

Plenary Minutes
29 September 2022 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
Mr Paul Douglas
Mrs Maureen Eccles
Ms Noelle McGreenera QC
Mr Brian McTeggart
Judge Miller QC
District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) Rosalie Prytherch
Mr Michael Robinson

In Attendance:

Mrs Tonya McCormac
Ms Adeline Frew
Mr Raymond Donnelly
Mr Andrew Millar

1. Apologies and Introductions

1.1 Apologies were received from Lord Justice Treacy

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 28 June 2022

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

5. Chief Executive's Report

5.1 Mrs McCormac reported on overall organisational performance against targets referring to the Strategic performance dashboard and report to Business Committee 23 September. It was noted that all areas were on target to be met, however a date for the politician's event is yet to be confirmed as a NI Assembly has not been formed and was not anticipated to happen in the current financial year.

5.2 An update was provided on the ongoing delay by the Landlord in getting contractors on site to replace the heating system and the resultant legal proceedings now initiated by TEO. Mrs McCormac referred to current Business Continuity planning for the approaching winter, the most practical option being to temporarily relax the current hybrid working model, to facilitate staff to work from home 3 days a week if required and to use existing heating space/rooms in the building flexibly.

The Chair was concerned of the potentially serious impact of the delay to fix the heating on NIJAC's operations, as we enter the winter months. Mrs McCormac confirmed that NIJAC's approach is suitably robust and focused from the outset on achieving the earliest and best long-term outcome and it was noted that upcoming schemes were being carefully planned to take account of potential accommodation impacts and ensure they were minimised.

Action Arising: It was agreed that the Chair write to TEO expressing concern about the potential serious impact of these circumstances on NIJAC's operations and seek an urgent meeting between her or a Board nominee with a suitably senior person to clarify lease arrangements and discuss how NIJAC's current needs can best be met.

5.3 Mrs McCormac updated on an on-going investigation by Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Ombudsman (NIJAO).

Action Arising: Mrs McCormac to advise Plenary of NIJAO outcome

5.4 Mr McTeggart noted a minor correction to the information provided in the Performance Dashboard.

6. Selection Committee updates

6.1 An update paper for each scheme was presented.

6.2 Mr Douglas provided an update on the Master (King's Bench) 2022 Scheme, reporting successful completion, and the Review Tribunal Consultant Psychiatrist, which is on-going.

6.3 Mrs Eccles provided an update on the SENDT President 2022 Scheme, reporting successful completion.

6.4 Mr Robinson provided an update on the ITFET (Vice President) 2022 Scheme, reporting that pre-appointment checks were ongoing.

6.5 Mr Doyle provided an update on the CCJ 2022 Scheme, reporting 2 applicants were deemed appointable following a 4-day exercise.

7. Advisory Committee

7.1 Mr Robinson presented his annual report on the effectiveness of the Advisory Committee and the draft Minutes of the meeting on the 08 September 2022.

7.2 Mr Robinson commented on the significant improvement in communications activity and the value of the dedicated resource in this area that allowed the Commission to more precisely target its communication and outreach activities.

8. Business Committee

8.1 Mr Doyle presented the draft Minutes of the meeting on 23 September 2022, incorporating his Annual Report to the Board.

8.2 Mr Doyle highlighted NIJAC's challenges in the absence of potential Monitoring Round funding this year and the appreciation of the Committee to Mr Duncan Greer for his excellent guidance and support in this area.

8.3 Plenary Chair thanked Mr Doyle for his long serving as Chair of Business Committee and his work in this role.

9. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

9.1 Mr McTeggart presented the draft minutes of the meeting of 22 September 2022 and guided members through the document.

9.2 Mr McTeggart highlighted the External Audit update by NIAO of the 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts (AR&A), the considerable ongoing effort to progress outstanding matters, and noted that a final internal report from NIAO to Those Charged with Governance was shortly expected. NIAO had confirmed in the interim that it would provide an unqualified Audit Opinion for 2020-2021.

9.3 Mr McTeggart reported that the internal audit on Outcomes Based Accountability confirmed that NIJAC's approach was well founded and that this would be a valuable activity for NIJAC going forward.

9.4 Mr McTeggart referred to the long term absence of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and Mrs McCormac updated on current measures to cover in his absence.

10. Personal Profile

10.1 Mr Millar reminded the meeting that a review of the Personal Profile had been approved at its June 2022 meeting and that the review had subsequently been undertaken by a Sub-Committee of the Advisory Cte. Plenary were advised that 3 options had been presented to the Sub-Committee and that they had been unanimous in adopting the model presented today. Mr Millar briefly described the

draft new model and the additional flexibility which it permits. Commissioners were uniform in their acceptance of adopting the draft new model as the focal point of the consultation phase of the review. Suggestions to adopt a workshop approach in respect of the consultation phase were made and adopted. The importance of outreach in the implementation of the new profile was also highlighted.

Action arising: Mr Millar to report to December 2022 Plenary with post-consultation revisions to the draft new model profile with a view to its adoption by NIJAC in all its subsequent recruitment schemes.

Action arising: Mr Millar to present a plan for the implementation of the profile (as adopted in December 2022) in schemes and through outreach alongside the presentation of the profile at the next meeting.

11. AOB

11.1 Themes for AF/AM for support to Advisory Committee?

Adeline to provide.

11.2 Commissioner Appointments Update

The Chair updated on Commissioner appointments as follows:

- High Court Commissioner appointment to be notified in the near future.
- Michael Robinson has been re-nominated by the Law Society
- Noelle McGreenera KC is voluntarily standing down.

11.3 Noelle McGreenera KC Presentation

Commissioners noted that this was Noelle's final Plenary meeting and the Chair thanked her for her valuable work as a Commissioner.

Mrs McCormac made an informal presentation to Noelle on behalf of staff and Commissioners

Date of next meeting: 15 December 2022 at 9.30 am

Signed:



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

Dated: 15-12-2022