

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION (JAC) MEETING

12 MAY 2011

MINUTES OF MEETING

PRESENT

Commissioners:

Christopher Stephens (Chairman)
Roger Toulson (Vice-Chairman)
Lorna Boreland-Kelly
Sir Geoffrey Inkin
Sara Nathan
Charles Newman
David Pearl
Francis Plowden
Jonathan Sumption

Staff:

Interim Chief Executive
Selection Exercise Director
Operational Services Director
Change Programme Director
Performance and Programming Senior Manager (for Item 4)
Assistant Director, Complaints (for Item 5 and 6)
Assistant Director, Human Resources (for Item 7)

1. Chairman's Update

1.1 The Chairman welcomed a representative from MoJ Internal Audit Division, who observed the meeting as part of the audit of Governance.

1.2 The Chairman updated Commissioners on activities since the last meeting. These included:

- Meetings with the Law Society, Society of Asian Lawyers, Black Solicitors Network
- Attendance at the Diversity Taskforce, Diversity Forum and Minority Lawyers Conference
- Observing the judiciary in the Court of Appeal, High Court and in various regional courts

1.3 He noted that future meetings and observations with Tribunal representatives were planned.

2. Apologies and matters arising

2.1 Apologies were received from David Bean, Jill Black, Hazel Genn and Harriet Spicer.

2.2 All Commissioners confirmed they had no personal interest in any matters to be discussed on this agenda.

2.3 The minutes of the March Board meeting were approved. The Board action register was noted with one minor change being made.

3. PPP Change Programme: moving from Phase 1 to Phase 2

3.1 The Commission was provided with a report of progress of the People, Process, Performance (PPP) Programme and the savings it had made for the JAC and Ministry of Justice (MOJ) during Phase 1, which had now completed.

3.2 The Commission noted work to develop a number of projects for PPP Phase 2, which would be undertaken over the next 2 years. An initial tranche would be brought to the Commission for further consideration at the Annual Strategic Review and at future Board meetings.

3.3 Commissioners' views were invited on priorities and preferences should an opportunity become available for legislative change.

4. Selection Decision Making

4.1 The Commission considered a paper proposing a trial of making selection decisions in smaller quorate groups of Commissioners, rather than at full SCC.

4.2 The balance of risk was considered in detail, but it was agreed that a pilot should take place and that staff should identify appropriate selection exercises, informing the Commission out of Committee. It was also agreed that clear criteria to evaluate the pilots should be drawn up and similarly circulated.

5. Complaints Analysis 2010/11

5.1 The Commission received a paper on the analysis of complaints over the last 6 months. It noted that the percentage of complaints against the number of candidates who have applied since the JAC was formed remains constant at around 1%.

5.2 It also noted a reduction of 40% in the number of complaints over the last year compared with the previous year, despite an increased number of applicants. This reduction was attributed partly to the introduction of feedback reports for qualifying tests. It noted that a higher proportion of complaints had been satisfied at first tier level, without being referred on to the Ombudsman. It asked that longer term trend figures be provided in future papers on the matter.

5.3 The Commission expressed their gratitude to staff, the reduction in complaints being a reflection of their good work.

6. Publication of Qualifying Test marking schedules

6.1 The Commission was asked to consider a paper on a proposal to publish qualifying test marking schedules at the same time as the relevant feedback report is published on the JAC web site.

6.2 The proposal was agreed, and 'banded' marking schedules will be published. A review of the policy would be carried out once sufficient experience had been gained.

7. Annual Review of HR Activities

7.1 The Commission received a paper providing an annual review of HR activities.

7.2 Commissioners noted the key achievements including a managed reduction in headcount, the implementation of a learning and development programme and an overall engagement score of 70% in the staff opinion survey.

7.3 The strategy for the year ahead was discussed and initiatives to meet the challenges for 2011/12.

7.4 It was agreed that retention data should be circulated out of Committee to illustrate length of service with the JAC by employee grade.

8. Reports from Working Groups

8.1 The Advisory Group last met on 11 April to review tests and role plays for forthcoming exercises.

8.2 The Audit and Risk Committee met on 11 May. The group approved the end of year performance report and discussed the risk register, IT issues and the dashboard of performance indicators.

8.3 The Outreach Working Group had met earlier that day. It provided comments on the draft 2010/11 Annual Report, considered the implications of the Equality Act and received an outreach update.

9. Director's Reports (JAC/11/16)

9.1 The Selection Exercise Director provided an update on current and forthcoming selection exercises.

9.2 The Director of Operational Services informed the Commission that the consultation on merit criteria had closed and that this would be considered at the June Board meeting. He provided an update on IT and the internal audit of information assurance. He raised the issue of the date of meeting the eligibility requirement in terms of nationality and it was agreed that a paper would be circulated out of Committee for Commissioners' views.

10. Interim Chief Executive's report (JAC/11/07)

10.1 The Interim Chief Executive reported on the successful staff event to launch the business plan. He said that the new structure and accommodation arrangements were working well. He informed the Commission that the JAC would be called to give evidence to the Constitution Committee and Senior Salaries Review Board later this year.

11. Any other business

11.1 The Chairman expressed his warmest congratulations to Jonathan Sumption on his appointment to the Supreme Court.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on 16 June 2011.