

## **SELECTION OF ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS**

### Issue

1. Members are meeting at 8.30am on 18 July 2011 at the BCE's offices, to select who to formally recommend for appointment by the Secretary of State as Assistant Commissioners.

### Recommendation

2. Following the independent selection process conducted by the Appointments Commission, the Secretariat recommends that you select for recommendation the individuals listed in Annex A. Annex A also incorporates the Secretariat's recommendations as to the regions individuals should be primarily appointed to, and which individuals should be identified as the Lead Commissioner in each region.

### Background and Consideration

3. Schedule 1 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended) provides that the Secretary of State may "at the request of the Commission, appoint one or more assistant Commissioners to assist the Commission in the discharge of their functions."
4. Members have previously decided that they would wish to see a team of up to three Assistant Commissioners appointed for each of the nine regions in England, one of whom would be designated the 'Lead' Assistant Commissioner for that region. Assistant Commissioners would be appointed for the purpose of:
  - a) chairing the public hearings in their region (Members have determined that each Lead should chair as many as possible in their region); and
  - b) analysing all the representations received for their region at the initial and secondary consultation stages, producing a digest of that information, and producing a report for the region that summarises the representations, and makes recommendations for retention or variation of the Commission's initial proposals (the Lead will oversee and be ultimately responsible for production of the whole report for a region).
5. Members have previously agreed the list of criteria against which applicants for the vacancies were to be assessed, and this is provided at Annex B.
6. Members previously agreed to use the services of the Appointments Commission to run the initial stages of the selection process, due to the likely size of the administrative task, and the regulation of the Appointments Commission by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (although the selection of Assistant Commissioners is not an exercise that is itself subject to OCPA regulation).
7. The Appointments Commission advertised the vacancies from 26 April on their own website and the Cabinet Office's 'Public Appointments' website. We also advertised the vacancies on our own website. Adverts were placed in the Sunday Times/Times Online, Counsel Magazine, the Law Society Gazette, the Lawyer, and the (local government) Management Journal. The Appointments Commission directly brought

the vacancy to the attention of those individuals registered with them who they considered might be a good fit with the criteria sought, and the Secretariat contacted the following Bar Associations with a request that they bring the vacancies to the attention of their members: Administrative Law; Commercial Bar; Chancery Bar; and Planning & Environmental Law. The vacancy was also advertised on the local government jobs website.

8. The application period closed on 18 May, and there were 1,026 applications received. Staff at the Appointments Commission conducted an initial sift of all applicants, to assess their relative strength against the published assessment criteria. Individuals in the top categories of this initial assessment were screened by an Independent Assessor (accredited as such by the OCPA) to ensure their categorisation was appropriate, before the top 71 applicants were sent to the assessment panel for shortlisting. A random sample of applications from lower categories was scrutinised by the BCE's representative on the panel for quality assurance purposes.
9. The assessment panel consisted of: Penny Bennett (Commissioner at the Appointments Commission) as Chair of the panel, Helen Yarrow (OCA-credited Independent Assessor) as the Independent member; and Tony Bellringer (Deputy Secretary to the BCE) as the 'business representative' member. The panel shortlisted the candidates it was sent, inviting 51 individuals to interview (three 'reserves' were also identified, but not used, as all initial invitees were able to attend): an interview-to-vacancy ratio of just under 2:1.
10. Annex C provides the pen portrait and initial assessment for each of the 51 candidates ultimately invited for interview.
11. Interviews were conducted on a competency basis, i.e. candidates were asked to provide and discuss examples of how they had previously demonstrated the published criteria. In each of the six 'essential' criteria, panel members separately then scored each of the criteria, based on the evidence from the application form and interview, then the panel came together to discuss their scores and reach an agreed consensus on the scores for that individual. Each criteria was allocated a score of 3 for 'Outstanding' evidence, 2 for 'Good' evidence, and 1 for 'Some' evidence – half marks were awarded for evidence that was borderline between two categories.
12. On the advice of the business representative member of the panel, the panel agreed before the first interview to apply weighting - by doubling the initial score – to the categories of: a) 'Maintaining authority, respect and confidence' (due to the relevance for public hearings); and b) 'producing succinct written analyses and digests of others arguments, and clear reasoned recommendations' (due to the relevance for the analysis and reporting work).
13. The merit listing of all the interviewed candidates based on their final assessment scoring by the panel is at Annex D.
14. Annex E sets out statistical data relating to the diversity of candidates in the areas of gender, disability and ethnicity, at three stages: application, pre-assessment, and shortlisting for interview.

## Selection Criteria

### Essential criteria

- Integrity and independence of mind;
- Ability to explain procedures and any decisions reached clearly and succinctly, both orally and in writing.
- Ability to inspire respect and confidence, and to maintain authority when challenged, particularly in a public hearing context;
- Ability to treat everyone with respect and sensitivity whatever their background;
- Ability to work accurately at speed and under pressure, quickly absorbing detail, analysing information objectively, and drafting written reports expeditiously;
- Ability to produce in writing clear and succinct analyses and digests of arguments put by others, and clear reasoned recommendations.

Examples of where these have been displayed in the context of working within a statutory and/or public framework will be particularly welcome.

### Other competencies and skills required, which may be tested at interview.

#### Communication Skills

- Good listening skills to demonstrate patience, courtesy and tact.

#### Personal effectiveness

- High level of expertise in your chosen area or profession

#### Leadership and Team working

- Ability to demonstrate leadership and managerial skills where appropriate and to work as a team.