

# Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission

## Corporate Plan 2025 – 30



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# Foreword

## *The Right Honourable Dame Siobhan Keegan, Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland*



As Lady Chief Justice for Northern Ireland, it is my pleasure to provide the foreword to NIJAC's Corporate Plan 2025-30.

This document sets out the Strategic Themes, Outcomes and Priorities for NIJAC over the next five years.

Having been established in June 2005 the Commission will soon achieve 20 years of operation and is now an established part of the judicial infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

NIJAC is a statutory body with defined responsibilities. Our legislative obligations provide duties upon which all of our activities must be founded. Whilst our responsibilities are broadened by our role as a public body it is possible to concisely state the core purpose of the Commission: Selecting the best applicants and promoting diversity in the judiciary.

It is that purpose to which all the Commission's activities must be tailored.

As both head of the judiciary and Chair of NIJAC, I am determined to work collaboratively with my fellow Commissioners and NIJAC staff to ensure that we have a diverse judiciary reflective of our society. This is clearly in the best interests of the public and for the benefit of all who will engage with the courts and tribunals.

Within this Plan we seek to assist our many stakeholders to understand the context of, and the basis for, the identification of our Strategic Themes, Outcomes and Priorities over the next five years to achieve our purpose.

I would like to thank my fellow Commissioners and the staff of NIJAC who give much to ensure that high professional standards are maintained and that we engage, listen and play our part in the delivery of the administration of justice for Northern Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Siobhan Keegan". The signature is written in a cursive style.

# About NIJAC

## *Selecting the best applicants and promoting diversity*

NIJAC is an independent public body, which was established on 15 June 2005 to bring about a new system for appointing members of the judiciary in Northern Ireland. The judicial system is one of the components leading to a fair and just society. Through NIJAC's remit, outlined in this Corporate Plan, our aspiration is to contribute to confidence in the judiciary in Northern Ireland.

NIJAC appoint applicants solely on the basis of merit and are required to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable:

- A range of people reflective of the community in Northern Ireland is available for consideration whenever we are required to select an individual to be appointed, or recommended for appointment, to the judiciary.
- Appointments to the judiciary are reflective of the community in Northern Ireland.

Our statutory duties are set out in the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 (as amended) which includes provisions in respect of our purpose and activities; the membership, staffing, governance, financing and our accountability.





# The Commission

*Working in partnership with The Executive Office*



The Commission comprises of 13 members drawn from the judiciary, legal profession and other backgrounds. The Chair is the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, The Right Honourable Dame Siobhan Keegan.

Our Commissioners also sit as members on our Selection Committees which include co-opted members with expertise in the relevant judicial office.

The Commissioners are supported by 13 members of staff, headed by Tonya McCormac, Chief Executive. To support the work of the Board we have three committees - Advisory, Audit and Risk Assurance and Business.

As a public body, we work in partnership with The Executive Office supporting the delivery of the Programme for Government.

# Setting the Direction

*Tonya McCormac, Chief Executive of NIJAC*

I am delighted to have supported the Commission in the development of NIJAC's Corporate Plan 2025-30.

Since our establishment in 2005, NIJAC have developed strong partnerships with many organisations including The Executive Office, the Lady Chief Justice's Office, the Law Society of NI, the Bar of NI, the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, the Departments of Justice, Economy and Communities and we look forward to continuing those relationships in the years ahead. I would like to thank all our stakeholder organisations for their engagement in the process of developing this Plan.

Over the last 20 years, NIJAC has celebrated significant milestones and achievements including increasing female representation across Courts and Tribunals, making significant steps to modernise the process of assessment, selection and broadening the depth and reach of our applicant pools.

We remain strongly committed to diversity and inclusion as an organisation and have recently received the highly regarded Diversity Mark Accreditation which will inspire our ongoing



commitment and strengthen our resolve in progressing diversity and inclusion in both the Commission, as an employer, and in making appointments to judicial office in the Courts and Tribunals in Northern Ireland.

I would like to thank the NIJAC Chair, Board, staff, and our stakeholders for their continued commitment to the work of the Commission and for their support. I am looking forward to continuing to work with all as we continue to make appointments, solely on the basis of merit, across our Courts and Tribunals in Northern Ireland

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tonya McCormac". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# Vision and Values

## *Selecting the best applicants and promoting diversity*

NIJAC play an important role in contributing to confidence in the judiciary by selecting the best applicants and promoting diversity. Our selection processes are designed to enable NIJAC to select persons for judicial office solely on the basis of merit, having considered their eligibility, suitability and integrity. Promoting diversity is achieved through a wide range of varied outreach methods to secure, so far as it is reasonably practicable to do so, that a range of persons reflective of the community in Northern Ireland is available for consideration at application and appointment stage.

Given our role and the nature of our work, it is important that we clearly articulate and put into practice our values and what we as a public body stand for. The following underpinning values represent the core behaviours of the Commission across all areas of our activities - engagement, assessment, selection, governance, and financial management. We have developed these values with our staff and Commissioners who seek to display these when fulfilling their duties and we seek to embed these further through our recruitment, induction, training and development and performance activities.





# NIJAC's Long Term Outcomes

Underpinning NIJAC's Corporate Plan 2025 - 30 are two high level Strategic Outcomes aligned to the Programme for Government (PfG) 2024 - 27.

In delivering on and achieving these, we continue to demonstrate how we make an impact as a Public Body in Northern Ireland.

**·NIJAC is recognised as a body which delivers appointments, solely on the basis of merit, to a judiciary which reflects the community (as far as it is reasonably practicable to do so).**

**·NIJAC is an open, transparent and well-run organisation and valued by stakeholders.**

Through this Outcomes Based Accountability approach, NIJAC will continue to demonstrate the impact of our work and measure our success as a public body in Northern Ireland.

The Programme for Government sets the context for what we need to do now to make a real difference. As a public body NIJAC has a role in working with others across government and the wider community to support and enable the transformation of public services and improve the well-being of people living in Northern Ireland.





# Programme for Government 2024-2027

On 27 February 2025 the Executive agreed a Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'. It outlines three missions with cross cutting priorities for making a real difference to the lives of people in Northern Ireland. This is the environment of which all public bodies work.

NIJAC's strategy and annual business objectives will be underpinned by and contribute to the following priorities below:

**Ending Violence Against Women and Girls**

**Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs**

**Safer Communities**

**Reform and Transformation of Public Services**

NIJAC's work during the period of this plan will contribute to these priorities by continuing to ensure that the process for the assessment and selection of judicial office holders incorporates their ability to demonstrate the full range of skills, attributes, behaviours and different aspects of effectiveness which make the judiciary in Northern Ireland capable of delivering a Justice service which is supportive of these priorities.

NIJAC will do this through the continual review and improvement of its assessment methods, the delivery of timely selection exercises which ensure that those courts and tribunals supporting the achievement of these aims are adequately resourced with a capable judiciary, and also through striving to improve the service through good governance and sustainable financial management.

# Key Strategic Themes

We aim to achieve our strategic outcomes in the period 2025-30 by our commitment to deliver a programme of action and activities which are focused on the following five key strategic themes:

- 01** Recognising Merit
- 02** Reflecting the Community
- 03** Engaging with Others
- 04** Valuing Our People
- 05** Delivering a well-run organisation

# Recognising Merit

*Designing and implementing continuous improvement of The Selection Process which recognises merit, promotes fairness and maintains public confidence.*

## Strategic Outcome

Assurance that NIJAC's Selection Process is fit for purpose and delivers appointments solely on the basis of merit

## Strategic Priorities

Conduct targeted pieces of work, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, to quality assure assessment and selection processes

Carry out a comprehensive review of Recruitment and Selection Training

Review and modernisation of assessment methods

# Reflecting the Community

*Monitoring diversity in the judiciary and our applicant pools to enable NIJAC to identify underrepresentation. Encouraging applications from across the community to maximise the potential for appointments to be reflective of the community.*

## Strategic Outcome

To have a judiciary which is as reflective of the community as far as is reasonably practicable

## Strategic Priorities

Develop and implement a NIJAC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

Review NIJAC's data needs and improve analytical & reporting capabilities

Identify areas of underrepresentation and take steps to address through targeted engagement and outreach initiatives in partnership with others



# Engaging with Others

*Collaborating with stakeholders to deliver effective services and working in partnership with others to influence and increase the wider awareness of what NIJAC does.*

## Strategic Outcome

Delivery of effective services through ongoing collaboration and partnership maximising NIJAC's opportunity to influence

Increased awareness of the story of NIJAC

## Strategic Priorities

Develop and implement a strategic framework for engaging with others

Structured and formalised meetings with partnership organisations resulting in improved communication, planning and delivery

Targeted engagement initiatives with relevant stakeholders/relevant organisations to influence and promote awareness about the work of NIJAC

# Valuing our People

*Creating the conditions by which our people (Commissioners, staff and co-opted individuals) feel supported, facilitated and inspired to do their best work.*

## Strategic Outcome

People are fully engaged in their work in terms of their skills and levels of motivation towards maintaining a positive culture to meet NIJAC's business outcomes

## Strategic Priorities

Building the capacity of our people (Commissioners, staff and co-opted individuals) by providing the specific skills, knowledge and support to carry out their roles

Improving collective leadership in the organisation by focusing on enrichment across job roles to maximise levels of motivation and encourage individual responsibility

# Delivering a well-run organisation

*Delivering an independent, efficient and effective public service with a focus on good governance and sustainable financial management.*

## Strategic Outcome

NIJAC has a strong culture of good governance, accountability and financial stability that supports NIJAC's values

## Strategic Priorities

Develop, implement and deliver on the renewed Partnership Agreement with TEO 2025-28

Continuing to improve Board effectiveness and oversight

Working with TEO to secure a sustainable funding model

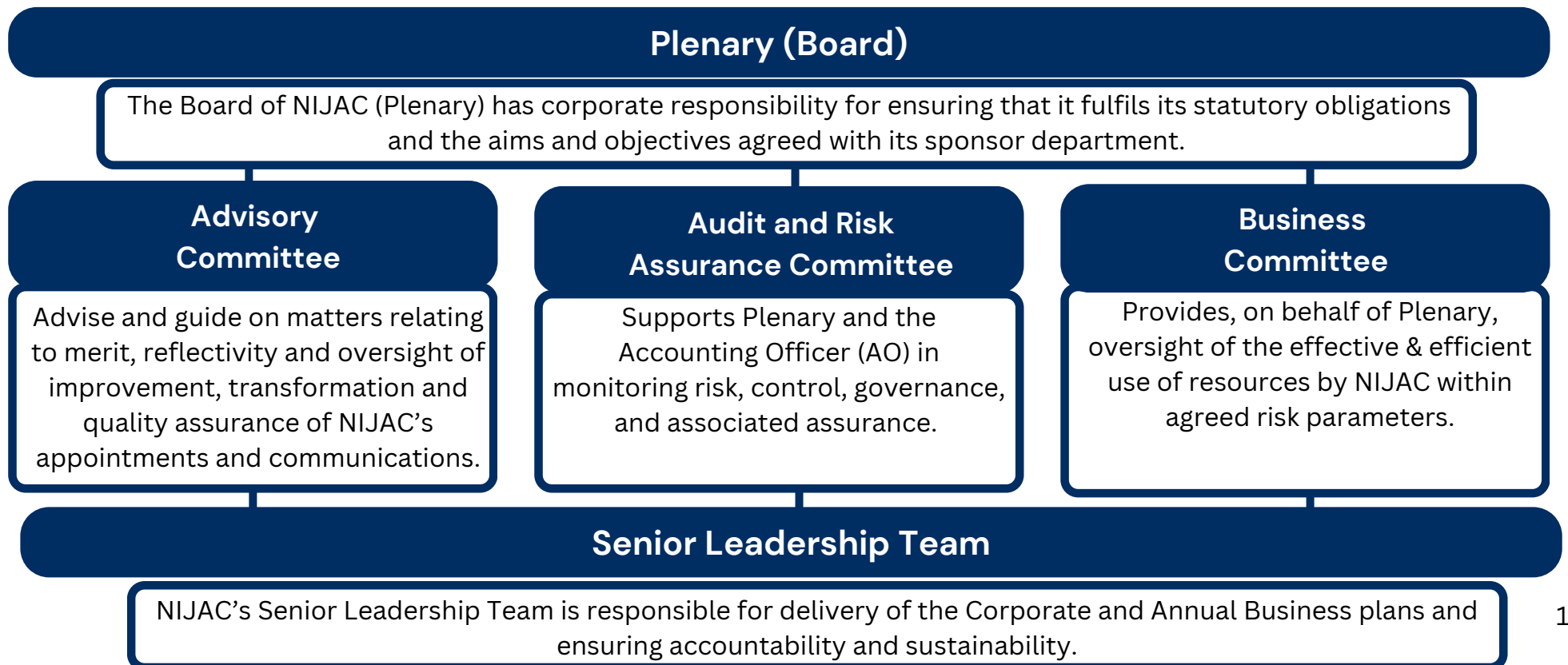
Development of an Accommodation Strategy for 2027 onwards

Maintain and improve Diversity Mark accreditation

# Implementation

## *Strategic Management of NIJAC's Corporate Plan 2025 - 30*

Monitoring and reviewing performance against this Corporate Plan will be integrated into our governance arrangements so we understand the extent to which we are achieving our intended Outcomes. Delivery of the Plan will be supported each year by an Annual Business Plan which sets out in detail our Actions and Measures. Through the Board, its Committees and the Senior Leadership Team as depicted below, regular reports monitoring delivery against key elements of our work will be scrutinised with a formal assessment of our Annual Business Plan in the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts.







# Implementation

## *Strategic Management of NIJAC's Corporate Plan 2025 - 30*

Our Corporate Risk Register is also aligned at all service delivery levels providing linkages between identified risks/threats to Corporate Plan outcomes and Annual Business Plan measures. We will implement the framework of strategic management to ensure that:

- all Commissioners, staff and those others assisting the Commission are aware of our aims and objectives of the strategic plan and their contribution;
- there is open and transparent monitoring of the achievement of our objectives;
- responsibility for decisions and quality of our delivery is clearly allocated;
- accountability for delivery is part of the regular review of business;
- risk management processes are in place which enable us to monitor and control those risks which arise, with appropriate scrutiny and oversight by the Board; and
- the Board is responsible for oversight, scrutiny and setting the strategic direction of the Commission with the support of the Chief Executive and staff.



# Contact Details

*We welcome any feedback on this plan or any aspect of our work*

## Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission

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