, except where this responsibility has been delegated to other Commissioners with the agreement of the Chairperson;
- effectively chairing meetings and enabling collective consideration by ensuring that the Commissioners meet regularly and that the minutes of meetings accurately record the decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual Commissioners;
- taking decisions on routine casework / correspondence, on behalf of the Commissioners. The Chairperson has a responsibility for ensuring that all Commissioners are consulted on non-routine issues;
- undertaking an annual assessment of the contribution of individual Commissioners. The Chairperson will also seek annually an assessment from the other Commissioners on his or her own contribution.

- overseeing the work of the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners (OCSC); and
- dealing with any complaints about the Commissioners and the OCSC. Any complaints about the Chairperson will be dealt with by two of the other Commissioners.

The Chairperson has no executive or managerial responsibility for the day-to-day work of the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners.

## **APPOINTMENT PROCESS**

Once you submit your application form, it will be assessed by the people who will be on the selection panel.

### **Short Listing Stage**

It is essential that candidates provide sufficient details in their application forms to demonstrate how they meet the selection criteria requirements above. Short listing will involve an in depth assessment of the knowledge, skills and experience demonstrated in candidate's application forms in relation to the selection criteria. Those candidates who meet the required standard will be invited to interview.

Applications will be considered against the following criteria at the short listing stage:

- Leadership
- Strategic Thinking and Vision
- Corporate Responsibility and Accountability
- Knowledge and Expertise
- Judgement and Decision-Making

These criteria will also form the basis of the interview. It is important that you provide practical evidence and examples of how you meet them. The application form indicates the broad areas that each criterion covers.

## **Interview Stage**

If you are invited to be interviewed, you will be informed in good time. The interview will be by a panel of four people, including an independent assessor. There will be two parts to the interview – a presentation, and a panel interview structured around the core competences. You will receive further details should you be invited to interview.

- ***Presentation***

Applicants should note that they will be required to make a short presentation as part of the interview stage. Candidates will be advised of the presentation topic before interview and what materials they will be permitted to bring into the interview room.

- ***Competence Based Interview***

Competence based interviewing is currently the most common method of conducting appointment interviews, and is the method that will be used for these interviews. It is a means of selecting the best candidate on the basis of their ability to perform the role of a public appointee. Candidates are required to provide evidence in the form of examples of past behaviour that demonstrate their ability to meet the criteria. It does not simply focus on what you have done but also how you did it.

Criteria based interviewing tests candidates against the specific selection criteria for a particular appointment. This in turn provides the selection panel with information and evidence about you and acts as a starting point for questions designed to obtain a deeper understanding of your abilities.

The panel will ask you to provide specific examples from your past experience in relation to each of the competences and award marks accordingly. You will already have provided some examples in your application form to show how you meet the core competences and you should be prepared to discuss your examples in more detail at interview. You may also draw on other examples from any area of your work / life experiences during the interview.

- ***Interview Arrangements***

Interviews for this post will take place in Belfast in March/April 2012. The Competition Co-ordinator will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for any candidate with a disability who has identified specific requirements on his or her application form in relation to any aspect of the interview process. It is important therefore that any specific requirements you may have are identified as soon as possible.

Depending on the number of applicants being interviewed, interviews may be conducted over several days. Candidates invited for interview will be reimbursed reasonable travel costs – details of how to claim travel costs will be provided with the invitation to interview. If your travel costs are likely to be in excess of £100, or you are unsure if your proposed travel would be considered reasonable, you should seek advice from the Competition Co-ordinator before your interview.

### **Secretary of State's Decision**

After the interview process is complete the selection panel will submit their list to the Secretary of State who will then make the decision who is to be recommended to Her Majesty the Queen for appointment. The Secretary of State may wish to meet those candidates deemed by the panel to be suitable for appointment before recommending an individual for appointment.

There may be a gap of a few weeks between your attendance at interview and the date you receive your written notification as the decision process depends on the availability of the selection panel members and the availability of the Secretary of State. Should you be unsuccessful you may contact the Competition Co-ordinator and ask for feedback on your performance.

### **Acceptance of an Appointment**

Once a candidate has confirmed acceptance of the appointment the details of the appointee will then be published.

## COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM

### Section 1. Personal details

Please give full details for your name, home address, e-mail address and contact telephone numbers.

### Section 2. Suitability for appointment – personal qualities

The person appointed will not necessarily have followed a traditional career path. Applicants are encouraged to highlight, for example, any relevant personal experience, voluntary or community work experience, or trade union activity in their application. In drawing up a shortlist for interview the Selection Panel will look at information provided in this section for practical evidence and examples of how your experience and background makes you suitable for appointment as a Chairperson.

The panel will want to know about what you have done personally rather than what a team of which you may have been a member has done collectively. It is important to illustrate **your personal role**, either as an individual or as a team member, in delivering the outcomes highlighted in the examples you provided of your relevant experience. In addition, you should bear in mind the following points:

- you should **use** language which is **simple** and **easy** to understand in your examples to describe what **you** have done;
- use **actual** examples, rather than ‘how you **would do** something’;
- you can **use examples** from either your working life or your personal life including any voluntary or community or trade union work you are, or have been, involved in;
- **avoid** statements that describe your personal beliefs or philosophies – focus on specific challenges and results;
- describe what **you** did and how **you** behaved – if your example includes activities completed by a team, focus on your role and not that of the team as a whole; and

- **you** should address all the requirements of each criterion.

Given the limitation on words permitted in applications, lengthy descriptions of your experience will not be possible. You are advised to focus on the issue and on your personal involvement.

### **Section 3. Employment and/or voluntary/trade union work experience**

We are particularly interested in any experience which would have special relevance for a public appointment. However do not be concerned if you have not been in employment for any, some or all of the last ten years. You will have had the opportunity in Section 2 to outline your suitability for appointment, and to tell us how you have gained the necessary skills outside of the normal employment field.

### **Section 4. Public appointments (i.e. Those made by government ministers)**

The Northern Ireland Office has a policy of publishing details of Ministerial public appointments already held, or previously held, by successful candidates.

### **Section 5. Other appointments**

Please give details of any other appointments you hold or have previously held.

### **Section 6. Conflict of interest**

In the interests of transparency and openness, applicants are asked to consider whether their appointment may give rise to a conflict of interest and state this clearly on the application form. In this section you are asked to provide information regarding interests that you, or your immediate family, have that might be construed as being in conflict with the role of Chairperson which might be raised in public.

An appointee to a public body could find that matters or incidents which previously attracted no attention could become matters of legitimate public

interest once the person concerned holds a public appointment. Actual or perceived conflicts might include, for example, a situation where a candidate has interests in an organisation that might benefit from a contract with the Commissioners.

A conflict of interest will not necessarily preclude an individual from appointment but candidates must be prepared to have this explored at interview. A guide for candidates is attached at Annex B.

### **Section 7. Access or other requirements**

Please state if you have any particular access or other requirements if called for interview.

### **Section 8. Appointment as a Commissioner**

The competition may be used to fill any Civil Service Commissioner vacancies that might arise over the next 12 months. Please indicate if you would be interested in being considered for a position as a Commissioner. Commissioner appointments are for a period of three years. As a Commissioner there will be a requirement to chair 2-3 Senior Civil Service recruitment competitions annually averaging a minimum of 3-4 days involvement in each competition. A fee of £300 per day will be paid for this particular role.

### **Section 9. Declaration and signature**

Ensure that you understand the degree of publicity the appointment will attract, read the declaration statement and sign your application form.

### **Monitoring Information**

Both the Political Activity Questionnaire and the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form should also be completed and returned. These forms are for monitoring purposes only. They will be detached from your application and will not be seen by any selection panels. Further information on the completion of these forms is included at Annex A.

## **APPLICATION FORM SUBMISSION**

- We will not accept incomplete application forms; application forms received after the closing deadline or reformatted application forms.
- Applicants using Royal Mail should note that 1<sup>st</sup> class mail does not guarantee next day delivery. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that sufficient postage has been paid to return the form to the Competition Co-ordinator by the closing deadline.
- We will not accept any application where we are asked to pay any shortfall in postage.
- Applicants are encouraged to submit online applications wherever possible. However, all requests for hard copy application packs are welcomed and all applications will be treated equally regardless of whether they are hard copy or online.

**Please return the completed application form and monitoring forms to the address below to be received no later than 5pm on Friday 17 February 2012. You can submit your forms electronically, but will be required to sign a hard copy of the monitoring forms at the interview stage.**

Competition Co-ordinator  
Corporate Governance Unit  
Northern Ireland Office  
Room 122, Stormont House Annex  
Belfast  
BT4 3SH

Tel: 028 9076 5497  
Textphone: 028 9052 7668  
Email: CSCNI2012@nio.x.gsi.gov.uk

**LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**

## **CONTACT**

Further information on the work of the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland can be found on the Commissioners' website:

[www.nicscommissioners.org.uk](http://www.nicscommissioners.org.uk)

Alternatively, if you wish to speak to someone about this appointment or wish to make a complaint about any stage of this appointments process you should contact the Competition Co-ordinator.

### MONITORING INFORMATION – A GUIDE FOR CANDIDATES

Both the Political Activity Questionnaire and the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form should be completed and returned with your application form. These forms are for monitoring purposes only. They will be detached from your application and will not be seen by any selection panels.

#### 1. POLITICAL ACTIVITY QUESTION

Government Departments are required to monitor the political activity of candidates for a public appointment in so far as it is already in the public domain. Neither activity nor affiliation is a criterion for appointment (except where statute dictates specific representation).

If you are successful, the information will be published with the announcement of your appointment.

Please indicate which of the specified activities you have undertaken by marking the appropriate box and by providing details of your involvement. Name the political party or body for which you have been active. If you have been or are an independent or have sought or obtained office as a representative of a particular interest group, you should state this.

#### 2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MONITORING FORM

Government Departments are also required to monitor the age, gender, ethnic origin, disability and community background of candidates. You must answer these questions.

Questions relating to marital status and dependants are voluntary. They are included for monitoring purposes and to meet the Northern Ireland Office's equality obligations under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Further information on the Northern Ireland Office's commitments under this legislation is set out in its Equality Scheme and can be viewed on our website at [www.nio.gov.uk](http://www.nio.gov.uk).

As with all the information contained in the form, it is gathered, maintained and processed, strictly in accordance with our Data Protection Registration, for public appointment purposes only.

**PROBITY & CONFLICTS OF INTEREST – A GUIDE FOR CANDIDATES**

*“Probity – Members of public bodies must be committed to the principles and values of public service and perform their duties with integrity.”*

**- Commissioner for Public Appointments Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies**

**The Seven Principles Underpinning Public Life**

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. These are:

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|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Selflessness</b>   | Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.                    |
| <b>Integrity</b>      | Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.                           |
| <b>Objectivity</b>    | In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.                               |
| <b>Accountability</b> | Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.  |
| <b>Openness</b>       | Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands. |
| <b>Honesty</b>        | Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.                                  |

**Leadership** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

All candidates who put themselves forward for public appointment must be able to demonstrate their commitment to the principles and values of public service. The Commissioner's Code of Practice states that it is the responsibility of Government Departments to ensure that the individuals they appoint can demonstrate that they meet the probity principle. This is highlighted in paragraph 2.04 of the Code, which states:

'that departments must ensure that all appointable candidates recommended to the Minister have been selected on merit and meet the criteria and the standards required by the principle of probity'

It is important that the candidate's commitment to the probity principle is tested and assessed at interview. One of the issues which might arise in relation to this, is that of conflict of interest.

***What is a conflict of interest?***

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.

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?***

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?***

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?***

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.

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

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?***

This situation may arise where the applicant is not familiar with the broad range of work which a body covers and therefore does not realize 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?***

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.

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.

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 body.

### **Areas where a conflict could arise**

There are five main issues, which could lead to real, or apparent, conflicts of interest. These are:

- Relevant financial or other interests outside the organization;
- Relationships with other parties/organisations which could lead to perceived or real split loyalties;
- Pending Government policy could give unfair personal advantage to people with allied business interests – for example access to privileged information – trade secrets;
- Perception of rewards for past contributions or favours;
- Membership of some societies or organizations.

Some examples of potential, real or perceived, conflicts of interest are:

- ***you are a director of a building supplies firm and the board to which you are seeking appointment conducts regular procurement exercises for building materials.*** You could benefit personally from decisions taken by the board.
- ***you are a manager in a voluntary organization, whose funding applications are considered by the board to which you are seeking appointment.*** The body for which you work could benefit financially from decisions taken by the board.
- ***you are a director of a pharmaceutical company and the board to which you are seeking appointment will be directing policy on medical research.*** Your company could have access to information, which would give them a commercial advantage over their rivals.
- ***you have, in the past, contributed significant funds to the political party to which the appointing minister belongs.*** Your appointment could be viewed as a reward for past favours.
- ***you and a senior official who is on the selection panel are both members of an organisation, whose membership is kept secret.*** Your appointment could be viewed as the “old boy network” in operation.

In other words, 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.

The above are examples only, so you should consider carefully your own circumstances to gauge whether or not a real, or perceived, conflict might exist.