

**Department of Culture Arts and Leisure**  
**Appointment of Chair, Vice Chair and Members to the Board of Sport**  
**Northern Ireland**  
**(Regulated Appointment)**

**Introduction**

- 1.1 The audit of the public appointments process for the appointment of the Chair, Vice Chair and Members to the Board of Sport Northern Ireland, forms part of the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Audit Programme in respect of 2007-08. This competition was administered by the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL).
- 1.2 This audit process was conducted under the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2001 and included an assessment of the extent to which relevant recommendations from previous Departmental audits have been taken forward.
- 1.3 The applicable guidance in force was the 'Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies' August 2005 (the Code), issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland.
- 1.4 This public appointments process arose from the decision to reconstitute the Board of Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) with effect from 1 July 2007. It was initially agreed to run one competition for the Chair, Vice Chair and 13 members, with the Chair to be appointed from 1 April 2007 and the Vice Chair and members from 1 July 2007.
- 1.5 For a variety of reasons however, this did not materialise. Following interviews for the Chair and Vice Chair positions only two candidates were found suitable for appointment. The Department then decided to extend the competition in an attempt to gain a wider pool of candidates, whilst retaining the names of the two found suitable from the first round. It was also agreed to extend the terms of appointment of the existing membership until 31 December 2007.
- 1.6 The competition to appoint the general members progressed at the same time as the second round of the Chair/Vice Chair competition. Following interviews the pool of suitable candidates for the Chair position had not increased sufficiently to enable the Minister to make an appointment. It was decided to further extend the Chair competition with the names of suitable candidates from the first and second rounds retained.
- 1.7 Whilst no Chair appointment was made, the Minister did appoint a Vice Chair and 13 members with effect from 1 January 2008. The Vice Chair subsequently acted up as Chair whilst the third round of that competition progressed. At the conclusion of the third round a Chair was finally appointed with effect from 1 August 2008.

## Executive Summary

- 2.1 The format of this audit report is based on an examination of the main stages of the appointments process, from which a number of audit issues were identified. These are set out in detail within the report and a summary of the recommendations is contained at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 Each recommendation has been given a priority rating which reflects the level of risk that DCAL is exposed to, as follows;

<b>Priority 1</b>	<b>High Risk</b>
<b>Priority 2</b>	<b>Medium Risk</b>
<b>Priority 3</b>	<b>Low Risk</b>

- 2.3 The main issues identified in the report are:
- The lack of adequate planning at the outset of the appointment process;
  - The absence of detailed scoring frameworks at the sift and interview stages of the competition;
  - The poor standard of paperwork documenting decisions made; and
  - The failure to implement a number of recommendations made in the previous Departmental Audit.

## Overall Conclusion

- 3.1 Overall, the quality of the appointments process associated with this competition in terms of compliance with the Code (on a scale of High-Medium-Low) has been assessed as **Medium** as a result of the nature of the audit issues identified.
- 3.2 I would like to thank the staff from the Central Management Unit (CMU) in DCAL for their assistance and co-operation during this particular audit.

## **Main Stages of the Appointments Process**

### **Stage 1 - Initial Planning**

#### **Initial Ministerial Involvement**

- 4.1 From the outset of the process it was evident that the Department planned to manage one competition to appoint the Chair, Vice Chair and 13 members. The Department involved the then Minister (Maria Eagle) from an early stage. The initial submission (2 November 2006) set out the background to the process and sought agreement to reconstitute the Board of Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) and to hold one competition with the aim of appointing the Chair from 1 April 2007 and the Vice Chair and general members from 1 July 2007.
- 4.2 Ministerial agreement on the selection criteria for each post and the way in which the process was to be conducted was given on 18 November 2006.

#### **Consultation with Sports Council and Timescale for the process**

- 4.3 It is apparent the Department sought Ministerial agreement to the process without consultation with the then Sports Council for Northern Ireland (SCNI). Code reference 3.9 recommends that as part of the planning process, Departments may wish to seek the views of the body concerned. Any such consultation must be at the beginning of the process. (See Para 4.8 et seq)
- 4.4 On 28 November 2006, the Chief Executive of SCNI contacted the Department regarding the reconstitution of the board and the skills mix required. As a direct consequence of this discussion the Department revised its entire approach to the process.
- 4.5 A new Sports Strategy was to be launched early in 2007 and it was considered beneficial for the existing Chair to help oversee its introduction. Rather than appointing a new Chair from 1 April 2007, the Department decided to extend his term of appointment until 30 June 2007 and appoint the new board in its entirety from 1 July 2007.
- 4.6 It was also decided to change the format of the interview process. Originally it had been planned to hold one set of interviews for all posts. However, following the decision to extend the existing Chair's term by three months, the Department decided to conduct interviews in two distinct stages.
- 4.7 Interviews for the Chair and Vice Chair positions were to be held initially followed by set of interviews for the general members. It was intended that the new Chair designate would participate in the selection of members.

- 4.8 The fact that the Department was required to revise its entire approach to the process following discussion with SCNI highlights the need for consultation with the appropriate body at the outset. Had the Department held early discussions on its intended approach the issues that came to light could have been avoided.
- 4.9 Within the Code, Departments have the flexibility to design a selection process most appropriate to their needs. However at the planning stage, Code reference 3.6 requires Departments to decide the nature of the process and draw up a firm timetable for each stage.
- 4.10 The initial Ministerial submission contained details of the intended nature of the process and the expected timeframe for it to be completed. As already indicated, both the nature of the process and the timeframe were subsequently revised. The Department failed to adhere to the revised timetable and no appointments were made by the intended date for reconstitution (1 July 2007).

**Priority Rating 2- As part of the planning process DCAL should consult with bodies at an early stage and monitor competitions to ensure that appointments are made in a timely manner.**

### The Role of the OCPA NI Assessor

- 4.11 The Department requested the use of an OCPA NI Assessor (OA) (Joan Ruddock) at the outset of the process and consulted with her regarding the content of the advertisement and Information Pack prior to publication.
- 4.12 The same OA was involved in all stages of the competition including the extended phases of the Chair/Vice Chair appointments.

### Role and Person Specifications

- 4.13 The role and person specifications were identified in the original Information Booklet for the posts which also contained details of remuneration, expenses and an indication of the time commitment required.
- 4.14 The person specifications addressed the qualities, experience and competence sought. Applicants for all positions were required to meet six essential criteria. In addition, applicants for the Chair and Vice Chair positions were required to meet three additional criteria. Unusually, the person specification for the Vice Chair was identical to that of the Chair.

## Other Issues at the Planning Stage

- 4.15 On 18 December 2006 the Department sought Ministerial agreement to the extension of the existing Chair's term of appointment to 30 June 2007 and asked her to note the revised approach to the appointment process.
- 4.16 It was noted that the Department then wrote to the existing Vice Chair and members advising that the board was to be reconstituted and assuring each that they were eligible to apply if they so wished. The correspondence also advised that the Chair's appointment had been extended and indicated when the advert for all positions would appear in the press.
- 4.17 There is no evidence however that the existing Chair received any correspondence advising him that he was eligible to apply again if he wished. It is clear that he only became aware that he was eligible to apply during a farewell meeting with the Permanent Secretary on **5 February 2007**. This was significant as the closing date for applications was **9 February**. As the Department had failed to advise him of his eligibility for the posts, they agreed to extend the closing date for him until 14 February.
- 4.18 From the documentation on file, it is clear that members who had already served two terms were confused as to their eligibility to apply for positions on the reconstituted board. It was necessary for the Department to seek clarification from the Commissioner on the eligibility issue **two weeks** after the advert had appeared in the press. These issues could have been avoided and highlight the need for effective planning at the outset of the appointment process.

## Stage 2 – Preparation

### Publicising Vacancies

- 5.1 A general advertisement for the posts of Chair, Vice Chair and members originally appeared in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and News Letter in January 2007. The advert outlined that the board consisted of 15 members (including Chair and Vice Chair) and that applicants could apply for more than one post.
- 5.2 It was good to see that the essential criteria for each post were clearly stated and the "OCPA NI Regulated" kitemark was displayed. A copy of the adverts was sent to OCPA NI as required by the Code.
- 5.3 It was also noted that the Department wrote to a significant number of organisations to alert them to the fact that the posts were being advertised. This approach was proportionate given the high profile nature of the competition.

- 5.4 At the conclusion of the first round of the process the Minister did not appoint a Chair or Vice Chair. Subsequently, the Department re-advertised for the posts in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, News Letter and Sunday Life in September 2007. A press release was also issued in an effort to create maximum publicity. Again the “OCPA NI Regulated” kitemark was displayed and a copy of the advert forwarded to OCPA NI.
- 5.5 The Minister did appoint a Vice Chair following this second round of the process. However, as the Chair position had still not been filled, the post was re-advertised for a third time in April 2008. Again a press release was issued to create publicity and the “OCPA NI Regulated” kitemark was displayed.

### Information Packs

- 5.6 The Information Packs issued for all three rounds of the process were consistent and contained most of the key information outlined in the Code. One requirement of Section 3.26 is that packs must contain details of expenses to be reimbursed in relation to the selection process.
- 5.7 A copy of the booklet “Make Your Mark – A Guide to Public Appointments in Northern Ireland” was included in the Information Pack at the second and third stage of the process. This booklet specifically states that “Applicants invited for interview are eligible for the reimbursement of reasonable travelling expenses”. However there is no evidence that the “Make Your Mark” booklet was issued at the first stage of the process and as such, the original information pack failed to provide any information relating to the payment of expenses.
- 5.8 **This issue was also raised in the previous Departmental Audit in 2004** when a recommendation was made that “Information Packs indicate whether expenses for the appointments process are payable”.

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must ensure that all Information Packs indicate whether expenses for the appointments process are payable.**

### Application Forms

- 5.9 Application forms throughout the process were simple and straightforward to complete. Candidates were able to apply for more than one position at the first round of the competition. The application form clearly indicated that all candidates must complete essential criteria questions 1-6, whilst only those applying for the Chair and/or Vice Chair positions should complete questions 7-9. At the second and third rounds candidates were advised to complete all nine questions. Each question allowed candidates ample space to describe their skills and experience against the essential criteria.

- 5.10 Code reference 3.27 requires Departments to ensure that application forms advise candidates that, if successful, some of the information they supply will be placed in the public domain. However, the application forms used for all rounds of this competition did not contain this particular advice.

**Priority Rating 3 – DCAL must ensure that application forms advise candidates, that if successful, some of the information supplied will be placed in the public domain.**

- 5.11 It was good to note one section of the form dealt particularly with probity and conflicts of interest. Candidates were asked if they, or their immediate family, had any business or other interests or personal connections that may be construed as being in conflict with appointment to the posts. They were also asked if there were any other probity issues which might cause embarrassment if, in the future, they were raised in public. Before answering these questions candidates were advised to read the probity and conflicts of interest guidance provided as part of the Information pack.
- 5.12 It was also encouraging to note that the application form contained information advising candidates of a statutory disqualification from sitting as a member of the NI Assembly, if they were to be appointed as Chair of SNI.

### Closing Date for Applications

- 5.13 The closing date for the return of application forms at the first stage was 5.00pm on Friday 9 February 2007. Two applications were received after the closing date. DCAL's policy states that late applications are generally not accepted unless the Department believes there are extenuating reasons for doing so
- 5.14 One application was rejected whilst the other was accepted due to the circumstances that existed in that case.
- 5.15 No late applications were received at the second or third rounds of the competition.

### Monitoring Forms

- 5.16 The application forms at each stage of the competition contained a monitoring section which was removed before it was seen by the sift or interview panels. All candidates completed the monitoring form as required.

## Stage 3 – Selection

### Selection Panels

- 6.1 Although there were ultimately three rounds to the Chair/Vice Chair competition, the selection panel remained the same throughout. It consisted of Paul Sweeney (Permanent Secretary, DCAL), Julia Bracewell (Sport Scotland) and Joan Ruddock (OA) and they were responsible for both the sifting and interview process.
- 6.2 A different selection panel consisting of Mick Cory (Director of Sport, Museums and Recreation, DCAL), Jack Palmer (Head of Sport, DCAL) and Joan Ruddock were responsible for the sifting and interview for the membership positions.

### Initial Sift

- 6.3 Both panels conducted an initial sift of applications to assess eligibility. It was evident from the documentation that candidates were only assessed against the published criteria.
- 6.4 The panels used a scoring framework, as follows:
- 8 - 10 Meets the criterion to an exceptional or very high standard
  - 5 - 7 Meets the criterion to a high degree
  - 1 - 4 Meets the criterion to an acceptable degree
  - 0 Does not meet the criterion
- 6.5 Whilst the framework goes some way toward guiding panels on the allocation of scores, there was no provision of narrative or related indicators to identify the requirements for each set of scores. This raises two important issues.
- 6.6 Firstly, how did the panel determine what constituted the difference between **meeting** and **not meeting** the criterion? And secondly, how did they differentiate between marks within the same scoring ranges i.e. 1-4, 5-7, and 8-10.
- 6.7 The absence of detailed narrative or related indicators meant that there was no supporting rationale to justify the scores awarded. Best practice would suggest that more detailed indicators should be used to support the scoring framework. **This issue was also raised in the previous Departmental audit in 2004.**

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must provide detailed indicators to support any scoring frameworks used when assessing applications.**

- 6.8 It was also noted that the methodology used by the panels differed significantly. In the Chair/Vice Chair competitions, panel members assessed candidates individually against each criterion. The final overall score was calculated as the **average** of the total scores given by each panel member.
- 6.9 In using this average score the Department did not allow for a panel consensus to be drawn for each candidate against each essential criterion. This raises two important issues.
- 6.10 Firstly, code reference 3.34 states that “*No candidate can be shortlisted, unless they have been satisfactorily assessed against the published criteria.*” In not recording scores against individual criteria there was no evidence that candidates necessarily met each of the published criteria Secondly, it would have been very difficult to provide quality feedback to candidates outlining how they had performed against each of the published criterion.
- 6.11 **This particular issue was also identified in the previous Departmental Audit report** which recommended that a consensus scoring approach be used in all public appointment competitions. This did not happen in the Chair/Vice Chair competition.

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL should ensure that shortlisting panels reach a consensus score for each candidate against each essential criterion.**

- 6.12 It was noted however that in the member competition, the panel, having initially assessed candidates individually, collectively reached a consensus score for each candidate against each of the essential criterion. This is a much better system highlighting areas of strength or weakness which enables more specific feedback for those who request it. It also provided clear evidence of whether candidates met each of the essential criteria.
- 6.13 The documentation associated with the sifting process required panels to award scores for each criterion and provide a summary of the evidence and supporting rationale. On numerous occasions however scores were crossed out, written over or amended and there was no evidence to identify why, or at what stage, these changes were made. Panel members also consistently failed to provide any comments to summarise the evidence or justify the scores awarded.
- 6.14 Code reference 3.34 requires that all decisions relating to eligibility must be fully documented. In light of the fact that scores were amended without evidence of the reason for doing so, the absence of summary comments from panel members and the lack of adequate rationale to support candidates scores, the Department did not fully comply with this Code requirement.

**Priority Rating 1 – DCAL must ensure that all decisions relating to the sifting process are fully documented.**

## Shortlisting

- 6.15 In the initial Chair/Vice Chair competition, 12 candidates were assessed as meeting the essential criteria. It was apparent that the panel had predetermined a specific number of candidates to interview and as such, only the top 8 scoring candidates, each of whom had received a score of 54 or more were shortlisted. Of these, 6 were interested in the Chair post and 7 were interested in the Vice Chair post.
- 6.16 At the second and third rounds of the Chair/Vice Chair competition, only those candidates who received a minimum score of 54 were invited for interview. This ensured that candidates were treated equally throughout the three rounds of this competition.
- 6.17 In the member competition 45 candidates were assessed against the published criteria. The record of the sift meeting indicates clearly that the panel agreed that candidates should achieve a minimum score of 30 marks in order to progress to the interview stage. 33 candidates were subsequently invited for interview.
- 6.18 It was also evident from the documentation that some candidates received a consensus score of 0 for some criterion. As such, in line with the scoring framework, **these candidates did not meet all of the essential criteria**. It was noted however the letters issued to the 12 candidates not invited for interview contained the same information and made no distinction between those who did not meet the essential criteria and those shortlisted out due to the volume of applications.

**As part of its feedback procedure the Department should revise the wording of its rejection letters to differentiate between those shortlisted out due to the volume of applications and those who do not meet the essential criteria for the posts.**

## Interview Process

- 6.19 At interview, the Department used the following scoring framework to assess each criterion;
- |      |            |
|------|------------|
| 0    | Unsuitable |
| 1-8  | Competent  |
| 9-15 | Strong     |
- 6.20 In both competitions the selection panels set a pass mark of 65% of the total marks available. Candidates were required to score 88 (from a total of 135) to pass the Chair/Vice Chair competition and 59 (from a total of 90) to pass the member competition.

- 6.21 It was noted that it was possible therefore for candidates to be assessed as strong in all criteria yet still not reach the pass mark. This makes little sense and leaves the Department open to complaint.

**It is recommended that the Department ensures that pass marks at interview are consistent with the scoring framework used.**

- 6.22 Whilst both panels used the same scoring framework, there were significant differences in their overall approach and consequently a number of issues have been identified relating to documentation and scoring methodology.

### **Interview Documentation**

- 6.23 The documentation used for all rounds of the Chair/Vice Chair competition provided very limited space for panel members to record candidate's answers. Only the lead questions for each criterion were recorded and there was no recorded evidence of any supplementary questions being asked.
- 6.24 Whilst the documentation used in the member competition provided a single page for each criterion, again only the lead question was recorded and there was no evidence of what supplementary questions were asked, if any.
- 6.25 During the Chair/Vice Chair competition the panel members assessed each candidate individually against each criterion. An agreed overall score was then awarded to each candidate and recorded on a separate scoring sheet. There was no evidence of what discussion had taken place, the scores awarded for each criterion, or how the panel had arrived at the agreed overall score.
- 6.26 This meant that it was impossible to determine how scores were awarded and would have made specific feedback very difficult to provide. In one case, two panel members each assessed a candidate as having failed to reach the pass mark. The final scoring sheet indicated that the agreed final score awarded was sufficient to merit a pass; however there was no evidence to demonstrate how the panel had reached this decision. Code reference 3.35 requires that all decisions arising from interviews must be fully documented.

**Priority Rating 1 - DCAL must ensure that all questions, deliberations and decisions arising from interviews are fully documented.**

- 6.27 It was interesting to note that in the member competition the panel reached a consensus score for each criterion and hence an overall consensus score. This was fully recorded on the scoring sheet. It was also recorded that the panel decided that those scoring 59-69 were

regarded as suitable for appointment whilst those scoring 70 or more were regarded as highly recommended for appointment.

## Interview Outcomes

- 6.28 Following the completion of the initial interviews for the Chair/Vice Chair posts two candidates were found to have been suitable for appointment. Each candidate had applied for both the Chair and Vice Chair posts. However, in light of the limited choice of just two candidates for two posts, the Permanent Secretary met with the Commissioner for Public Appointments to discuss how the Department should proceed.
- 6.29 On 22 May 2007, the Permanent Secretary forwarded a submission to the Minister, Edwin Poots, advising that the competition had failed to provide a sufficient range of candidates for him to make a choice. The submission made a number of recommendations as to the way forward. Amongst these, were the recommendation that the Minister should agree to re-run the Chair/Vice Chair competition in September 2007 and extend the life of the existing board until 31 December 2007.
- 6.30 There was no clear evidence however of the Minister's decision regarding that submission. A memo from Edgar Jardine, Deputy Secretary, to Paul Sweeney, the Permanent Secretary, dated 1 June 2007 suggested that the Minister was content to extend the life of the existing board until 31 December 2007 although there was nothing on file from the Minister to verify this. It was apparent however from the files that the terms of appointment for the Chair, Vice Chair and existing members were extended until 31 December 2007.
- 6.31 The Code of Practice permits extensions in exceptional circumstances. However, Code reference 3.20 requires that extensions must be agreed, in writing, with OCPA NI in advance. There was no evidence that these extensions were agreed in writing with OCPA NI.

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must ensure that all extensions are agreed in writing, with OCPA NI in advance of Ministerial agreement.**

- 6.32 On 5 June 2007 the Department advised candidates of the outcome to the competition. The two found suitable for appointment were asked if they were content for their names to be held over until the competition was re-run, at which time they would be considered along with any other suitably qualified candidates.
- 6.33 The Department then commenced the second round of the Chair/Vice Chair competition and at the same time proceeded with the member competition. On 30 July 2007, the Department wrote to all those interested in the member positions to advise of the delay in the process and ascertain if candidates still wished to be considered for the posts. As it was apparent that the decision to extend the life of the existing

board had been taken in early June, it would have been good practice for the Department to advise candidates of the delay much earlier.

- 6.34 Interviews for the member positions were subsequently held in October 2007. At the second round of the Chair/Vice Chair process, three new candidates were invited for interview. Two were interested only in the Chair position and one was interested only in the Vice Chair position.
- 6.35 Following interview, all three candidates were found suitable for appointment. Taking account of the candidates found suitable at round one of the process, this meant that the Minister had a choice of five candidates. Of these two were interested in the Chair position only, two were interested in the Chair and Vice Chair positions and one was interested in the Vice Chair position only.
- 6.36 The Minister chose to appoint a Vice Chair and thirteen members from 1 January 2008. He was still not satisfied that he had sufficient choice from which to appoint a new Chair and the decision was taken to run a third competition.
- 6.37 As it was likely to take some time for the third round of the competition to be completed, the new Vice Chair was formally appointed as Acting Chair in the interim.
- 6.38 At the third round of the Chair competition 6 candidates attended for interview. It was noted that one had previously been interviewed for the Vice Chair post. As he had applied only for the Vice Chair post originally, the Department chose to interview him a second time – this time for the Chair post.
- 6.39 However, as the third round of the competition was an extension of the original process, the questions asked were identical to those at the first and second rounds. Consequently, this candidate was asked the same questions at both interviews. This could have led to an advantage over other candidates. However the scoring documentation showed that he actually received a lower score at his second interview.
- 6.40 Following interview, three new candidates were found suitable for appointment. Their names were then presented together with those from the first and second rounds, in order for the Minister to make his choice.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

- 6.41 At interview, all candidates were asked if they had any conflicts of interest. From the interview notes and application forms it was also clear that some candidates did mention real or perceived conflicts.
- 6.42 In one particular case, there was a very clear conflict of interest. Annex C of the Code requires that panels explore the potential consequences of any conflict of interest with the candidate and assess whether or not it is serious enough to warrant withdrawing from the competition. It

also requires that the panel should ensure that all discussions about conflicts are fully documented.

- 6.43 In this case, the interview notes failed to demonstrate clearly how and to what extent the panel explored the issues with this candidate, what the responses were, and whether the panel believed the conflict was manageable.

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must ensure that all conflicts of interest are both fully explored with candidates and the outcome of discussions recorded.**

### Ministerial Submissions

- 6.44 Ministerial submissions were issued following each set of interviews. Submissions contained the names of those candidates found suitable for appointment together with some biographical information and a brief summary of their performance at interview.
- 6.45 It was also noted that the submission relating to the members competition, divided candidates into suitable and highly recommended categories.
- 6.46 Code reference 3.36 requires that the OA completes a Validation Certification and that this must be included in the Ministerial submission. Whilst it was clear that the OA completed the validation certificate following the interview processes, there was no evidence that they were included in the Ministerial submissions.

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must ensure that completed Validation Certificates are included in Ministerial submissions.**

### Publicising Appointments

- 6.47 The Department announced the appointments through Press Releases which contained some of the requisite information outlined at 3.42 of the Code.
- 6.48 It was noted however, that the press release announcing the appointment of the Vice Chair and members failed to provide a career summary of six of those appointed, details of other Ministerial appointments held and the remuneration received, and in one case the declaration of political activity which had been undertaken.

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must ensure that Press Releases contain the requisite information.**

- 6.49 It was also noted that the Department issued a press release announcing the Vice Chair and members appointments **before** all candidates had been advised of the outcome. This was not good practice and was compounded by the fact that some of those deemed unsuccessful were existing board members who were not informed of the decision prior to the press release.

**It is recommended that as a point of good manners, the Department ensures all candidates are advised of the outcome of public appointment competitions before press releases are issued.**

**Feedback**

- 6.50 The Department received a number of requests for feedback. In each case this was provided in a timely manner either by telephone or at a meeting with the candidate.

## APPENDIX 1

### SUMMARY OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

**Priority Rating 1 – DCAL must ensure that all decisions relating to the sifting process are fully documented.**

**Priority Rating 1 - DCAL must ensure that all questions, deliberations and decisions arising from interviews are fully documented.**

**Priority Rating 2- As part of the planning process DCAL should consult with bodies at an early stage and monitor competitions to ensure that appointments are made in a timely manner.**

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must ensure that all Information Packs indicate whether expenses for the appointments process are payable.**

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must provide detailed indicators to support any scoring frameworks used when assessing applications.**

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL should ensure that shortlisting panels reach a consensus score for each candidate against each essential criterion.**

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must ensure that all extensions are agreed in writing, with OCPA NI in advance of Ministerial agreement.**

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must ensure that all conflicts of interest are both fully explored with candidates and the outcome of discussions recorded.**

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must ensure that completed Validation Certificates are included in Ministerial submissions.**

**Priority Rating 2 – DCAL must ensure that Press Releases contain the requisite information.**

**Priority Rating 3 – DCAL must ensure that application forms advise candidates, that if successful, some of the information supplied will be placed in the public domain.**