

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION (JAC) MEETING
9 FEBRUARY 2012
MINUTES OF MEETING

PRESENT

Commissioners

Chris Stephens (Chairman)
Roger Toulson (Vice-Chairman)
Jill Black
David Bean
Malcolm Birchall
Noel Lloyd
Alexandra Marks
Alison McKenna
Stella Pantelides
Andrew Ridgway
Ranjit Sondhi
Valerie Strachan
Deborah Taylor
John Thornhill

Staff

Chief Executive
Selection Exercise Director
Operational Services Director
Deputy Director, Programming and Candidate Services
Assistant Director, Strategy and Policy
Private Secretary to the Chairman
Acting Board Secretary

1. Apologies and matters arising

1.1 Apologies were received from Martin Forde.

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

1.3 The Minutes of the 26 January 2012 meeting were approved and the Board Action Register was noted.

2. Chairman's Report

2.1 The Chairman provided an update on his activities since his last report at the December Board (having not reported at the January joint Board meeting due to time considerations). These included meetings with: Sir John Thomas, President of the Queen's Bench Division; Michael Todd, the incoming Chairman of the Bar Council; the Attorney General, Dominic Grieve QC MP; Helen Edwards, Director-General of the Justice Policy Group, Ministry of Justice; and Colin Passmore, Senior Partner at Simmons & Simmons.

2.2 Alison McKenna mentioned that she had previously been employed by the Government Legal Service (GLS), and would be interested in becoming involved in any Commission work regarding the opportunities for members of the Government Legal Service and CPS.

2.3 The Chairman had observed a tribunal hearing with Judge Martin, the President of the Social Entitlement Chamber, had recently attended a seminar organised by the Judicial College on 'the

craft of judging', and had chaired the selection panel for the High Court (Chancery) selection exercise.

2.4 The Chairman sought the formal agreement of the Commission for him to be a member of the forthcoming selection commission for the appointment of the next President of the Supreme Court. The Commission agreed.

2.5 The Chairman explained that from 1 April 2012 his working pattern would be reduced from three to two days a week.

3. Strategic Introduction to Change

3.1 The Chairman provided a strategic introduction to the following item on the agenda, the JAC's Change Programme. He set out the drivers for change, and the results of the People, Performance and Progress programme, which had led to a greater number of applications being handled, while expenditure and staff numbers have been reduced.

3.2 The Chairman then outlined his vision for the JAC, with a greater focus on improving the candidate experience in regard to the selection process as a whole. This was discussed by the Commission, in particular with regard to the amount of time it takes to run selection exercises from inception through to completion. It was acknowledged that, although the JAC only had direct control over part of the process, many candidates assumed that the entire length of the selection process is attributable to the JAC.

3.3 Commissioners also discussed the future with regard to the methods used to short-list applicants for judicial roles. The Chairman emphasised that all current policies would remain in place unless and until the Commission agreed to change them.

4. Change Programme

4.1 The Assistant Director, Change Programme introduced a paper outlining the projects contained within the Change Programme, which was now being developed.

4.2 He explained that a significant strand of the Programme was the IT project, which is aimed at improving the candidate experience, by reducing the amount of paperwork involved and allowing applicants to complete certain parts of the application process online.

4.3 Commissioners discussed the overall Programme and suggested that it should distinguish between strategic projects and those which are more operational, with appropriate weighting

added. It was agreed that this would be done as the Programme is developed and an update would be provided at the May Board meeting.

5. JAC Business Plan 2012/13

5.1 The Assistant Director, Strategy and Policy, introduced a paper on the JAC Business Plan 2012/13, which is due to be published at the start of the next financial year. She explained that the JAC reports to the Ministry of Justice on a quarterly basis on performance against the milestones set out in the Plan.

5.2 The Commission discussed several elements of the Plan. It was suggested that the strategic vision of the JAC should be brought out more explicitly in the document, and that it could incorporate elements of the Change Programme.

5.3 Commissioners were asked to provide any further comments to the Assistant Director by the end of February. She would then reflect all comments in the Plan to be sent to the MoJ, for the approval of the Lord Chancellor.

6. Chief Executive's Report

6.1 The Chief Executive provided an update on the JAC's financial circumstances. He explained that the MoJ has asked the JAC to consider a further budget reduction for 2012/13, which will be confirmed in March 2012.

6.2 The Commissioners discussed the secure circulation of papers and asked if more could be delivered electronically. The Chief Executive explained that there were security issues to be considered, but he would explore further whether the risks could be satisfactorily addressed.

7. Report back from Working Groups

7.1 The Selection Exercise Director provided an update in the work of the Advisory Group, which had last met on 31 January to discuss: Qualifying Test for Fee-paid specialist member war pensions armed forces, and Fee-paid specialist member Criminal Injuries; Situational Scenario/Role Play for Fee-paid specialist member Criminal injuries, Deputy Judge and Salaried Judge of the Upper Tribunal, AAC, Deputy District Judge Magistrates, and Circuit Judge; and Feedback reports for Deputy Judge Upper Tribunal IAC, Fee-paid specialist lay members HESC, and Fee-paid specialist transport member Upper Tribunal.

7.2 It was noted that the Group is undergoing a significant change of membership, as the current Bar Council, Law Society, Tribunal, and District Judge representatives are all standing down in the near future.

7.3 The Chairman announced that Valerie Strachan was to be the new chair of the JAC's Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). She would meet the former chair, Francis Plowden for the purpose of a hand over.

8. Directors' Reports

8.1 The Selection Exercise Director provided an update on current and forthcoming selection exercises. She also provided an oral update on the piloting of on-line testing of candidates, and would update the Board again at the next Board meeting in March. A paper on the outcome of the panel recruitment exercise would also be provided at the March Board meeting.

8.2 The Operational Services Director provided an update on key priorities, including a number of upgrades to the IT system, aimed at improving the efficiency of JAC processes. He also introduced a paper on the JAC's quarter 3 performance, which the Commission noted.

8.3 Both Directors agreed to review the format of their Reports to reflect the requirements of the new Board.

9. Any other Business

9.1. The JAC response to the MoJ Consultation Document on 'Appointments and diversity' would be posted on the JAC website by 13 February. A verbal update on potential legislation options would be provided at the next Board meeting.

Date of next meeting

The next Board meeting would be held on **Thursday 15 March**.