

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION (JAC) MEETING

16 September 2010

MINUTES OF MEETING

PRESENT

Commissioners

Usha Prashar (Chairman)
Roger Toulson
Lorna Boreland-Kelly
Hazel Genn
Geoffrey Inkin
Frances Kirkham
Edward Nally
Sara Nathan
David Pearl
Francis Plowden
Harriet Spicer
Jonathan Sumption

Staff

Chief Executive
Director, Courts Appointments
Director, Tribunals Appointments, Corporate Accounting & Planning
Director, Operational Services
Director, Strategy & Outreach
Assistant Director, Policy & Research Strategy
Private Secretary to Chairman

Apologies and matters arising

1. Apologies were received from Jill Black and Charles Newman.
2. All Commissioners confirmed they did not have a personal interest in any matters discussed.
3. The minutes of the July meeting were approved.

Report on the outcome of pilot qualifying tests (JAC/10/49)

4. The Commission noted the findings of the pilot of qualifying tests developed by academics and commercial test developers and acknowledged the work of the staff on this project.
5. It was agreed that due to the current financial climate the Commission should pause before any further action is taken to outsource the development of qualifying tests.

Report back from working groups

Diversity Forum

6. The Diversity Forum last met on 22 July and received a presentation from The Hon Mr Justice Hickinbottom on solicitor progress in the judiciary and a presentation from a Commissioner on preparation and application to judicial office.
7. Commissioners noted the time and commitment given by members of the Forum.

8. The next meeting would take place on 20 September and would be the last to be chaired by Baroness Prashar.

Directors' reports (JAC/10/50)

9. The Commission considered a paper presented by the Director of Operational Services on good character checks (JAC/10/51). The Commission agreed that a Service Level Agreement should be signed with the Association of Chief Police Officers' Criminal Records Office for criminal checks and noted that the use of this organisation would be made clear to applicants on the Consent Form. It was agreed that progress with HM Revenue and Customs would be discussed at a future meeting, once further information was available.
10. The Director of Strategy and Outreach updated the Commission on progress towards implementing data sharing arrangements with the Ministry of Justice – subject to the obtaining the informed consent of candidates - for exercises launching after 1 January 2011 (JAC/10/52). It was noted that the data would not be transferred to the Ministry of Justice until there was evidence that it could be transferred and held securely.
11. The Commission noted the findings of a report which provided a summary of lessons learnt from closedown reports considered by the Quality Assurance Group over the past six months (JAC/10/53).
12. The Quarter 1 Performance Report (JAC/10/54) was presented to the Commission by the Director of Strategy and Outreach. The Commission noted progress against all Key Performance Indicators was 'Green'.
13. The Director of Tribunal Appointments Corporate Accounting and Planning updated the Commission on role play policy and noted that a more substantive update would be given to the Commission at a later stage. The Commission were also informed of the Transparency Agenda and it was agreed that going forward an update would be included in the Director's report.
14. The Director of Courts Appointments provided an update on exercises currently running and noted work undertaken to provide further training and development of staff including the provision of monthly training workshops.

Operating Model (JAC/ 10/48)

15. The Commission considered options to achieve the possible budget reductions required by the Spending Review. It was agreed that further work should be undertaken and discussed

again at the meeting in October and that there would be a monthly assessment of the risk associated with budget reductions.

16. Proposals put to the Commission included provisions to remove first class travel.
17. The Commission also agreed that staff should be provided with further information on progress and options under consideration.

Discussion with the Lord Chancellor and Director General of Law, Rights, International in the Ministry of Justice (DG LRI)

18. The Lord Chancellor and DGLRI attended a discrete part of the meeting to discuss the review of the end to end judicial appointments process and to hear any views from Commissioners. There was a very informative and constructive exchange during which Commissioners highlighted some key facts relating to the JAC's performance and delivery.

Chief Executive's report (JAC/10/55)

19. The Chief Executive updated the Commission on current key issues noting that staff morale had been maintained to a good level during the summer given the uncertain circumstances.

Chairman's report

20. The Chairman informed Commissioners of her recent meeting with DGLRI and attendance at the Justice Select Committee hearing and the Commonwealth Magistrates' Judges' Association conference in Brighton with the Lord Chief Justice. She was also due to give evidence to the Senior Salaries Review Body the following week.

Any Other Business

21. The Vice Chairman thanked the Chairman for her work and noted the leadership, courage, wisdom, energy and friendship she had provided to the Commission throughout her period in office. The Vice Chairman proposed that the Commission endorsed the Lord Chancellor's recognition that she had put the Judicial Appointments Commission on the map, to which all agreed.
22. The Chairman thanked Commissioners for their support and said it had been a privilege to work with them. She also thanked the Chief Executive, Leadership team and staff for their work.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on 14 October 2010.