

Plenary Minutes
30 March 2023 at 9.30 am

Present: The Rt. Hon Dame Siobhan Keegan, the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland (Chair)
Mr Eoin Doyle QFSM
Mr Colm Donaghy
Mrs Maureen Eccles
Mr Michael Robinson
Mr Brian McTeggart
Lord Justice Treacy
Judge Rosalie Prytherch
Mr Bernard Brady KC

In Attendance: Mrs Tonya McCormac
Ms Adeline Frew
Mr Raymond Donnelly
Mr Andrew Millar
Miss Caitriona Roberts
Mr Duncan Greer

1. Apologies and Introductions

1.1 Apologies were received from.

Judge Miller

Judge Humphreys

Mr Paul Douglas

1.2 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared regarding any of the items included on the agenda.

3. Confidentiality

The Chair reiterated to all the need for confidentiality to be maintained.

4. Minutes of meeting of 15 December 2023

4.1 The minutes were approved. It was confirmed that action points arising had either been completed or would be covered in today's Agenda.

5. Chief Executive's Report

The Report having been circulated in advance; members were asked to raise any matters for discussion or clarification.

5.1 Mrs McCormac referred to the draft Business Plan 2023/2024, comments currently being sought from Members and the Executive office. Following receipt of same, the document will be circulated for final approval by Plenary electronically and then published on NIJAC's website.

5.2 Mrs McCormac reported that the next Tri-Partite event was being planned to be held in Edinburgh in October 2023 hosted by The Judicial Appointments Board Scotland. The Chair remarked on the high value that she placed on this collaboration and on the leading role played by NIJAC in the group's joint development work.

5.3 Commissioner appointments – Mrs McCormac welcomed new Commissioners Mr Bernard Brady KC and His Hon Mr Justice Michael Humphreys and Mr Michael Robinson as a returning Legal Commissioner for a second term. Mrs McCormac advised that, as NIJAC had now returned closer to its full complement of Board Members, normal quorate arrangements for Board meetings would therefore be reinstated from week beginning 4 April.

5.4 The Chair recorded her sympathy to the family of Dr Joan Martin Hunt on their recent bereavement and acknowledged her worthy contribution as a Co-opted Member of the Commission up until the time of her passing.

5.5 Lay Commissioner Vacancies – Mrs McCormac provided an update on the Lay Commissioner vacancy. Discussions are underway with The Executive office to start a public appointments process in late 2023 to fill the vacancy and create a reserve list for any future vacancies.

5.5 Mrs McCormac confirmed that all targets in the Business Plan 2022-23 had been met with the exception of a planned engagement event with political representative. This could not happen during 2022-23 however, members felt that a future event should be organised. An options paper will be presented Plenary in June 2023.

6. Selection Committee updates

6.1 An update paper for each scheme was presented.

6.2 Review Tribunal Legal Member Scheme 2022. Mr Doyle provided an update on the Review Tribunal Legal Member Scheme, reporting that the scheme had now successfully completed with 10 appointees identified.

6.3 Deputy County Court Judge 2022 Scheme. Mr Donaghy provided an update on the Deputy County Court Judge Scheme, reporting that the scheme has currently successfully completed with 12 appointees identified. Aggregated provision was raised at this point and discussed before Plenary members agreeing a position on aggregated provision moving forward for all future schemes.

6.4 Appeal Tribunals Salaried Legal Member Scheme Fixed Term Contract 2022. Mrs Eccles provided an update on the Appeal Tribunals Salaried Legal Member, reporting that the scheme had successfully completed with 1 appointee identified.

6.5 Deputy Statutory Officer Scheme 2023. Mr McTeggart provided an update on the Deputy Statutory Officer Scheme, advising Pre-scheme meeting took place on 9 March, advertising date being 14 April 2023. This is the first scheme to use the new Judicial Profile.

6.6 NIVT Valuation Members 2023. Mr Donaghy reported on the NIVT scheme, advising of a Pre-Scheme meeting on 6 March and applications closing on 3 April.

7. Advisory Committee

7.1 Ms Frew presented the draft Minutes of the meeting on 9 March 2022. Ms Frew gave an update providing further information on eligibility and aggregated provision. Members further considered and discussed.

7.2 The Chair commented on the positive NIJAC statistics including the Stakeholder Survey Report and proposed that such information should be widely shared as appropriate with the public. It was agreed to circulate information to stakeholders as appropriate including placing on NIJAC's website.

8. Business Committee

8.1 Mr Doyle presented the draft Minutes of the meeting on 9 March 2023 and invited Mr Duncan Greer to comment on NIJAC finances.

8.2 Mr Greer presented a financial update for the 2022-23.

8.3 Mr Greer reported on a prospective budget cut for the 2023-24 year with the potential of between 10% and 15% efficiencies being required. This reflected the financial challenges across all government bodies and the public sector this year. Mr Doyle thanked Mr Greer for his stewardship and asked Members to be particularly circumspect to these financial circumstances particularly in how schemes and activities were to be conducted in the year ahead.

8.4 Mr Doyle notified of weekly meetings with NIJAC's sponsorship department (TEO) and the landlord to rectify the ongoing heating and ventilation issues at Headline. Mr Doyle that all efforts were being made to expedite matters.

9. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

9.1 Mr McTeggart presented the draft minutes of the meeting of 14 March 2023, 2022, and guided members through the document.

9.2 Mr McTeggart highlighted the absence of any response to NIJAC's tender for Internal Audit services. Mrs McCormac advised that she was confident that a suitable service provider would be identified in-year and satisfactory arrangements will be made for the 2023-24 year.

9.3 The Chair thanked Mr McTeggart and Mr Doyle for their Chair roles in ARAC and Business Committee respectively, and now looked forward to their continued contribution to NIJAC in other ways.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Mr Robinson updated on his attendance at the Commonwealth Law Conference in Goa, India, relaying his positive experience of the event and the value of comparing and discussing the different approaches to judicial appointments internationally. The Chair thanked Mr Robinson for the templates he has subsequently provided and his approval for use by NIJAC.

11 Composition of Committees

11.1 Miss Roberts presented an updated chart on the composition of committees and timetable for 2023-34 ted for information.

Date of next meeting: 22 June 2023 at 9.30am

The meeting concluded at 11.30am

Signed:



.....
The Right Honourable Dame Siobhan Keegan, the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, Chair of the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission

Dated: 22-06-23