

NORTHERN IRELAND DISTRICT POLICING PARTNERSHIPS

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

**REPORT OF THE IMPARTIAL ASSESSORS
TO THE POLICING BOARD**

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Appendix 1 'Indicative timetable for the appointment of Independent Members to the District Policing Partnerships [DPPs] 07/08'.

Appendix 2 'Table showing DPP membership across all districts following reconstitution in 2008'.

1.0 General Introduction

The Northern Ireland Policing Board carried out a public appointments process, between October 2007 and March 2008, to appoint Independent Members to District Policing Partnerships [DPPs] and to the Belfast sub-groups.

The process was conducted according to the Code of Practice on the 'Appointment of Independent Members to District Policing Partnerships and Belfast District Policing Partnership Sub-Groups'. [the Code]

The Code was issued in November 2007 and was made under Paragraph 6[2] of Schedule 3 and paragraph 6[2] of Schedule 3A to the Police [Northern Ireland] Act 2000 [the 2000 Act], as amended by the Police [Northern Ireland] Act 2003 [the 2003 Act] and the District Policing Partnerships [NI] Order 2005 [the 2005 Order]. Hereafter referred to as the 2000 Act [as amended].

The provisions of the 2000 Act [as amended] enable the Secretary of State to issue, and from time to time revise, a code of practice containing guidance as to the exercise, by Councils and the Policing Board, of their functions in the nomination and appointments process for independent members.

The Code gives guidance to District Councils and the Policing Board on their respective roles in the nomination and appointment of independent members to DPPs and to the Belfast sub-groups.

The Code used in this process was the 2007 version, which replaced the 2005 version and takes account of the legislative changes made by 2003 Act which, in particular affect appointments to the Belfast sub-groups and the disqualification provisions. These came into effect on 4th September 2007.

The Code is described, in its introductory section, as being 'in line with the guidance on appointments to public bodies issued by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments' [OCPA -- the Commissioner's Code of Practice] even though the appointments do not come within the OCPA remit. It is also described as having been 'screened for adverse equality

impacts'. [Following screening, it was determined that an equality impact assessment was not required.]

Part 111 of the 2000 Act [as amended] sets out the provisions governing the operation and functions of DPPs and the Belfast sub-groups. Schedules 3 and 3A, in addition to providing for the Code, set out how DPPs and sub-groups are to be established and how appointments of political and independent members are to be made. They also set out the constitution of the DPPs and sub-groups, and how the positions of chair and vice-chair are to be filled.

As with the previous nomination and appointments process [carried out between May and December 2005], the process drew candidates from two streams:

- [1] existing members of DPPs and
- [2] new candidates who responded to advertisements for the posts.

In accordance with the Act [as amended], independent members of DPPs and sub-groups are appointed by the Policing Board from names submitted by the District Councils. In making the appointments, the Policing Board is required to seek, as far as practicable, to ensure that the overall membership of each DPP is representative of the community in the Council area. Within Belfast, the Policing Board must seek, as far as practicable, to ensure that the membership of the DPP is representative of the community of Belfast as a whole and that membership of each sub-group is representative of the district it serves.

In the context of the changes brought about by the St Andrews Agreement, and subsequent to an analysis of the membership of all 26 DPPs, it was determined that 23 of Northern Ireland's 26 DPPs, plus the four Belfast sub-groups, should be subject to a process of nomination and appointment, as set out in the Code. The analysis, in a paper entitled 'Reconstitution of District Policing Partnerships [DPPs] – The Political Condition', was approved by the Board on 6th September 2007.

The DPPs affected [ie to be reconstituted] were:

Antrim

Ards

Armagh

Ballymoney

Belfast

Carrickfergus

Castlereagh

Cookstown

Craigavon

Derry

Down

Dungannon & South Tyrone

Fermanagh

Larne

Limavady

Lisburn

Magherafelt

Moyle

Newry and Mourne

Newtownabbey

North Down

Omagh

Strabane.

Those DPPs not requiring reconstitution were:

Ballymena

Banbridge

Coleraine

As with all previous nomination and appointments processes there was independent scrutiny at all stages of the process.

It was recognised that the process was a large-scale, complex exercise with 211 positions to be filled, with candidates coming from two distinct sources

[existing members and new candidates] and with the complexities attached to the process in Belfast with a DPP and four sub-groups.

In this context of complexity and geographical spread, measures are required to ensure consistency of approach and standards across all DPPs.

The Code requires that 'Independent Panel Members' [IPMs], with voting rights, sit on all short-listing, interviewing and appointment panels. These IPMs were taken from the OCPA list of approved Independent Assessors. The Code also requires that a small team of experienced 'Impartial Assessors' [IAs] oversee the process. This team, comprising three OCPA listed Assessors [named at the front of this report], was engaged in September 2007 and one of their number, John Keanie, was appointed as team-leader.

The task of the IA team was to ensure that best practice methods and standards were applied, to intervene where necessary to require adjustment, and to report to the Policing Board on the overall process. This is that report.

In addition, as in the 2005 process, an experienced OCPA Independent, Judith Eve, was appointed to act as Independent Complaints Monitor, to deal with complaints from any candidate unable to have his/her complaint resolved by the Policing Board.

This additional layer was introduced to ensure that the complaints of candidates would be, and would be seen to be, objectively and efficiently handled by an expert in such matters, who was uninvolved in the appointments process.

This report of the IAs is intended to provide the Policing Board, the District Councils, the general public, relevant Government Departments, the NIO and other interested parties with a wholly independent account of the process by which the Independent Members of the DPPs and sub-groups have been appointed.

The report will also express the view of the IAs on the compliance of the nomination and appointments process with the Code, and will assist those

responsible for the planning and implementation of the process to identify opportunities to refine and improve any future processes.

The ultimate aim of the IAs' work, including this report, is to ensure that Independent Members of all DPPs and sub-groups are selected through an open, transparent, inclusive and fair process and that they, together with the elected members on the DPPs and sub-groups, are, as far as practicable, representative of the communities they serve, bringing to their work a relevant mix of abilities, experience and qualities.

1.1 References to other documents.

In order to keep this report as succinct as possible, background documents will not be appended. Such documents include the 2000 Act [as amended] the Code of Practice and the three previous reports of the Impartial Assessors [June 2003, January 2005 and January 2006].

Readers of the report who wish to have sight of any such documentation can obtain copies by contacting the Director of Community Affairs Branch, Northern Ireland Policing Board, 31 Clarendon Road, Belfast BT1 3BG.

1.2 Initial overview

This report will consider, stage by stage, the process for the appointment of 211 Independent Members to 23 of Northern Ireland's 26 DPPs, and to the four Belfast sub-groups.

It will identify issues that have arisen in the process and will make recommendations for the improvement of any future appointments process.

The duty of the IAs was to oversee the process to ensure openness, transparency, probity and effectiveness.

In the discharge of this duty, it was essential that the IAs acted in a manner that was separate, independent, impartial and objective in relation to the Policing Board's appointment exercise.

The 'best practice yardstick' used by the IAs, at each stage of the process, was that inherent in the Code, which itself is strongly reflective of the OCPA Code and the 'Best Practice Guide for Government Departments'.

The Impartial Assessors, having completed their monitoring and assessment of the process and the resulting appointments, have detailed, in this report, issues arising during the process, and have made recommendations, where necessary, for improvements.

In overall terms, the Impartial Assessors are pleased to record their opinion that:

“The process has been conducted in a manner that complies with the Code, that significantly utilises best practice methods, and that has built upon the lessons learned in the previous recruitment rounds and the recommendations made in the previous reports of the Impartial Assessors. In the implementation of the process, the cooperation and commitment of the Policing Board, the District Councils and the other participants, towards ensuring representativeness in the District Policing Partnerships, has been impressive.”

2.0 Monitoring the process stage by stage

2.1 Introduction

From the time of their engagement, the IAs monitored the process at each stage until its completion.

The IA team established an ‘Impartial Assessor’s Progress File’, containing detailed records of all the checks they carried out, together with background documents used in the process. The file will be deposited with the Policing Board and can be used as a reference source and to inform any future monitoring processes.

Section 2 of this report uses the IAs’ Progress File to go through the whole process, stage by stage, identifying issues and detailing recommendations as appropriate.

This section is intended not to provide a detailed record of the monitoring process but to highlight comments and, where necessary, recommendations for improvement. In each section, Comments and Recommendations are presented in bold type.

It is important to note that there was continual interaction between the IAs, the officers of the Policing Board and PriceWaterhouse Coopers [the consultant firm selected by tender to provide expert services and support] and minor issues raised by the IAs were dealt with in the normal course of events.

2.2 Planning the process

As with the previous recruitment rounds, the process this time was a large and complex one, requiring a fair and consistent methodology for appointing 211 people to 23 DPPs and the four Belfast sub-groups, using different shortlisting / interviewing panels in every District and dealing with 621 internal and external applications.

Comment: Planning for the process was detailed and thorough.

Policing Board officers produced an 'Indicative timetable for the appointment of Independent Members to the District Policing Partnerships 07/08'. This was approved by the Board.

[Appendix I, 'Indicative timetable for the appointment of Independent Members to the District Policing Partnerships [DPPs] 07/08']

From the Indicative Timetable, the detailed plans for each stage of the process were developed, using tried and tested methods from previous recruitment rounds and amending / improving these where necessary.

'Process papers' were developed to guide participants in the various stages. Examples of these can be seen in the IAs' Progress File.

Comment: The IAs were brought into the process early in the planning stage.

As recommended in the IAs report in January 2006, the IAs were involved at an early stage and had the opportunity to comment and make suggestions on

any element of the plan. This is in line with the advice given by OCPA on public appointments in general.

Also, all documentation to be used in the process, including Application Forms, Candidate Information Packs and documentation to be used for marking and recording the sifting, shortlisting, interviewing and decision-making stages, was forwarded to the IAs for comment and approval before being finalised. Several amendments suggested by the IAs were incorporated in the documentation.

It was noted, in the IAs' responses to the Policing Board on the documentation, that it was clear that IA recommendations had been taken on board and that documentation, particularly the Application Forms, was 'user-friendly', employing plain language, greater clarity than before, was very straightforward to complete and came with good guidance to potential applicants.

Detail of some of the issues above can be seen in the IAs' Progress File.

Comment: The IA Report of Jan 06 was considered during the planning process.

There were eight recommendations for improvement of the process, in the IAs' January 2006 report. There had been 16 such recommendations in the January 2003 report, demonstrating that progress had been made on several issues raised by the IAs.

The January 2006 report was carefully considered, both by the Policing Board's Officers and PWC personnel, and a set of solutions dealing with the issues and informing the relevant parts of the current process, was developed. The report, and the set of solutions, can be seen in the IAs' Progress file. They include suggested improvements in the areas of planning, sifting of new applications, shortlisting and the candidate awareness programme.

Comment: Advance planning with respect to the reorganisation of the Belfast sub-groups was undertaken by Policing Board Officers and PWC. This was an important area of difference with previous process. The planning proved effective, the amended process coping in a satisfactory manner with the changed requirements.

For example, after joint consideration of the matter, between Policing Board Officers and PWC in November 2007, PWC produced a paper dealing with 'The key issues associated with NIO changes to the set-up and organisation of the Belfast DPP and sub-groups'. This was opened up to the IAs for discussion / comment prior to finalisation.

Comment: The coordination between Policing Board Officers and PWC was effective and consistent, ensuring that the planning process, and the implementation stages, were carried out to a high standard.

In the January 2006 IAs' report, we made some criticism of what appeared sometimes as a lack of consistency across the PWC team in dealing with [admittedly often difficult and political] questions. This time round there was a marked difference. The PWC team leaders began their close working with the Policing Board team immediately after being appointed, and throughout the process provided a very high level of service with a strong degree of consistency in what they did across all of the Districts. The experience gained by PWC from previous recruitment rounds also showed in, for example, the strong and confident line they were able to take on issues of contention. This served the process well.

It should also be said that the Policing Board Officer team was assiduous in ensuring that they received the level of performance they required, and that they had implemented important recommendations from the January 2006 IAs, report.

As in previous recruitment rounds, the IAs developed a plan for their monitoring of the process.

It included the following tasks, which give a flavour of the nature of the IAs' work:

- Discussions at Planning stage, and at relevant other stages in the process, with Policing Board Officers and PWC, of the plans, documentation and implementation of the process.
- Monitoring of Information Pack.
- Monitoring of Advertising process.

- Monitoring, by dip-sampling, of the sifting process for new applicants, carried out by PWC
- Attending Information and Training sessions across Northern Ireland, covering Councillors and Independent panel members, and candidates / prospective candidates.
- Monitoring the process used to deal with existing DPP members who wished to be reappointed.
- Monitoring the District Councils' shortlisting process and documentation, including attendance at shortlisting sessions in a range of Districts.
- Monitoring the District Councils' interviewing process and documentation, including attendance at interview sessions in a range of Districts.
- Attending Training sessions for the Appointments Panel of the Policing Board.
- Attending Appointments Panel decision-making sessions.
- Monitoring the process for feedback to candidates
- Examining the results of the Appointments process.
- Preparation, and presentation to the Policing Board, of the Report of the Impartial Assessors.

2.3 Advertising / publicity

It was the intention of the Policing Board that advertising and publicity would be designed to reach, and appeal to, the widest possible range of potential applicants.

Prominent advertisements were produced, entitled 'YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR POLICE SERVICE, YOUR CHANCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE'.

These were posted in the Belfast Telegraph, in local papers, on radio and on-line. The advertisements were flagged up, in the Belfast Telegraph, by the inclusion of 'attention notices' saying 'YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR ISSUES, YOUR ROLE -- SEE TODAY'S RECRUITMENT SECTION OR VISIT WWW.DISTRICTPOLICING.COM'.

In addition, targeting letters were sent out to a range of organisations that deal with sectors of the community highlighted in Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.

The response was as follows:

630 applications were requested.

449 applications were returned.

172 existing DPP members expressed an interest in being reappointed.

2.4 Feedback and complaints procedure

Comment: The feedback and complaints procedures were set up and well explained in the information packs.

Section 2.15 and 2.16 of this report give details of the feedback and complaints stages.

2.5 Councillor training sessions

PWC arranged eight training sessions, to cover every DPP area affected.

These took place between 5th and 19th December 2007. The sessions were full day events and Councillors & Independent Members of panels were required to attend before they could act as a panel member.

Comment: The training sessions were well organised and informative. IAs noted, in the sessions they attended, a strong consistency of approach among the PWC staff taking these sessions. This was an improvement on the previous recruitment round.

It was felt that too much time was given, at the start of each session, to personal introductions of those present, and that the time could have been more productively spent on actual training, eg more practical exercises.

Recommendation: The contents of the training sessions should be reviewed to ensure maximum impact and best use of time.

2.6 Appraisal of existing DPP members

In the January 2006 IA Report, it was noted that 'the lack of a developed performance appraisal system for existing members proved to be a deficiency in the process'. The accompanying recommendation was that 'At the earliest possible date, a properly developed system of performance appraisal should

be implemented for DPP members. In any future appointments process, appraisal results for each existing DPP member should be used to decide on his / her eligibility for inclusion in the pool of candidates that is to be considered for appointment of Independent DPP members’.

IAs note that this recommendation has been acted upon, and considerable progress has been made. An appraisal file exists on every DPP member, containing record of attendance, assessment of the member’s performance by the DPP Vice-Chair and a self-assessment from the member, together with the police check results on the member and his / her declaration of interest in reappointment.

Comment: The IA team examined a dip-sample of these files from all 23 DPPs affected, and found them to be generally in good order.

A list of queries was submitted to Policing Board Officers and resolved to the satisfaction of the IAs. These related to, for example, missing signatures and the date of appraisal which, in some cases was several months old. The IAS also noted quite different ‘styles’ in the written appraisals by Vice-Chairs.

Recommendation: Continued attention should be given to the development and maintenance of the appraisal system for DPP members; as far as possible, the timing of appraisal rounds should be organised so that recent appraisals are available as input to reappointments processes; consideration should be given to the matter of achieving consistency in the performance appraisal, by Vice-Chairs, of DPP members. This may require training.

2.7 The ‘Internal Candidate’ process

The results of each DPP member’s performance appraisal, together with the member’s declaration of interest in being reappointed, were the determinants of whether he / she would be included in the pool of ‘appointable candidates’ to be submitted to the Policing Board for consideration.

-all 172 existing DPP members who were deemed ‘reappointable’ by the Board, from the 23 affected DPPs, expressed an interest in being reappointed.

Their names were included in the pool to be considered by the Policing Board's Appointments Panels.

-Subsequent to the deliberations of the Appointments Panels, offers of appointment were made to 89 of these existing members. This represented 42% of the total offers of appointment, the other 58% of offers being made to 'new candidates' from the open competition.

The IA team carried out a dip-sample of the records from this process and all was found to be in order. Minor queries were raised with Policing Board officers and resolved to the satisfaction of the IAs.

It would be remiss of the IA team not to mention the criticism expressed by several Councillors, across the DPPs, about the treatment of existing members under this system of appointment. There is clearly some resentment that an existing member, with a good service record as evidenced in his / her appraisal, goes into the pool along with 'new candidates' from the open competition, and has no guarantee of being reappointed; the allegation being that, at that stage [ie the Policing Board Appointment Panel stage] loyal service to a DPP is not properly recognised.

During the course of the process, IAs, Independent Panel Members and PWC staff were frequently confronted with questions and opinions on this issue. All that could be done was to explain that, in the legislation and in the Code, this is how existing members are to be considered for reappointment, the intention being that a continuing wide range of candidates comes forward from every section of the community, and that the Appointments Panels of the Policing Board have every opportunity to get the best possible matching profile of DPP members against the District's profile.

Comment: The 'Internal Candidate' process, whilst being the subject of much criticism, was seen by the IAs to have been conducted in a proper manner, in line with the requirements of the Act and the Code.

Recommendation: Continued attention will need to be given to the matter of how existing members are considered for reappointment, eg:

- it is important that such a potentially contentious issue is well and consistently explained and that expectations are managed when existing DPP members put themselves forward for reappointment.**
- it is recognised that there are good reasons behind the current method of dealing with reappointment; however, as the composition of DPPs moves increasingly towards being substantially in line with the community profile of the Districts, the method should be kept under review. It is perhaps relevant to note here that, in most other public appointments, appointees can serve for a maximum of two terms. This allows for recognition of good service and provides the public body with a degree of continuity in its membership, whilst ensuring that there is a healthy turnover with new faces, new energy, and new ideas, skills and perspectives coming in on a regular basis.**

2.8 Sifting new applications

Sifting of applications was done, as in previous recruitment rounds, by PWC, against agreed eligibility and essential criteria. Clear guidelines were produced for sifting and the sifting process was applied consistently, documented in specific detail and signed off by Policing Board Officers. The IA team carried out a 10% dip-sample of the documentation and found everything to be in order. A small number of minor queries from the IA team were handled by PWC staff.

2.9 Shortlisting

Shortlisting of applicants was carried out by the panels set up in each District, chaired by a Councillor, and serviced by a PWC 'observer'. An Independent Assessor, with full voting rights, attended each panel session.

The IAs' monitoring process consisted of attendance at a sample of shortlisting sessions and a dip-sample [minimum of 10%] of the documentation recording the shortlisting decisions of all 23 panels. A detailed record of the IA checks is held in the IAs' Progress File.

Under the facilitation of the PWC staff, the shortlisting process was well run and well documented. Minor queries, raised by the IA team, were handled by PWC on an ongoing basis.

At the end of the shortlisting process, the IA team was asked by PWC to 'sign off' on the shortlisting process before proceeding to the interview stage. The IAs did so on the basis that their monitoring exercise had not revealed anything that would render the shortlisting process, or any part of it, invalid.

Issues arising:

[1] As in previous recruitment rounds, there was a tendency for some Councillor panellists to try to use their knowledge, or supposed knowledge, of candidates, in addition to the information provided in the application forms. This was dealt with firmly by the PWC observers, but it is disappointing that there is, and will probably continue to be, this tendency among some Councillors. The main point here is that, when a comment is made about a candidate, it cannot be 'unsaid' and, even though the panel is then instructed to exclude the extraneous information, there is a distinct possibility that it could colour the views of panellists.

This point was raised in the January 2006 report of the IA team, and it is clear that subsequent action was taken by PWC to ensure that the matter was addressed, in the training sessions and supporting documentation, and in the actual Panel sessions, but it continues to be a difficulty that will require to be constantly striven against.

It must be said that, in none of the examples witnessed by IAs, was there any evidence that extraneous information influenced the shortlisting decisions, and the firmness of the PWC observers on the matter was impressive and consistent, but the risk is there.

The same risk is evident in the interview process. It is being managed in an equally firm way and this approach needs to be continued and developed.

Recommendation: Efforts must be continually kept up to ensure that extraneous information about candidates is not brought into the shortlisting and interviewing processes by panellists, and if it is, it is not

allowed to affect the results, which are to be based on the application form and the interview.

[2] During the shortlisting stage, and at the interview stage, some Councillors expressed very strong views about the nature of this recruitment and appointments process. For example, there was the allegation that the merit principle is not used at the stage where the Policing Board is making the appointments, the implication being that it is a waste of time the Council panels operating the merit principle at shortlisting and interview stages since, at the appointments stage, other decision-making criteria take precedence over the merit principle. In response to these points, the PWC observers and the IAs had continually to point out the requirements of the Act and the Code in terms of achieving balanced DPPs that reflect their communities. These explanations were generally accepted but there is clearly some disquiet about the process. With regard to the shortlisting and interviewing panels attended by the IAs, it can be noted that the views of the Councillors, although expressed forcibly on some occasions, did not interfere with the proper running of the Panel sessions; overwhelmingly, the Councillor panellists were fully cooperative with the process once they had made their criticisms.

[3] A further, and related, issue raised by some Councillors was that, after the shortlisting and Interview stages are completed, they, as Councillors, have no part in the appointment of the Independent members, although, as they recount, they are frequently held to account for the appointment decisions by their constituents. In response they point out that they have no knowledge of how the decisions are made by the Policing Board, and they feel that this lets the process down and appears unprofessional.

Suggestions were made that the Chair of each District Panel should be invited to attend the session of the Policing Board Appointments Panel dealing with his / her District, even if on an observer basis. They say that this would make the process more transparent and would enable them to deal more effectively with local criticism.

In discussion of these issues with the IA team, Policing Board Officers have suggested that they would be prepared to give briefings to Councillor

Panellists and/or to the Political Parties. It may also be possible to open the Board Training Days to Councillors.

Comment: Points [2] and [3] above are based on what appear to be quite widely held views among Councillors. Whilst the IA team has not seen actual detriment to the DPP recruitment process with regard to these complaints, there is clearly the possibility of the process being discredited, to some extent, in the eyes of the Councillors, some of whom have asked that their views be included in this report. Perhaps , with a third round of DPP recruitment now completed and lessons learned from that experience, and with the gradual maturing of the DPPs themselves, there is an opportunity for another look at some of the issues that concern the Councillors as participants in the DPP process.

Recommendation: Steps should be taken to discuss, with Council representatives, some of the issues that concern them in the DPP recruitment process, with a view to examining how these might be dealt with in future recruitment rounds.

[4] There was added complexity in the process this time around, with the new arrangements for the four Belfast sub-groups.

Paragraph 64 of the Code says 'In the case of Belfast, it will be possible for candidates to be appointed to more than one sub-group, or to a sub-group and the main DPP. The application form for Belfast applications should provide an opportunity for candidates to indicate which of these they are interested in and may ask them to express a preference'.

Paragraph 69 of the Code says 'In the case of Belfast it will be possible for candidates to be appointed to both the Belfast DPP and a sub-group or indeed more than one sub-group'.

Whilst this topic is being introduced here in the 'Shortlisting section' of the report, the issue had implications throughout the process, from start to finish. This included the guidance documentation for panels, for candidates and for other participants in the process, and it had implications for the running and

recording of the sifting, shortlisting, interviewing and Appointments Panel stages of the process.

Because of the complexities attached to this issue, the IA team took a particular interest in it; how it was documented; how clear the guidance for participants was; how it actually worked in practice, at sifting, shortlisting, interviewing and appointment stages.

It is clear to the IA team that a great deal of thought had been given to the matter by the Officers of the Policing Board, who developed and disseminated a detailed understanding and set of actions / methodologies to deal with it and who ensured that, in practice, it was well run and properly controlled.. It is also clear that PWC took the issue on right from the start of their commission and developed a detailed set of documents and actions for explaining, training, implementing and recording the process.

The IAs were involved in discussions on the matter from an early stage and developed the view that the process was being well planned and prepared for. In the event, after conducting its monitoring process, which included both attendance at sessions and subsequent documentation checks at every stage, the IA team was satisfied that the process was conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

We should mention that, at the sifting stage a few errors were detected by the IA team, and the team had some queries relating to the interpretation of the information candidates had provided relative to their choices of which DPPs to apply for. This was unsurprising due to the complexities introduced by the new arrangements. The queries were raised at the time by the IAs and corrections made where necessary. They were also discussed with Board Officers and PWC and measures put in place to ensure consistency of treatment for all candidates. The IA team was satisfied with the action taken on these matters.

Comment: In the checks done by the IA team, the new arrangements for recruitment to the Belfast DPP and the four sub-groups were seen to be fair and transparent and were planned and actioned effectively.

[5] It was agreed, by Councillor panellists, Independent panellists, PwC observers and the IA team that, in many Districts, there was a significant problem with a poor standard in the completion of application forms by candidates, with many candidates providing insufficient information for a proper appraisal of their skills and experience. This was surprising considering the amount, and the high quality, of written and other advice and guidance provided to candidates to assist them in producing effective applications. Particularly absent from many applications were examples that demonstrated how the candidate fulfilled the criterion in question. It is difficult to know what further can be done to improve this situation, other than ensuring that, in future recruitment rounds the effort is kept up to provide the best possible guidance to applicants.

One suggestion regarding the application form is that, immediately after the heading 'Details of Your Role', there should be a reminder along the lines of 'Examples will assist the panel in making a decision on your application. You need to describe your actual role'.

Some Councillors partly blamed the application form for the problems, saying it did not make clear enough the importance of providing sufficient information at Essential Criterion 1 for a proper appraisal of the candidate.

It should be added that the above consideration of this issue deals with the form-filling aspect only, and does not consider the point, made by some, that it is about more than poor form filling, and perhaps the DPP process is not attracting the best candidates that it could. This is hard to gauge but it might be an area for consideration when thinking about any future recruitment round.

Recommendation: Continued attention needs to be given to improving the standard of applications, through the written and verbal assistance provided to candidates, both in the guidance notes and the application form. Attention also needs to be given to how the recruitment process might attract the best possible calibre of applicant.

[6] A further point, relating to use of information provided on application forms, was that once a panel had agreed, in its pre-shortlist meeting, to shortlist on Essential Criteria only [and to our knowledge this is what happened in every

District], information provided in the Desirable Criteria boxes could not be used. The advice given to panels was quite firm on this and it is clearly correct once the pre-shortlist decision has been made. However, it was apparent to the IA team, and to panellists, that promising candidates were being lost to the process due to what some might say is a 'technicality'. This is unfortunate given the disappointing calibre of some applications and the need for the process to attract good quality candidates.

There is also the potential for inconsistency; if panels in different Districts made different decisions regarding the use of Desirable Criteria for shortlisting, it is possible that comparable candidates in different Districts could be treated differently. Whilst not wishing to undermine the necessary controls on the shortlisting stage, or indeed the sifting stage or any other part of the process, we feel that, in the interest of dealing effectively with potentially good candidates, the situation should be re-examined. It may be that guidance notes on the application form are made even more explicit to ensure that candidates definitely know they must give all information on a criterion, in the box where it is asked for, and that information in other boxes will not count. It may be that the policy of using only Essential Criteria is reconsidered, and Desirable Criteria are brought into the shortlisting process without the panels having discretion on whether to do so. A further consideration could be that the terms 'Essential' and 'Desirable' are done away with and candidates are assessed on all the criteria.

Recommendation: For any future recruitment round, the situation should be examined, and any necessary changes made, where potentially good candidates are excluded at shortlisting stage due to the presentation of their information on the application form.

[7] It was apparent, from applications, that many candidates do not fully understand what a public appointment is, and the result is a plethora of unwanted information in the box where candidates are asked to list their public appointments.

Recommendation: The application form should contain an explanation of what a public appointment is, in the box where candidates are asked to list any public appointments they hold.

[8] A question arose about experience gained outside the Council area. In one case, a candidate had experience in ethnic forum issues in another District from that applied for. In discussion, the PWC Observer's advice was that this information could not be used. [The candidate did fulfil the criterion of living or having a connection with the District applied for.] The IA team felt that the information on ethnic forum experience should have been ok to use. By taking a hard line on this matter, as was done on this occasion, good candidates, with valuable experience gained elsewhere, could be lost to the process. In this case, the candidate was selected for interview anyway on the strength of his / her other attributes.

Recommendation: Guidance should be altered to ensure that it is clear to shortlisting panels that relevant experience, gained by an eligible candidate but not gained in the District applied for, is permitted as part of the shortlisting decision-making process.

2.10 Candidate awareness sessions

Eight Candidate awareness sessions were held at 4 venues across Northern Ireland. Sessions attended by IAs were well run by PWC staff and there was good interaction, with many questions from candidates. It was clear that PWC had done a considerable amount of homework on this part of the process, with strong consistency in the answers they provided, across the Districts. This was particularly pleasing as it was an area of some weakness in the last recruitment round, as detailed in the IAs report.

An average, across the 23 Districts, of 40% of candidates for interview, attended the awareness sessions.

It will be important, in future recruitment rounds, that there is no let-up in the effort to encourage as many candidates as possible to attend the Candidate Awareness Sessions.

Comment: Candidate awareness sessions were effective and were consistent across the Districts observed by the IAs.

2.11 Interviews

Interviews were conducted, in each of the 23 Districts, during January and February 2008. The interview panels comprised the same members as the shortlisting panels.

IAs attended six interview sessions, and after the interview process was complete, the IA team carried out a 10%+ check on the documentation from the interviews. Queries thrown up by the document checks were handled by PWC on an ongoing basis.

Comment: The interview sessions observed were conducted effectively, in line with the guidelines of the Code and with best-practice requirements. PWC staff were strong and consistent in the advice they gave and in dealing with issues such as extraneous information on candidates [Dealt with in 2.9[1] above]. Independent panel members played a valuable role in the process, and did not subsequently raise any matters of concern with the IAs.

Councillor panellists were generally cooperative and able but there was often an undertone of cynicism about the process, its fairness, particularly to existing DPP members, and the fact that Councils are not involved in any way in the final decision-making process on candidates. [See 2.9[2] and 2.9[3] above]

Recommendation: The Councillors, who play a significant part in this appointments process, have expressed some strong views about the nature and conduct of the process, as described in sections of this report. There is a need to deal with their concerns prior to any further appointments process, in order to retain their trust in the process and their continued commitment to it. Consideration should be given as to how a dialogue with the Councils is facilitated on matters of concern.

Detailed reports, on interview sessions attended by IAs, are held in the IAs' Progress File.

Issues arising:

[1] The IA team is increasingly of the opinion that questions at DPP interviews have become very generic. That is, they deal with the competencies but there is little attempt to set the questions in the context of policing, the DPPs or the developing situation in Northern Ireland. Indeed, we witnessed interviews where there was no mention at all of policing, just questions and answers on the competencies which, as one Councillor remarked, 'could have been for any job you could think of'.

The result could be said to be somewhat bland, with very little requirement for candidates [or very little opportunity] to display any knowledge or views about policing and the DPPs, or to demonstrate that they have done any research into the DPPs, the Police or policing matters in general. Admittedly, candidates could have brought policing and DPPs into the answers to questions about the candidate's work in the community, but there is no guarantee that they will and, in the event, many did not.

This is a comment that could be made of many public appointment processes currently, and in our view it tends to militate against effective performance at interview.

Recommendation: Prior to any future recruitment round, careful consideration should be given to the formulation of interview questions that allow / encourage candidates to set their answers in a context applicable to the DPPs. This would allow candidates to display their thinking on relevant matters and encourage high calibre candidates to 'shine' a little more.

[2] During their checks on documentation subsequent to the Interview stage, the IAs became aware of a greatly varying standard of note-taking by Councillor panellists. Some notes were so sparse as to be totally inadequate if ever called upon to support a decision on points awarded to a candidate. We have been informed that PWC staff were aware of this problem at some of the

interview sessions and consistently made efforts to ensure that note-taking was taken more seriously and was adequate for the establishment of proper records. However, their advice and encouragement clearly was not always successful. We do not have any evidence that this led to any unfairness or inconsistency in the treatment of candidates, particularly since the panel discussions to reach agreed scores were thorough and well-informed, but we are of the opinion that note-taking at interviews is a weakness that must be addressed.

Recommendation: The importance of note-taking at interviews should be stressed even more than it is currently, and training sessions for Councillors should assist them to develop their skills in this respect.

[3] There were some examples of considerable variations in the individual scores of panel members. This is not unusual, and the collective marking discussions, ably led by the PWC Observers, ensured that agreed marks were arrived at. However, it may be worth considering how the excellent marking-guidance forms, produced by PWC, and which assist panel members to allocate appropriate marks to candidates in each competence being appraised, could be used to better effect, perhaps helping to reduce marking inconsistencies. Such enhanced use of the marking-guidance forms might also reduce incidences of discrepancy between marks and written comment, eg where a comment from a panel member saying 'good example' led to a score of 5, and, in the same interview, another comment saying 'good example' led to a score of 3.

It was also noted that, in a few cases, PWC Observers did not ask for individual marks from panel members on a random basis, inadvertently allowing a 'pattern' to develop where one particular member 'led off' the marking process. This should be avoided so as to ensure one particular panel member does not exert undue influence on a panel's marks.

In the view of the IAs, these issues did not, on this occasion, impact adversely on the marking process and the final agreed marks were arrived at in a considered and proper manner.

Recommendation: The guidance forms, on the marking of interviews, should be given more prominence in the process eg highlighted more in training; used more formally / overtly in the individual marking process; used formally in the collective marking process when variations are being discussed. Also, it should be ensured that individual marks from panel members are taken on a random basis for each candidate, thus avoiding patterns to develop and undue influence by one panellist to skew results.

[4] The IA team had also attended training sessions for all panellists, run by PWC. It was a requirement that, to serve on a panel, the panellist had to have attended training. These were informative sessions that clearly assisted panels in their subsequent interviewing work. One criticism is that a lot of time was spent on introductions at the start of the sessions. This could be reduced and more practice time fitted into the sessions, particularly on areas of weakness such as interview note-taking as mentioned in [2] above.

Recommendation: Training sessions for interview panels should be re-examined with a view to cutting out lengthy introductions and including more practice on areas of weakness such as note-taking at interviews.

Comment: The issues raised at [1] and [2] above, together with several of the issues raised in section 2.9 on shortlisting { 2.9[1], 2.9[2], 2.9[3], 2.9[6] and 2.9[8] }

are all issues that affect the quality of the interview process. Attention to these issues will, hopefully, be part of the continuing work to improve any such process at each iteration. That said, the IA team is of the view that the interviews were conducted in a fair and consistent manner, that it was clear that the considerable work put into organising the interviews was repaid by a well-run set of interviews and that the process was run in accordance with the Code of practice.

Comment: In the view of the IA team, there is now a tried and tested process for interviewing, and for the other stages in the process.

Improvements have been implemented for each recruitment round to the point where the system is of a very high standard. A possible weakness in all of this, particularly evidenced by much of what has been written in sections 2.9 and 2.11 above, is that the considerable variations in the abilities of the Councillor panellists are starkly highlighted in the context of the high-standard system.

The IA team is aware that the task of ensuring consistency across 23 Districts is not an easy one, and it is not helped if some of the panellists are very inexperienced in the interview process. We are also aware that this is quite a difficult area for discussion with Councils, which have to ensure also that they put forward the correct Political balance of Councillors; but we feel that this requirement sometimes pushes out the requirement for some skills or experience in interviewing.

It is clear that there are many Councillors who do possess the skills and experience needed for the task, and there were many examples of such Councillors on the Panels we observed, but we feel that more attention should be given, by the Councils when selecting panel members, and by the Policing Board and its consultants, to setting out the skills / experience required of panel members and ensuring that their selection and training leads to the best possible panels for the job.

Recommendation: Careful consideration should be given to developing a set of requirements for any Councillors to serve on panels. These requirements should be discussed with Councils and the Councils should be encouraged to fulfil the requirements, when choosing Councillor panellists, as far as possible. Subsequent training should be targeted at the skills gaps.

Subsequent to the completion of interviews, the IAs carried out a monitoring exercise on the documentation of the process. This consisted of a detailed check on at least 10% of the files for each District.

The detailed record of these checks is held in the IAs' Progress File.

Queries were dealt with as the checks progressed, mainly through the PWC Observer for each District.

2.12 Training sessions for Policing Board Appointments Panel

IAs attended the two training sessions, where Policing Board Officers provided a comprehensive presentation on the background, policy, legislative requirements and conduct of the DPP appointments process. On each occasion, there was a productive discussion session in which a wide range of questions was dealt with.

The sessions [or, in a small number of cases, individual training sessions] were attended by all panellists, including the Independents.

Comment: The training sessions for DPP Appointments Panel members, attended by IAs, were well organised and informative, with good interaction between the Policing Board Officers and the panel members.

2.13 Policing Board Appointments Panel sessions

The Appointments Panels met on six days between 3rd March and 11th March 2008. IAs attended on five of these days.

The Appointments Panels had full delegated authority from the Policing Board to make the final decisions on which candidates, from the pool of appointable candidates, were to be appointed. The pool of appointable candidates comprised all candidates deemed appointable from the new external applications and from the existing members appraisal process. This is the stage, in the public appointments process, that is normally carried out by a Government Minister but which, in the case of the DPPs, is the responsibility of the Policing Board, within the 2000 Act [as amended] and the Code of Practice.

Panels comprised Policing Board elected and independent members, and an Independent member with full voting powers. At each session, one member of the Panel was voted in as Chair of that session.

The team of Policing Board Officers, led by the Director of Community Affairs, provided administrative support at each session, together with a full briefing on relevant policy and process.

During subsequent discussions, the team dealt with queries by members, before beginning the appointments process.

The team provided, for each District in turn, hard-copy and computerised information on the 'district profiles', on the profiles of the elected members serving on the DPPs, and on the profile of the range of Independent candidates that would best ensure that each DPP would be representative of its District.

This was followed by hard-copy and computerised information on the candidates in the pool, deemed to be appointable either via the interview process or by virtue of being eligible serving DPP members.

The Panels selected, from these lists, those candidates from the pool who best fitted the requirements, primarily considering community background, gender and age, and also considering attributes such as disability, race, sexual orientation, information on dependents, marital status, occupation, postcode and whether the candidate lived in an urban or rural location.

During the selection process, panel members were able to query the computerised database, developed by the Policing Board Officers, from a variety of perspectives to ensure that they achieved the best possible fit of candidates and vacancies.

Panel members were required to use their discretion, on the basis of the information provided to them and on panel discussion of the options, to achieve this 'best fit'.

Comment: As in the previous recruitment rounds, no disclosure was made, at this stage, about which candidates were 'new' and which were existing DPP members. Also, candidates' names were not given. This was important in ensuring that all candidates in the 'appointable pool' were treated on an equal basis.

Comment: It was noted that a small number of Councils had not provided the required information on the composition of their elected

members nominated by them to serve on their District's DPP. Despite the efforts of Policing Board Officers, this small number of Councils did not accede to the requests for information.

The IA team believes that the lack of this information is a serious matter that renders it difficult for the Policing Board to ensure that, overall [including Elected members and Independent members] each DPP is properly representative of the District it serves. We recognise that there is no legislative basis, in the current Act, for demanding the information, and we believe that the matter should be rectified, preferably through agreement with Councils but, if need be, by other means which may include changes to the Act and/or the Code.

Recommendation: Before any further recruitment round, action should be taken to ensure that District Councils agree to provide the necessary information on the composition of their Elected members serving on DPPs. This should be done by agreement if possible. If this is not possible, changes to the Act and/or Code of Practice should be pursued.

Comment: Subsequent to Panel sessions, it was suggested by some Appointments Panel members, and agreed by Policing Board Officers that, having considered the efficacy of the appointment process, there was a danger that information, to the Panels, on existing members may sometimes not be as full as that given on new applicants. That is, when the Panel asks Officers for information on a candidate, if it is a new applicant the application form provides a considerable amount of information on the candidate's skills, experience and background. If the Candidate is an existing DPP member, the information, provided by the DPP Vice-Chair assessment and the Candidate's self-assessment, may not be as good. There is, therefore, a potential detriment to existing DPP members that must be addressed.

Recommendation: Consideration should be given on how to provide equally informative data, to the Policing Board Appointments Panels, on new applicants and existing DPP members. One suggestion for

consideration is that existing members be required to complete an application form similar to that of new applicants. This would not be intended to replace the existing system of reappointing existing members; it would simply be for information purposes.

2.14 Notification and publication of outcomes

After shortlisting, 'Letters of Regret' were issued to unsuccessful candidates by PWC.

After interview, 'Letters of Regret' were issued by PWC to candidates unsuccessful at this stage.

After the Policing Board Appointments Panels had completed their work, letters offering appointments, letters advising candidates that they were on reserve lists, and letters to unsuccessful candidates, were issued 14th March 2008.

After response from candidates, letters confirming appointment, with effect from 1st April 2008, were issued 27th March 200.

Press releases were issued 1st April 2008.

Appendix 2, entitled 'Table showing DPP membership across all districts following reconstitution in 2008', demonstrates the results of the appointments process.

2.15 Feedback

At the time of writing this report, there have been approximately 75 requests from candidates for feedback. The figure in the January 2006 report was 55.

Written responses have been provided in all these cases.

Feedback after interview stage was provided by PWC and feedback after Policing Board Appointments Panel stage was provided by Policing Board Officers.

Both sets of feedback were most impressive, being open, forthright and comprehensive.

Examples of the feedback requests and letters of response are included in the IAs Progress File.

Comment: Whilst the feedback process has been open and thorough, it is noted that there was no time limit set for the receipt of complaints, so, at the date of writing this report, there is no way of knowing if there will be more requests for feedback. In contrast, Policing Board Officers and PWC are subject to a 21 day deadline for responding to requests.

Recommendation: Consideration should be given to setting time limits on requests for feedback.

2.16 Complaints

To date, there have been three complaints made to the Independent Complaints Monitor. In two of the cases she has found no breach in the appointment procedure. The third case is under consideration at the time of writing this report.

3.0 Conclusion / Validity of Process

3.1 Introduction

As with the previous recruitment rounds, the 2007 / 2008 process was large-scale, covering 23 of the 26 DPP Districts, and complex, with the added complexity this time of the new arrangements for Belfast and its four sub-groups.

In addition, as in the last recruitment round, the complexities of considering, in a fair and equitable manner, candidates from two distinct sources [existing DPP members and new applicants] had to be dealt with.

As always, the Political context for the competition has been significant, and this time was certainly no exception, with the Political changes brought about by the St. Andrews Agreement being the catalyst for the reconstitution of the DPPs.

Comment: The Impartial Assessors note the significant achievement of all those involved in planning and implementing the process and in gaining the results demonstrated in Appendix 2.

In particular, the attention given to the recommendations contained in previous IA reports is welcomed, and it is clear to the IA team that the process has matured and continually improved. We note particularly the effective team work between the Consultant [PWC] and the Policing Board's Officer team, and the significant improvement in the difficult task for the Consultant of achieving consistency across 23 different shortlisting and interviewing situations.

There are serious issues to be dealt with in this report if the process to recruit Independent DPP members is to continue to improve and stay up to date, and if it is to enjoy the trust, going forward, of all its participants.

3.2 Validity of the process

As a result of the monitoring work carried out by the Impartial Assessors, they are satisfied that the design, documentation, implementation and recording of the 2007 /2008 process to recruit Independent members, to the 23 District Policing Partnerships requiring reconstitution, has been fair, robust, open and transparent and has complied with the 'Code of Practice' issued by the Northern Ireland Office in 2007 on the 'Appointment of Independent Members to District Policing Partnerships and Belfast District Policing Partnership Sub-Groups'.

4.0 Executive summary and list of recommendations

4.1 Summary

The N.I. Policing Board carried out a public appointments process, between October 2007 and March 2008, to appoint Independent Members to 23 of the 26 District Policing partnerships, and to the four Belfast sub-groups. [In the context of the St. Andrews agreement, and subsequent to an analysis of all 26 DPPs, it had been determined that 23 DPPs and the four Belfast sub-groups should be subject to a process of nomination and appointment, as set out in the Code.]

The process was conducted according to the Code of Practice on the 'Appointment of Independent Members to District Policing Partnerships and Belfast District Policing Partnership Sub-Groups' [the Code]. The Code used was the 2007 Code, which replaced the 2005 Code and takes account of the legislative changes made by the 2003 Police [Northern Ireland] Act and the District Policing Partnerships [NI] Order 2005.

There was independent scrutiny throughout the process, which was a large-scale, complex process with 211 positions to be filled.

-Consistency, in the application of the process across the 23 Districts, had to be ensured.

-Each DPP had to be as representative as possible of the community it serves.

There were three layers of independent scrutiny:

1. Each shortlisting / interviewing panel had an Independent Member with full voting rights. These Independents were chosen from the OCPA list of Independent Assessors. [Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland]. The process was not an 'OCPA Monitored' one, but OCPA Independents were used, and the Code is strongly reflective of the OCPA Code.
2. An Independent Complaints Monitor was appointed.

3. A team of three 'Impartial Assessors' [IAs] was appointed to oversee the whole process. The task of this team was to ensure that best-practice methods and standards were applied, to express a view on the compliance of the appointments process with the Code and to present a report, on the process, to the Policing Board.

The ultimate aim of the IAs was to ensure that Independent Members were selected through an open, transparent, inclusive and fair process and that they, together with the Elected Members on the DPPs, are representative of the communities they serve.

The IA team examined the process and its documentation stage by stage, and attended many of the planning, information, training, shortlisting, interviewing and appointment sessions.

Section 2 of this report provides the detailed results of that examination. Section 2 also contains, for each stage where appropriate, detailed **Comment** and **Recommendations** highlighted in bold type.

The conclusions of the IA team are as follows:

The process has been conducted in a manner that has been fair, robust, open and transparent and complies with the Code; that significantly utilises best-practice methods and has built upon the lessons learned in previous recruitment rounds and the recommendations made in the previous reports of the Impartial Assessors. In the implementation of the process, the cooperation and Commitment of the Policing Board, the District Councils and the other participants, towards ensuring representativeness in the District Policing Partnerships, has been impressive.

4.2 List of recommendations

Many issues were considered by the IA team during its monitoring work. Minor issues were resolved during the conduct of the process, whilst some require further action. These are summarised below:

Training

1. The contents of the training sessions, for panels, should be reviewed to ensure maximum impact and best use of time.

Appraisal of existing DPP members

2. Continued attention should be given to the development and maintenance of the appraisal system for DPP members; as far as possible, the timing of appraisal rounds should be organised so that recent appraisals are available as input to reappointments processes; consideration should be given to the matter of achieving consistency in the performance appraisal, by Vice-Chairs, of DPP members. This may require training.

The Internal Candidate process

3. Continued attention will need to be given to the matter of how existing members are considered for reappointment, eg:

- it is important that such a potentially contentious issue is well and consistently explained and that expectations are managed when existing DPP members put themselves forward for reappointment
- it is recognised that there are good reasons behind the current method of dealing with reappointment; however, as the composition of the DPPs moves increasingly towards being substantially in line with the community profile of the Districts, the method should be kept under review. It is perhaps relevant to note here that, in most other public appointments, appointees can serve for a maximum of two terms. This allows for recognition of good service and provides the public body with a degree of continuity in its membership, whilst ensuring that there is a healthy turnover with new faces, new energy, and new ideas, skills and perspectives coming in on a regular basis.

Shortlisting

4. Efforts must continually be kept up to ensure that extraneous information about candidates is not brought into the shortlisting and interviewing processes by panellists, and if it is, it is not allowed to affect

the results, which are to be based on the application form and the interview.

5. Steps should be taken to discuss, with Council representatives, some of the issues that concern them in the DPP recruitment process, with a view to examining how these might be dealt with in future recruitment rounds.

6. Continued attention needs to be given to improving the standard of applications, through the written and verbal assistance provided to candidates, both in the guidance notes and the application form. Attention also needs to be given to how the recruitment process might attract the best possible calibre of applicant.

7. For any future recruitment round, the situation should be examined, and any necessary changes made, where potentially good candidates are excluded at shortlisting stage due to the presentation of their information on the application form.

8. The application form should contain an explanation of what a public appointment is, in the box where candidates are asked to list any public appointments they hold.

9. Guidance should be altered to ensure that it is clear to shortlisting panels that relevant experience, gained by an eligible candidate but not gained in the District applied for, is permitted as part of the shortlisting decision-making process.

Interviews

10. The Councillors, who play a significant part in this appointments process, have expressed strong views about the nature and conduct of the process, as described in sections of this report. There is a need to deal with their concerns prior to any further appointments process, in order to retain their trust in the process and their continued commitment to it.

Consideration should be given as to how a dialogue with the Councils is facilitated on matters of concern.

11. Prior to any future recruitment round, careful consideration should be given to the formulation of interview questions that allow / encourage candidates to set their answers in a context applicable to the DPPs. This would allow candidates to display their thinking on relevant matters and encourage high calibre candidates to 'shine' a little more.

12. The importance of note-taking at interviews should be stressed even more than it is currently, and training sessions for Councillors should assist them to develop their skills in this respect.

13. The guidance forms, on the marking of interviews, should be given more prominence in the process eg highlighted more in training; used more formally / overtly in the individual marking process; used formally in the collective marking process when variations are being discussed. Also, it should be ensured that individual marks from panel members are taken on a random basis for each candidate, thus avoiding patterns to develop and undue influence by one panellist to skew results.

14. Training sessions for interview panels should be re-examined with a view to cutting out lengthy introductions and including more practice on areas of weakness such as note-taking at interviews.

15. Careful consideration should be given to developing a set of requirements for any Councillors to serve on panels. These requirements should be discussed with Councils, and the Councils should be encouraged to fulfil the requirements, when choosing Councillor panellists, as far as possible. Subsequent training should be targeted at the skills gaps.

Policing Board Appointments Panel sessions

16. Before any further recruitment round, action should be taken to ensure that District Councils agree to provide the necessary information on the composition of their Elected members serving on DPPs. This should be done by agreement if possible. If this is not possible, changes to the Act and/or the Code of Practice should be pursued.

17. Consideration should be given on how to provide equally informative data, to the Policing Board Appointments Panels, on new applicants and existing DPP members. One suggestion for consideration is that existing members should be required to complete an application form similar to that of new applicants. This would not be intended to replace the existing system of reappointing existing members; it would simply be for information purposes.

Feedback

18. Consideration should be given to setting time limits on requests for feedback.

Signed by the team of Impartial Assessors:

Gwen Savage

Jo Quinn

John Keanie

16th April 2008.

Appendix 1

Indicative timetable for the appointment of Independent Members to the District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) 07/08

	Action	Date	
1	Central Procurement Unit (CPU) place the ad relating to the Tender process in the papers	12 September 07 COMPLETED	
2	Policing Board appoints Impartial Assessors to oversee the appointments process	29 August 07 COMPLETED	
3	Closing date for return of Tenders for Recruitment Consultants	27 September 07	
4	Evaluation panel (Debbie, DJ, Amanda assisted by Angela Massey of Procurement Unit) meet to evaluate tenders	2 October 07	
5	Policing Board and CPU may need to interview those companies submitting Tenders – clarification interviews if required	w/c 22 October 07	Dependent on outcome of No.4
6	Award contract	29 October 07 sooner if clarification interviews are not required	Dependent on outcome of No.4
7	Hold early project meeting with successful tenderer		Dependent on outcome of No.4
8	Consultants produce Information Pack for distribution to candidates containing Application Form, DPPs Fact Sheet, DPPs Code of Practice, Terms of Appointment for Independent Members of the DPPs	by 31 October 07 or not later than 7 November 07	
9	Consultants place ads in Northern Ireland daily and weekly papers inviting applications for appointment as Independent Members of the DPPs	by 31 October 07 or not later than 7 November 07	
10	Closing date for receipt of applications (by 5.00pm)	30 November 07	
11	Consultants complete initial shortlisting against the advertised criteria	7 December 07	
12	Consultants and Councillors complete shortlisting for interviews by	20 December 07	
13	Policing Board sends details to the Chief Constable of those candidates shortlisted for interview for a criminal record check.	21 December 07	

14	Councils appoint the Political Members to the DPPs	Not later than 6 December 07	
15	Consultants train the Councillors who will conduct the selection interviews and ensure that the shortlisting of candidates for interview is undertaken and the timetable for interviews is agreed	1 November 07 – 14 December 07	
16	Consultants invite candidates for interview as each panel completes its shortlisting and no later than	8 January 08	
17	Council panels commence interview of candidates	15 January 08	
18	Council panels conclude interview of candidates	15 February 08	
19	Consultants send results to Policing Board as each Council panel completes its interviewing and no later than	22 February 08	
20	Policing Board panels meet to appoint Independent Members to the 26 DPPs commencing	3 March – 14 March 08	
21	Policing Board panels conclude the process of appointing Independent Members to the 23 DPPs which require to be reconstituted	14 March 08	
22	Board issues Offer letters to successful candidates to confirm that they are willing to accept their appointment as Independent Members of the DPPs	14 March 08	
23	The Policing Board notifies the Councils as to those who are being appointed as Independent Members of the DPPs	28 March 08	
24	The Policing Board issues Letters of Appointment to all those who are being appointed as Independent Members of the DPPs	28 March 08	
25	Policing Board announces 1 April 08 as the reconstitution date of the DPPs	31 March 08	
26	Consultants/Board issue letters to those candidates who were not successful in being appointed	28 March 08	
27	Consultants/Board will provide initial feedback upon request from unsuccessful candidates	1 April 08	
28	Impartial Assessors report to the Policing Board on the Appointment Process	30 April 08	