

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION MEETING

10 DECEMBER 2009

DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING

PRESENT

Commissioners

Usha Prashar (Chairman)
Heather Hallett
Lorna Boreland-Kelly
Hazel Genn
Geoffrey Inkin
Frances Kirkham
Sara Nathan
Charles Newman
David Pearl
Francis Plowden
Harriet Spicer
Roger Toulson

Staff

Chief Executive
Director, Courts Appointments
Director, Tribunals Appointments and Corporate Accounting and Planning
Director, Strategy and Outreach
Director, Operational Services
Board Secretariat
Private Secretary to Chairman

Discussion with the Association of District Judges

1. The Chairman welcomed District Judges Oldham (President), Trent (Senior Vice-President), Walker (Secretary) and Chapman (Civil Committee Chairman) of the Association of District Judges to the meeting and providing the opportunity for the Commission to discuss relevant issues with them.

Issues discussed included:

- District Judge appointees with no previous judicial experience and the provision of support and training
- The use of appraisal reports
- Confidentiality arrangements for judges working on selection exercises
- Geographical location of those appointed to the District Bench

2. After the discussion members of the Association of District Judges left the meeting.

Apologies and matters arising from the November meeting

3. Apologies had been received from Jill Black, Edward Nally and Jonathan Sumption.

4. The minutes of the November meeting were approved.

Six monthly complaints analysis (JAC/09/59)

5. The six monthly complaints analysis provided information and data on the latest trends regarding complaints against the JAC. It was noted that the volume of complaints had returned to a more normal level since last reported in June and that there was a good story to tell. It was suggested that more information on complaints could be published on the JAC website.

Proposal on business objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2010/11 (JAC/09/60)

6. Commissioners discussed the proposed set of KPIs for 2010/11, which had been reduced in number following the discussion at the November meeting. It was agreed that the reworked KPIs were more focussed but further work was required to capture and measure Strategic Objective 2.

Proposed Efficiency options (JAC/09/61)

7. The Commission noted the work that had been commenced since the discussions at the November meeting to explore the options for identifying efficiencies through reducing expenditure, or generating income. A further progress report would be provided to the Commission in February.

Further report on IT projects (JAC/09/62)

8. The Commission received an update on progress in securing capital funding from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) for IT improvements and the options being considered. The Commission agreed to the recommendation for a shared service option, subject to funding being agreed by the Access to Justice Investment Committee on 18 December.

Report from JAC Working Groups

Outreach Working Group (OWG)

9. The OWG met earlier in the day and considered the communications strategy, advertising plans for upcoming selection exercises and the Reasonable Adjustments Policy. It was agreed that a letter from the Royal National Institute for the Blind praising the JAC for its efforts made on reasonable adjustments would be shared more widely.

Diversity Forum

10. The Diversity Forum last met on 26 November, which featured a presentation on the briefing/training provided to JAC selection panels. Members agreed an Action Plan following up the results of the JAC's 'Barriers to Application' research published in the summer. The Plan had since been placed on the JAC website.

Directors' Reports (JAC/09/63)

11. The Director of Courts Appointments informed the Commission that: for the Recorders (Civil) selection exercise the qualifying test had taken place on 9 December, and for the Deputy District Judge (Civil) selection exercise letters had been sent to candidates inviting them to sit the qualifying test in January.
12. The Director of Tribunals Appointments and Corporate Accounting explained that details of Commissioners' and Directors' expenses would be published on the JAC website in January and work on unit costs was progressing.

13. The Director of Operational Services informed the Commission that both the Selection Programme for 2010/11 and the 3 year Rolling Programme had been agreed by MoJ. The Commission thanked the staff involved in achieving this important milestone and agreed that both should be published on the JAC website.
14. The Director of Strategy and Outreach informed the Commission that the next batch of selection exercise data should be ready for publication in February 2010 as official statistics.
15. A paper on panel chair contracts was also considered by Commissioners and the recommendations for extending panel chairs' appointments for one further year and the proposals outlining a revised appraisal process were agreed.

Chief Executive's report (JAC/09/65)

16. The Chief Executive informed Commissioners of a successful meeting with the Director General of Access to Justice Group in MoJ on 2 December to discuss the JAC's six monthly performance.

Chairman's report

17. The Chairman notified Commissioners that she had recently met with Sir Anthony May to discuss section 9 (l) appointments. She thanked JAC staff on behalf of the Commission for their hard work over the past year.

Any Other Business

None.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on 11 February 2010.