

**JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION (JAC) MEETING
10 OCTOBER 2013
MINUTES OF MEETING**

PRESENT Commissioners	Staff
Christopher Stephens (Chairman) Julia Macur (Vice-Chairman) David Bean Malcolm Birchall Martin Forde Noel Lloyd Alexandra Marks Alison McKenna Stella Pantelides Andrew Ridgway Ranjit Sondhi Valerie Strachan Deborah Taylor John Thornhill Alan Wilkie	Chief Executive Director of Policy and Operations Assistant Director, Outreach Policy Officer Board Secretary

1. Apologies and matters arising

1.1 No apologies were received.

1.2 The Chairman welcomed Julia Macur, the new Vice-Chairman, to the Commission and introductions were made.

1.3 All Commissioners confirmed that they had no personal interest in any matters to be discussed on the agenda.

1.4 The minutes of the 12 September meeting were agreed and the Board Action Register noted.

1.5 Alexandra Marks enquired as to progress in relation to the JAC's application for an exemption under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. The Chief Executive would make enquiries and report back at the next Board meeting.

2. Chairman's Report

2.1 The Chairman provided an update on his activities since his last report at the September meeting. Together with Alexandra Marks, he had attended the final of a series of meetings with city solicitor firms hosted by Mr Justice Hickinbottom. He had met Nicholas Fluck, the

new Law Society President, for an introductory meeting. In addition he had held his first bilateral discussion with the new Lord Chief Justice and had attended the launch of the Committee on Standards in Public Life 'Survey of public attitudes towards conduct in public life in 2012' with the Chief Executive.

2.2 For the remainder of the month the Chairman would be attending the annual Legal Wales Conference, meeting with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, the new CILEx President, Stephen Gowland, and also the Chancellor of the High Court.

2.3 The Chairman also provided an update to the Commission on the recruitment campaign to select new Commissioners.

2.4 The Chairman invited Commissioners to comment on any activities of particular interest with which they had been involved. Alexandra Marks informed the Commission of her meetings with partners of solicitor firms, suggesting there might be a need to strengthen our messages as it was still the case that many solicitors were not aware that they were eligible to apply for judicial appointment.

2.5 Deborah Taylor raised an issue in relation to the potential of barristers incurring tax liabilities as a result of payment arrangements being put in place by HMRC and the Legal Aid Agency (LAA). She considered that it would be of interest to receive an indication from the LAA on how the Revenue would be dealing with this and also to consider the potential impact this may have on applicants in relation to their character declarations. The Chief Executive agreed to make enquiries and report back to the Board.

2.6 Andrew Ridgway informed the Commission of a conference which had been held in Jersey attended by approximately 300 judges from the Commonwealth, noting that a substantial item on the agenda was a discussion on judicial appointments. It was unfortunate that the JAC had not been given the opportunity to be represented. The Chairman indicated he would consider what could be done to be more involved in similar events.

3. Chief Executive's Report

3.1 The Chief Executive provided an oral update confirming the budget remained at £4.9 million for 2013/14 and the changes to the selection programme for the remainder of the year. He confirmed the new organisational structure which had come into effect on 1st October, and informed the Commission that the annual staff survey had also launched on 1st

October, with results due in December.

3.2 The Chief Executive also provided updates on elements of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 in that all three sets of relevant regulations were now in force and the first exercise to launch under the new legislation would be the High Court. He indicated also that the Chairman would be writing to the Lord Chief Justice with regard to the process to select candidates to form a pool of judges from which s9(1) authorisations would be made.

4. Communications Strategy

4.1 The Assistant Director, Outreach, presented a paper to the Commission which introduced a proposed Communications Strategy and objectives for 2013-15 which they were asked to consider.

4.2 The strategy paper had been developed with the support of Andrew Ridgway, Alexandra Marks, Alan Wilkie and Martin Forde. The Commission discussed the strategy at length and were broadly supportive, providing comments and drafting suggestions.

4.3 The Chairman invited Commissioners to provide any further comments direct to the Assistant Director, Outreach, who would incorporate those and bring the Strategy back to the November Board meeting for final agreement.

5. Grading of Candidates

5.1 The Policy Officer presented a paper on the grading of candidates which provided an update following the Board decision in July to revert to a five-grade classification system.

5.2 The paper proposed delaying implementation of the decision until the Work Psychology Group had considered this as part of their review of JAC processes and practices, with the aim of providing a report to the Board in December.

5.3 Commissioners discussed this at some length and some were disappointed at the proposal to defer further. Panel members had been consulted on the introduction of a fifth grade but it was queried whether they had fully understood the reasoning behind the Commission's decision. However, the Commission recognised that there may be value in waiting for receipt of the Work Psychology Group report and agreed to do so.

5.4 In addition, the Commission requested that the further Board paper on grading make reference to the cost implications of providing more feedback to candidates. The Chairman

endorsed this and commented that this would be brought to the December Board for final approval.

6. Report Back from Working Groups

6.1 Stella Pantelides, Chair of the Advisory Group, provided an update on the work of the Group which had last met on 18 September and discussed both the role play and situational scenario for Fee-paid Judge of the First-tier Tribunal, Social Entitlement Chamber and also the situational scenario for Salaried Judge of the Social Entitlement Chamber. It also discussed the qualifying test feedback report for District Judge (Civil) 2013, and was provided with oral updates on the 'End to End' process and legislative changes.

6.2 It was suggested by the Chair of the Advisory Group that the minutes of these meetings should be provided to the Commission in future to which the Commission agreed.

6.3 Noel Lloyd, Chair of the Judicial Appointments Recruitment System (JARS) Project Board also provided a short update on the position of the replacement IT system and confirmed that a formal request for proposals had been sent to both remaining suppliers via the G-Cloud on 26 September. A recommendation on the preferred supplier would be made to the IT Project Board later in October with the choice of supplier coming to the November Commission Board meeting for final ratification.

7. Management Information Pack

7.1 Commissioners discussed and noted the Management Information Pack included in the papers.

7.2 The Director of Operations and Policy informed Commissioners that staff mid-year reviews were now underway, and that Band A staff would be undertaking 360 degree reporting and may wish to approach Commissioners to provide feedback.

Date of next meeting

The Chairman confirmed that the next Board meeting would be held on **Thursday 7 November**.