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Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland

Business Plan 2017 - 2018

“Guardian of the Public Appointment Process”

Vision

The CPA NI vision is to ensure that all public appointments are made on merit, in a fair and open manner and that opportunities to serve on the boards of public bodies are open to the widest possible field of candidates.

CPA NI

The post of Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland was established in 1995, in response to the first report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee).

The Commissioner is independent of Government.

This is the Business Plan of CPA NI covering the period April 2017 - March 2018. It sets out the statutory duties of the Commissioner and the approach that the Commissioner and her office (CPA NI) will take to fulfil those duties during the coming year.

Core Values

The core values of CPA NI reflect the seven key principles of public appointments. They are that public appointments should be made on the basis of:

Merit

Diversity

Equality of Opportunity

Openness, Transparency and Independence

Integrity

Proportionality

Respect

Mission Statement

The CPA NI mission is to regulate and monitor public appointments to ensure that every Government Department operates systems that allow every citizen who wishes to contribute to the working of public bodies, who has skills or experience to contribute and who has the motivation and integrity to serve, to put his/her self forward for appointment and be treated, throughout the public appointment process, in a manner that is fair, consistent, open and transparent, with the goal of selecting the best candidates, on merit, for board service.

Statutory Duties of the Commissioner

CPA NI was established to regulate and monitor the compliance of the Departments with the Commissioner's 'Code of Practice for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland' (the Code). The Commissioner also provides advice and guidance, in the context of her Code, on processes of selection for public appointment, and she investigates complaints.

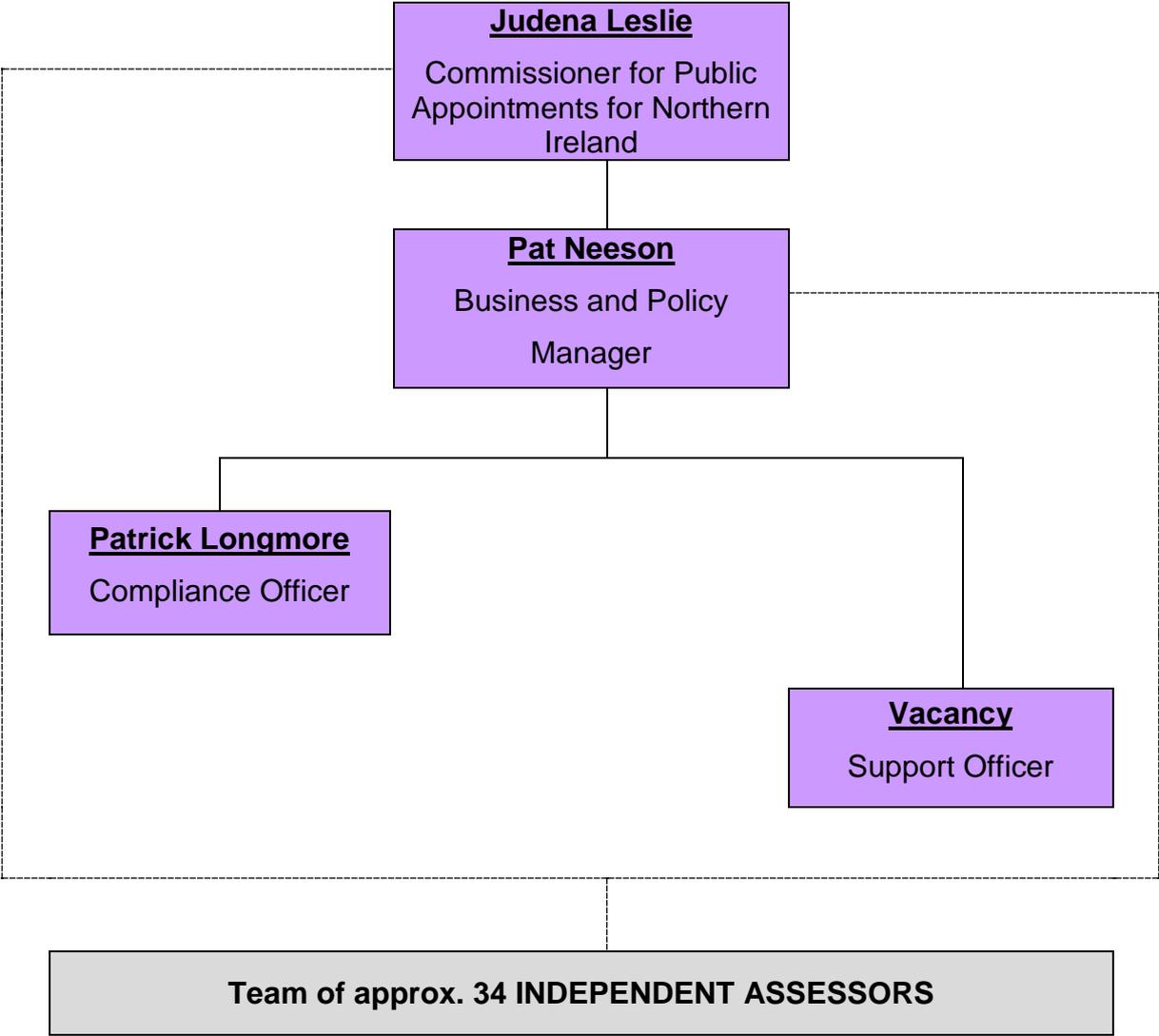
The statutory duties of the Commissioner are set out in the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 as amended. They are:

1. The Commissioner shall in the manner she considers best calculated to promote economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the procedures for making public appointments, exercise her functions with the object of maintaining the principle of selection on merit in relation to public appointments.
2. The Commissioner shall prescribe and publish a Code of Practice on the interpretation and application by Departments of the principle of selection on merit for public appointment and shall adopt and publish from time to time such additional guidance to Departments as the Commissioner shall think fit.

3. The Commissioner shall carry out an audit to review the policies and practices of Departments in making public appointments to establish whether the Code of Practice referred to in paragraph 2 is being observed.
4. The Commissioner may require any Department to publish such summary information relating to selection for public appointments as she may specify in writing.
5. The Commissioner may from time to time conduct an inquiry into the policies and practices pursued by a Department in relation to any public appointment or description of any public appointment.
6. The Commissioner shall publish an annual report.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Commissioner for Public appointments for Northern Ireland



The Commissioner's statement of key objectives.

1. Diversity

From the outset of my appointment in September 2015 I have made it clear that I intend to promote vigorously the objective of diversity on public boards in Northern Ireland. I do so for reasons of fairness, good governance and the pursuit of quality public services.

There is clear evidence to show that where the directors of a corporate board are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds with diverse skills and there is a strong representation of women then that board is likely to function at a higher level than one which lacks these attributes. This evidence supports the understanding that diversity in decision making is an integral part of good governance. A high functioning public board focussed on good governance will provide the leadership and direction necessary to ensure its public body delivers effective and quality public services. And we all have a vested interest in the delivery of high quality public services in Northern Ireland.

In March 2016 the then First Minister and deputy First Minister wrote to me to inform me of the Executive agreement to a number of measures aimed at achieving greater diversity on the boards

of our public bodies. The key measure is the setting of targets for achieving gender equality in public appointments. These are:

- By 2017/2018 for appointments made in-year.
- By end year 2020/21 for all appointees in post, with equality reflected in board membership and at chair level.

The Northern Ireland Executive target for gender equality for chairs of public bodies breaks new ground and leads the way in the UK. Likewise there is no equivalent measure within the Republic of Ireland. NI Executive Ministers are to be commended for this forward thinking.

The promotion of these targets will be a key objective for my office during the period of this business plan and beyond. This approach is reflected across a number of our own targets in particular those relating to audit and compliance monitoring, training of Independent Assessors and liaison with stakeholders.

2. Promoting good governance

CPA NI wishes to work with other interested bodies in promoting good governance across its public sector bodies. As highlighted in the previous paragraphs the good governance objective is closely linked to that of diversity at board level. In promoting high standards of governance we hope to see our public bodies leading the way for other sectors. The challenge is to develop

Northern Ireland's reputation as a high functioning administration and economy. The good governance objective is an integral part of the NI Executive's shared future vision which aspires to a society that is increasingly attractive to live in and invest in.

Recent political developments in Northern Ireland make the good governance objective and the wider aspirations for our society even more challenging to achieve. But rather than despair at the obstacles ahead I believe it is incumbent on those of us who share the vision to persist in our efforts.

3. Resources under pressure

I am very conscious that in the public sector everyone must seek to do more with fewer resources and CPA NI, even if it is a very modestly resourced office, is not immune from this. There are a number of new pressures on the organisation. For example, the changes in Departmental structures and the reduction in staff levels means that in some cases Departments have lost staff experienced in public appointments. As anticipated there has been an increase in requests seeking advice from CPA NI. In addition the new Ministerial targets on diversity and the renewed focus in CPA NI on achieving diversity creates resourcing demands. One of the best ways of achieving more with less is through greater sharing of information and expertise between organisations and individuals. I am committed to such an

approach and my office has already put it into practice by working with Departmental officials to deliver on an outreach programme. Nevertheless it may be necessary to make a bid during the period of this business plan for a modest increase in CPA NI staffing resource.

CPA NI OPERATING PLAN: 01 APRIL 2017 – 31 MARCH 2018

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>CPA Code of Practice</p> <p>To prescribe and publish, and update as necessary, a Code of Practice on the interpretation and application by Departments of the principle of selection on merit for public appointments.</p>	<p>The effective maintenance, development and promotion of the Code of Practice and associated guidance.</p>	<p>Monitor the implementation of the Code in recruitment processes.</p> <p>Liaise closely with Department Public Appointment Units and recruitment practitioners including Independent Assessors.</p> <p>Amend Code and produce guidance as necessary.</p>
<p>Audit and Compliance Monitoring</p> <p>To conduct audits to review the policies, practices and actions of Departments in making public appointments.</p> <p>To conduct regular compliance checks on documentation and processes used and issued by Departments, including Advertisements and Press Releases.</p>	<p>A CPA NI programme of audit, and a compliance monitoring regime, designed to ensure that appointment processes are carried out effectively, fairly, openly, efficiently and proportionately and in line with the Commissioner's Code.</p>	<p>Carry out an audit programme based on the CPA NI risk analysis which has an emphasis on diversity factors</p> <p>Report on findings, produce recommendations and publish.</p> <p>Carry out diversity spot checks on competitions that are considered high risk.</p> <p>Monitor Advertisements, Press Releases and other documents as necessary.</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>Complaints</p> <p>To conduct effective inquiries into Department policies, practices and actions on any public appointment process.</p>	<p>The establishment, maintenance, publication and implementation of an effective and objective complaints system.</p>	<p>Investigate and report on complaints presented to CPA NI.</p> <p>Follow up necessary action with Departments.</p>
<p>Annual Report</p> <p>To publish an annual report.</p>	<p>The provision of a comprehensive annual report which serves the requirements of the internal and external stakeholders of CPA NI, including the political and administrative systems of Government and the general public.</p>	<p>Collate relevant information for the year and publish annual report.</p> <p>Provide FM/dFM with an advance copy of report.</p> <p>Present report to NI Assembly.</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>Advice and Guidance</p> <p>To provide advice and guidance in the conduct of effective and fair public appointment procedures that are compliant with the Code.</p>	<p>The provision of prompt and high quality responses to queries on the Code and its application, from panel chairs, Independent Assessors and other relevant parties.</p>	<p>Provide regular updates, advice, guidance and training to Independent Assessors, Departmental representatives and other relevant parties.</p> <p>Provide advice to Departments and others on the pursuit of diversity within public appointments.</p> <p>Provide an “open door” for queries from all sources.</p> <p>Maintain a system for handling, managing and recording all queries.</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>Independent Assessors</p> <p>To manage, train, allocate, and monitor a pool of suitably trained individuals that Departments use to meet the policy requirement of independent assessment in the public appointment process.</p> <p>These Assessors are independent of Government and the Commissioner.</p>	<p>The effective management of a trained, competent and experienced team of Independent Assessors who provide an effective and efficient service in all public appointment recruitment processes.</p>	<p>Manage, train, allocate and monitor a team of Independent Assessors.</p> <p>Provide training and advice to enable Independent Assessors to play a role as diversity champions within the appointments process.</p> <p>Provide all necessary forms of support and guidance to Independent Assessors.</p> <p>Implement effective administrative procedures and records with regard to the management of the Assessors.</p> <p>Carry out a recruitment drive to refresh the current team of Assessors in conjunction with TEO.</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>Budget</p> <p>In co-operation with OFMDFM NSMC Joint Secretariat, to establish, implement and monitor the CPA NI budgetary process and financial regime.</p>	<p>Adherence to all financial and budget guidance issued by OFMDFM, and successful management of the budgetary and financial processes set out in the Financial Memorandum and other relevant documents.</p>	<p>Implement effective, efficient and accurate processes of budgetary and financial management.</p> <p>Process payments, in a timely and accountable manner, using Account NI.</p> <p>Ensure that all procurement is compliant with the regulations stipulated by TEO sponsor branch.</p> <p>Ensure that the necessary resources are secured to meet the full requirements of CPA NI and its customers, allowing for levels of complaints, issues arising from audit and compliance work, ad hoc legal advice and research requirements.</p>
<p>Liaison with stakeholders including provision of relevant information to the public</p> <p>To raise the profile of CPA NI and its functions, within and without the political and administrative systems of Government, in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – promote public appointment opportunities to a wide field of potential candidates; 	<p>An increased awareness, by all internal and external stakeholders, of public appointment opportunities and of a fair and open merit-based recruitment process.</p>	<p>Maintain strong working links with Ministers, SPAds and MLAs.</p> <p>Maintain strong working links with senior Civil Service and Department contacts, and other bodies eg NI public sector Chairs Forum, Institute of Directors, Women’s groups, Professional and Business networks.</p> <p>Continue to work in partnership with Departments on the promotion and development of public appointments.</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – promote diversity in public appointments in particular to promote the Executive targets for gender equality at Board member and Board chair levels. – increase public confidence in the fairness and openness of the public appointments system; – ensure that the public is aware of the independent functions provided by CPA NI and of the right to avail of the CPA NI complaints procedure. 	<p>Promotion of the NI Executive gender targets for appointment of members and Chairs of public boards.</p>	<p>Continue proactive outreach programme. This will include meeting with under-represented groups to provide information on public appointments.</p> <p>The provision of workshops to promote understanding of the public appointment system and provide support to potential applicants with a focus on under-represented groups. Continue to work with Departments in the delivery of the workshops.</p> <p>Development of CPA NI website to ensure it provides relevant information in a user friendly and engaging format. Monitor the progress made on recommendations from the Commissioner’s January 2014 Diversity Report; monitor the progress against the Executive gender equality targets.</p> <p>Contribute to the development of The Executive Office (TEO) strategy for promoting the NI Executive gender equality targets.</p> <p>Liaise with TEO on actions to deliver the strategy.</p> <p>Participate in the strategy delivery committee sub groups.</p> <p>Support and extend new Mentoring Scheme involving collaboration between the Queen’s University Belfast and Northern Ireland’s public sector.</p> <p>Develop mentoring scheme to University of Ulster</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>Administrative Support</p> <p>To plan and co-ordinate the work of the Commissioner's office to meet the Business Plan targets in the most effective, efficient and value-for-money manner.</p>	<p>The provision of an efficient and effective service to the Commissioner and all stakeholders.</p>	<p>Regularly monitor progress in line with each business plan key target, measure and action.</p> <p>Fulfil the requirements of the sponsor branch as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding and other relevant documents.</p> <p>Manage the Commissioner's diary.</p> <p>Ensure that all Personal Performance Agreements are up to date and in line with current procedures.</p> <p>Ensure that all staff are provided with appropriate training opportunities to help them fulfil their respective roles and meet their business objectives.</p> <p>Address the ongoing absence of administrative support staff and resultant work pressures.</p>
<p>Northern Ireland Executive Asset Management Strategy</p> <p>To provide a commitment to the objectives of the Northern Ireland Executive Asset Management Strategy.</p>	<p>A commitment to the objectives of the Northern Ireland Executive Asset Management Strategy.</p>	<p>This is to be reviewed annually to determine any action needed.</p>

KEY TARGET	MEASURES	ACTIONS
<p>Information Management</p> <p>To ensure all information managed and stored by CPA NI is in line with all relevant policy.</p>	<p>Manage information in accordance with all relevant legislation requirements and Departmental policies.</p>	<p>Monitor information assurance procedures.</p> <p>Continue to implement data sharing arrangements with all Departments.</p> <p>Ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)</p>