



The Commissioner
for Public Appointments
Northern Ireland

“Guardian of the Public Appointment Process”

Follow up report on recommendations made in June 2013 Audit of Historic
Buildings Council

Department of the Environment

December 2013

A competition to appoint seven members to the Historic Buildings Council was selected for audit as part of the 2013/2014 audit programme of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI). The competition was administered by the Department of the Environment (DOE). Five recommendations were identified as a result of the audit and presented in a report published in June 2013. The Department was advised that it should take action to address these recommendations, and that a follow-up to the audit would be conducted in six months.

In order to conduct the follow-up, the Commissioner requested documentation based on public appointment competitions run by the Department since the publication of the audit report.

The review of the documentation produced the following results.

Recommendation 1

In order to comply with paragraph 3.2 of the Code and to fully inform the Minister of the detail and the timeframe for key aspects of the process, the Department should ensure that an appointment plan is included in all future Ministerial submissions relating to public appointment processes.

Implementation of recommendation 1

The Department provided a copy of a Ministerial submission which included an appointment plan. The appointment plan was compliant with the Code. This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 2

In order to comply with paragraph 3.19 of the Code, and in keeping with the principles of diversity and equality, it is important that potential applicants are made aware that information in alternative formats will be available upon request.

Implementation of recommendation 2

The publicity for a subsequent DOE competition informed potential applicants that publicity was available in alternative formats upon request. This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 3

In order to comply with paragraph 3.20 of the Code, the Department should ensure that it informs potential applicants whether expenses relating to the selection process will or will not be reimbursed.

Implementation of recommendation 3

The Department provided an Information Pack which included the following statement. Please note that, in line with Department of Finance and Personnel guidance, travel and accommodation expenses incurred by candidates attending interview will not be met by the department. This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 4

The Department should consider that if qualifications are not part of the selection process then they are an unnecessary part of the application form.

Implementation of recommendation 4

CPANI reviewed an application form for a post which required no qualifications. The application form did not contain a qualifications section, and did not request information on an applicant's qualifications. This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 5

Paragraph 3.25 of the Code states, 'Everyone who applies for a post must be kept informed by the Department of the progress and ultimate outcome of his or her application in a timely and courteous manner'. If, following the interview, the panel members have determined a candidate should not be recommended to the Minister as suitable for appointment, it is important that the candidate is advised of this. If a candidate has been recommended to, but not selected by the Minister, the Department should communicate this to the candidate. This may assist in encouraging candidates to apply for other public appointment positions.

Implementation of recommendation 5

The Department provided copies of letters notifying candidates of the outcome of their interview. These letters clearly stated whether or not the candidate had passed the interview stage, and advised them of the Minister's final decision. This recommendation has been implemented.

Conclusion

All recommendations have been implemented. The Commissioner would like to thank the Department for its attention to these matters.