



The Commissioner
for Public Appointments
Northern Ireland

“Guardian of the Public Appointment Process”

Follow up report on recommendations made in October 2012 audit of the
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Invest NI

June 2013

The report of the investigation into the process to appoint four members to the Board of Invest NI was issued to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) Minister and Permanent Secretary on 03 October 2012. The DETI Minister responded to the Commissioner on 12 October 2012 and indicated that the Department had accepted the one recommendation within the report.

In accordance with CPANI standard procedures, the compliance officer wrote on the 03 June 2013 to the Department's Public Appointments Unit [PAU] to conduct a follow-up review to establish whether the recommendation within the report had been implemented. The Head of PAU responded on 04 June 2013.

Detailed below is the one recommendation, the Departmental response and a summary of the CPANI findings following consideration of the Department's response.

Audit Finding

Two applicants out of the 17 deemed suitable for appointment, who had not been selected by the Minister for appointment, requested feedback. A PAU representative provided feedback that was timely, informative and based on contemporaneous records kept by the panel.

Paragraph 3.47 requires 'feedback to be carried out by the Chair of the panel...in exceptional circumstances...another member of the selection panel may be substituted'. The documentation provided by the Department gave no reason why the Chair did not provide the applicant with feedback. It would be useful if, in such cases, the Department would record the reason when feedback is provided by a person other than the Chair of the panel.

Recommendation

When feedback is provided by a person other than the Chair of the panel, the Department should ensure that the reason for this is recorded.

Departmental response to recommendation

DETI's policy has been for PAU staff to proactively include feedback within all letters of regret. When additional information or feedback has been requested (which was the case here), PAU have seen this as a continuation of the correspondence with the individual and have responded accordingly.

PAU will continue to proactively provide applicants/candidates with feedback within their letters of regret. When additional information or feedback is subsequently requested, PAU will ensure the Chair of the selection panel provides the response. In exceptional circumstances, another panel member will be asked to provide the response and PAU will record the reason why for the audit trail.

Follow-up findings

The Commissioner has considered the Department's response and is content that a robust system is in place to provide candidates with timely and informative feedback when requested.

Conclusion

The recommendation has been actioned. The Commissioner thanks the Department for its work on this issue.