

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONERS

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE TO THE SENIOR SALARIES REVIEW BODY (SSRB)

Executive Summary

1. In its letter of 28 July 2009 to Janet Paraskeva, the First Civil Service Commissioner, the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB) invited the Civil Service Commissioners to submit written evidence to SSRB for its 2010 report.
2. Our Annual Report for 2008–09, which is available on our website www.civilservicecommissioners.org, covers our general experience of recruitment to the Senior Civil Service during the period and contains information and statistics which we trust will be of interest to the Review Body. As has been our practice in recent years, we also provide this additional evidence.
3. Our evidence is a factual record of the 117 competitions for Senior Civil Service (SCS) posts which we have chaired during the reporting period, together with our observations which are based on this experience.
4. Our broad conclusions are:
 - The levels of recruitment through open competition at pay bands 2 and 3 of the Senior Civil Service have remained high. Commissioners chaired 98 such competitions this year compared to 104 in 2007/08 and 90 in 2006/7.
 - This year saw a higher percentage of successful candidates coming from the Civil Service than has been the case in the last few years. 63% of successful candidates were from the Civil Service compared to 41% in 2007/08 and 39% in 2006/07.
 - The Civil Service is continuing to attract strong fields of candidates for its top jobs.
 - The current remuneration arrangements do not appear to be a barrier to attracting high quality candidates from the wider public sector and the private sector.

Our Role

5. As Commissioners, we contribute to the development of an effective and impartial Civil Service and support its core values by assuring that appointments into it are made on merit through fair and open competition and by promoting the Civil Service Code and hearing appeals under it.

6. When a vacancy within the top pay bands of the Civil Service - pay band 2, pay band 3 and Permanent Secretary (a total of around 600 posts) is opened to external recruitment, we oversee the process for selection by chairing the recruitment panel. Our approval is required before any such appointment can be made.

7. It is for government departments, to decide whether or not to go to open competition at pay band 2. The decision on a vacancy at pay band 3 and Permanent Secretary level is taken by the Senior Leadership Committee, on which the First Civil Service Commissioner sits. Departments also decide the characteristics of the competition and the terms and conditions on offer, including the level of remuneration to be awarded to the successful candidates, seeking advice and, if necessary, approval from the Cabinet Office.

8. Under the terms of the 'Top 200 Protocol' agreed between the Commissioners and the Senior Leadership Committee, we also chair competitions for the Top 200 posts in the Civil Service when the competition is restricted to applicants already in the Civil Service. There were 16 such competitions during the reporting period.

Significant developments during the year

9. In our evidence last year we noted the publication of the draft Constitutional Renewal Bill in March 2008. However, despite considerable public focus on constitutional issues, legislation on the Civil Service had not yet been introduced to Parliament by the time of the publication of our annual report in July 2009.

10. We therefore welcomed the introduction into Parliament at the end of July of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill. The Bill proposes a Civil Service Commission comprising the Civil Service Commissioners and staff. It places on a statutory footing the principle that recruitment to the Civil Service must be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. The Bill also requires the Commission to hear appeals under the Civil Service Code and it provided for the Minister for the Civil Service and the Commission to agree to the Commission taking on additional roles.

11. The Civil Service Commissioners continue to believe that the constitutional position of the Civil Service and the core values that underpin its effectiveness are so important that they need the protection of statute. It should not be possible to change the essential values of the Civil Service,

including the principle of recruitment on merit, without proper Parliamentary debate and scrutiny.

12. There was uncertainty during the year whether Civil Service legislation would be introduced. However, where there were improvements that could be introduced in advance of legislation, we thought it right that we did not wait. The draft legislation proposed that we replace our Recruitment Code with Recruitment Principles
<http://www.civilservicecommissioners.org/Recruitment/RecruitmentPrinciples/> to further emphasise our role as a strategic regulator. We have done this from 1 April 2009.

13. Our new Recruitment Principles, which are mandatory for departments and agencies, are high level and focused. They set out our interpretation of the principle of appointment on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. They make it clear that it is for agencies and departments to determine their own recruitment policies and practices, and test them against our Principles.

14. In April 2009 we published a new guide to the approach of the Civil Service Commissioners in chairing senior competitions
https://www.civilservicecommissioners.org/Publications/Charing_Competitions/
This brings together in one place clear and comprehensive guidance and resources to explain exactly how we will discharge our role as chair of the panel of senior recruitment competitions, in line with our own Recruitment Principles.

Recruitment to the Senior Civil Service from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009

Recruitment activity

15. Levels of recruitment have remained high this year. Our Annual Report shows a total of 98 appointments through open competition to the Senior Civil Service which required the Commissioners' approval, compared with 104 in 2007-08, 90 in 2006-07, 111 in 2005-06 and 91 in 2004-05.

Marking structure

16. The Commissioners' marking structure for assessing candidates' performance at interview is as follows:

- A = an outstanding candidate;
- B = a very good candidate;
- B/C = clearly above the minimum acceptable level;
- C = acceptable;

- D = near-miss;
- E = clearly not acceptable.

(Only those awarded a mark of A, B, B/C or C are above the line and therefore can be considered appointable. Occasionally, a mark of A-, B+ and B- may be awarded in order to differentiate candidates within the A and B bands.)

Appointments at SLC level

17. The Senior Leadership Committee continues to advise the Head of the Home Civil Service on appointments at pay band 3 and above. The First Civil Service Commissioner sits on the Committee.

18. During the period of the report, 30 positions at SLC level were filled following open competition. This maintains the level of activity of last year when there were 29 such competitions, a significant increase on the year before that when there were 17 such appointments.

Appointments below SLC level

19. There were 68 senior appointees below SLC level filled through open competition during 2007-08 for which the Commissioners had to give their approval.

Non-appointments

20. In addition to the competitions noted above, there were two competitions which Commissioners chaired that failed to produce an appointable candidate. The year before this figure had been eight.

Commentary

Numbers

21. In total we chaired competitions for 117 posts this year. Of these 98 were open to external candidates; 16 were competitions only open to Civil Service candidates; one was for a statutory office holder at the request of the Attorney General; and two did not result in an appointment.

Size of fields

22. In general, there were good quality fields in terms of size for most of the competitions that the Commissioners chaired. In most cases where a small field was attracted this was anticipated in advance due to the specialist nature of the job or some other anticipated factor.

Quality of fields: board marking

23. For SLC appointees, 90% were marked either 'A' or 'B'. This is very close to the 83% who received A or B markings last year. The A markings showed the same upward trend that we noted last year: from 6% in 2006-07 to 14% last year and 27% this year. These are of course very small samples

so undue weight should not be given to these movements. Table 1 shows the marks awarded to the successful candidates for SLC posts for the year compared with the position in the previous four reporting years.

Table 1

SLC Appointee Markings: Open competitions					
Year	A	B	B/C	C	Total
2004-05	4 (21%)	14 (74%)	1 (6%)	0	19
2005-06	3 (15%)	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	20
2006-07	1 (6%)	13 (76%)	2 (12%)	1 (6%)	17
2007-08	4 (14%)	20 (69%)	4 (14%)	1 (3%)	29
2008-09	8 (27%)	19 (63%)	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	30

24. For non-SLC appointees, 75% were marked either 'A' or 'B'. This is close to the 72% year and the same percentage as the year before that. Table 2 shows the marks that were awarded to appointees below SLC this year compared with the four previous reporting periods.

Table 2

Non SLC-Appointee Markings: Open competitions					
Year	A	B	B/C	C	Total
2004-05	5 (7%)	45 (63%)	14 (20%)	8 (11%)	72
2005-06	12 (13%)	53 (58%)	13 (15%)	13 (15%)	91
2006-07	11 (15%)	44 (60%)	10 (14%)	8 (11%)	73
2007-08	8 (11%)	46 (61%)	11 (14%)	11 (14%)	76
2008-09	5 (7%)	46 (68%)	9 (13%)	8 (12%)	68

Quality of fields: appointable candidates

25. As reported above, 30 positions at SLC level were filled following open competition. All the recommended candidates were appointed and in 17 competitions (57%) the panel was able to identify one or more reserves.

26. There were 68 senior appointees below SLC level. 45 (66%) of the fields were of high enough quality to produce at least one appointable reserve candidate.

Quality of fields: Commissioners' assessment

27. We record an assessment of fields based upon the personal impressions of the Commissioner chairing the competition. This anecdotal assessment takes into account such factors as number of applicants (weighted against the nature of the job), the quality of candidates at each stage of the process and the diversity of the field in light of the requirements of the job.

28. The assessment of the competitions for the 98 'open' appointments was that in 39 of them (40%) the field was good and in 13 (13%) it was very

good. For 44 competitions (45%) the field was judged as adequate and in 2 competitions (2%) it was judged as poor. These distributions were broadly similar for both SLC and non-SLC competitions.

Sources

29. We noted in last year's evidence that there has been marked consistency over the past few years in the percentages of successful candidates from the Civil Service, the wider public sector and the private sector. For the past four years they had been roughly each year around 40% from the Civil Service, 25% from the wider public sector and 35% from the private sector. Table 3 shows a detailed breakdown for the past five years.

30. This year the figures do not have the consistency that we noted last year. There has been an increase in the percentage of successful candidates from the Civil Service, up to 63%, and corresponding declines in successful candidates from the other two sectors.

Table 3

Sources of All Senior Appointees					
Year	Pay band	Civil Service	Private Sector	Public Sector	Year Total
2004-05	SLC	4	10	5	91
	Non-SLC (pb2)	34	26	12	
	Total	38 (42%)	36 (39%)	17 (19%)	
2005-06	SLC	10	4	6	111
	Non-SLC (pb2)	32	35	24	
	Total	42 (38%)	39 (35%)	30 (27%)	
2006-07	SLC	8	6	3	90
	Non-SLC (pb2)	28	27	18	
	Total	36 (40%)	33 (37%)	21 (23%)	
2007-08	SLC	11	12	6	105
	Non-SLC (pb2)	32	27	17	
	Total	43 (41%)	39 (37%)	23 (22%)	
2008-09	SLC	19	7	4	98
	Non-SLC (pb2)	43	16	9	
	Total	62 (63%)	23 (24%)	13 (13%)	

Tables 4 and 5 break these figures down for SLC and non-SLC appointments.

Table 4

Sources of SLC Appointees: Open Competitions				
Year	Civil Service	Private Sector	Public Sector	Total
2004-05	4 (21%)	10 (53%)	5 (26%)	19
2005-06	10 (50%)	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	20
2006-07	8 (47%)	6 (35%)	3 (18%)	17
2007-08	11 (38%)	12 (41%)	6 (21%)	29
2008-09	19 (63%)	7 (23%)	4 (13%)	30

Table 5

Sources of Non-SLC Appointees (pay band 2)				
Year	Civil Service	Private Sector	Public Sector	Total
2004-05	34 (47%)	26 (37%)	12 (17%)	72
2005-06	32 (35%)	35 (39%)	24 (27%)	91
2006-07	28 (38%)	27 (37%)	18 (25%)	73
2007-08	32 (42%)	27 (36%)	17 (22%)	76
2008-09	43 (63%)	16 (24%)	9 (13%)	68

Salaries

31. In our written evidence to the Review Body last year and the year before we commented particularly on two issues: advertised salaries vs. actual salaries and the disparity in starting salaries between appointees from Civil Service and non Civil Service sources. It is worth recalling that departments and agencies normally negotiate the remuneration package with the successful candidate after the Commissioner's involvement with the competition has ended. Our information on remuneration comes to us retrospectively.

32. Two years ago we commented on evidence that many successful applicants from the private sector were negotiating salaries significantly in excess of those advertised; while successful civil servants were getting starting salaries significantly below the advertised rate. Last year the pattern was more mixed and less extreme. This year there are far fewer instances of payments significantly over the advertised rate. It does seem that the Civil Service has addressed this issue and there is now much greater consistency: in the assessment of salary for jobs; and in negotiation with successful candidates on their starting salary.

33. Tables 6 and 7 show the average starting salaries by source of appointees over the past five reporting periods. It is interesting to note that average starting salaries for successful Civil Service candidates for both SLC and non-SLC jobs increased from last year. Candidates from the private sector and the wider public sector received average starting salaries that were lower than the year before, for both SLC and pay band 2 jobs. For pay band 2, the wide disparity between starting salaries of Civil Service candidates against the rest that was noted last year has been noticeably eroded.

34. It is important to recognise that salary is one element of the remuneration package, bonuses are another and pensions are a third. They may combine in different configurations for candidates from different career backgrounds.

Table 6

Average pay band 3 Starting Salaries by Source Sector (£k)			
Year	Civil Service	Private Sector	Public Sector
2004-05	110.4	160.8	134.2
2005-06	122	166.8	156
2006-07	145.3	164.8	183
2007-08	135.3	172.9	160.8
2008-09	138.1	160.0	155.0

Table 7

Average pay band 2 Starting Salaries by Source Sector (£k)			
Year	Civil Service	Private Sector	Public Sector
2004-05	92	106.1	101.5
2005-06	100.9	111.5	112.6
2006-07	98.9	128.5	118.9
2007-08	102	130.6	131.8
2008-09	108.8	115.4	115.7

35. In the last two years we noted an increased tendency for departments not to include any salary figure or range in any of the information for candidates. This practice appears to have largely ceased: we only noted one instance where no salary was mentioned in the job advertisement or information pack.

Diversity of appointees

36. In the last few years we have reported lower percentages of successful female candidates. Last year this was marked for pay band 2 jobs while the percentage of successful candidates for SLC jobs increased (in each year it is a small sample of jobs from which to make a comparison). However, over both pay bands there was a noticeable change from 30% of successful candidates being female in 2004-05 to 24% in 2007-08.

37. There has been a change again this year and across the two pay bands 35% of successful candidates are female. The percentage of successful SLC candidates has slightly declined (this is a very small sample, in actual numbers there were 7 successful female candidates to SLC jobs this year as opposed to 8 the year before). For pay band two the percentage of female appointees has gone from 22% to 40% (27 successful female candidates this year as opposed to 17 last year).

Table 8

Gender of SLC Appointees: Open competitions		
	Female	Male
2004-05	4 (21%)	15 (79%)
2005-06	6 (30%)	14 (70%)
2006-07	4 (24%)	13 (76%)
2007-08	8 (28%)	21 (72%)
2008-09	7 (23%)	23 (77%)

Table 9

Gender of non-SLC Appointees (pay band 2)		
	Female	Male
2004-05	23 (32%)	49 (68%)
2005-06	29 (32%)	62 (68%)
2006-07	19 (26%)	54 (74%)
2007-08	17 (22%)	59 (78%)
2008-09	27(40%)	41 (60%)

38. The data collected on applicants in open competitions does not enable us to comment with any reliability on the ethnicity of candidates or on the percentage of candidates with disabilities.

**Civil Service Commissioners
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