

ANNEX C



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

Applicant Information Booklet

CLERK/CHIEF EXECUTIVE – NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Welcome Statement

Dear Applicant

Thank you for your interest in the post of Clerk/Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

This is a high profile and uniquely challenging role in which the post-holder has the opportunity to assist the Assembly in the performance of its tasks of legislating, scrutinising Government and representing the people of Northern Ireland.

The post-holder will be expected to provide the leadership required to drive a complex, multi-functional organisation that is able to react to the changing political and fiscal environment.

The enclosed information sets out the main requirements of the post and the experience required from the post-holder. If you have any queries regarding the post or the appointments process, please contact Diane Lamont, Senior Human Resources Manager on 02890 525917 who will be available to assist. Further information about the Northern Ireland Assembly can be obtained on our website www.niassembly.gov.uk

I look forward to receiving your application.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Speaker of the Assembly & Chair of the Assembly Commission

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the Commission) is seeking to identify a person for appointment as the Clerk / Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Assembly. This document provides information for applicants about the appointment process.

This booklet contains important information on the role and eligibility criteria for the appointment as well as details of how to apply for the position. Prospective applicants should read this booklet carefully before completing an application form.

Application forms are available on the Northern Ireland Assembly website and should be completed online. Completed application forms demonstrating the skills and experience sought, must be submitted by the closing date of midnight on Friday 29 January 2016.

It is anticipated that those applicants selected for interview will be invited to appear before the Selection Panel week commencing 29 February 2016.

It is hoped that the successful candidate will take up appointment in June 2016. Further details of the selection process are given at the end of this booklet.

Appointment Principles

The Commission is committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified applicants regardless of gender, marital or family status, religious belief/political opinion, disability, age, race, nationality or sexual orientation. Appointments are based on merit. As females are underrepresented at senior management grades in the Assembly, applications from females would be particularly welcome.

Background

The Northern Ireland Assembly was established following the signing of the Belfast Agreement (also known as the Good Friday Agreement) in April 1998. The Agreement was the result of extended talks between the political parties in Northern Ireland and the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland. The talks covered how Northern Ireland should be governed in the future to ensure that the aspirations of all communities could be democratically accommodated.

The electorate of Northern Ireland endorsed the Belfast Agreement in a referendum in May 1998 and this paved the way for the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which defined the future institutions of government in Northern Ireland, and for the collaboration between the governments of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The referendum was followed by elections to the Assembly on 25 June 1998, when 108 Members were elected. Those elected Members are known as Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

The Assembly Commission

Within the Assembly there is a Commission whose role in Section 40(4) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is 'to provide the Assembly, or ensure that the Assembly is provided with, the property, staff and services required for the Assembly to carry out its work'. The Commission is chaired by the Speaker of the Assembly, together with five other elected Members. The Commission acts as the board of trustees or body corporate for the Assembly Secretariat (its administrative body). The Commission sets out the Secretariat's strategic direction and purpose which the Clerk/Chief Executive is required to deliver.

The Assembly Secretariat

The Assembly Secretariat is headed by the Clerk/Chief Executive who is also the Clerk to the Assembly and the Accounting Officer for the Secretariat. It is made up of a number of 5 major constituent parts – Corporate Support Unit, Parliamentary Services Directorate, Corporate Services Directorate, Facilities

Directorate and Legal & Governance Services Directorate. It has a staffing complement of around 365 posts and is staffed by direct employees of the Commission. The Clerk/Chief Executive is supported in their duties through the work of a Secretariat Management Group comprising of 4 Directors and the Clerk/Chief Executive chairs this group. The current structure chart for the Secretariat is set out at **Annex A**.

A copy of the current Corporate Strategy for the Northern Ireland Assembly is attached at **Annex B**. The post-holder is likely to be appointed sometime in June 2016 and will be entering at an interesting time as it will be the start of a new Assembly following the 2016 Assembly elections.

The Commission has significant experience of responding effectively to the challenge of providing high quality professional services whilst seeking to reform and improve the institution. However, in coming years the Commission will be required to respond to such challenges whilst also implementing significant organisational changes arising from budget reductions and resultant changes in service standards.

The Role and Responsibilities of the Clerk/Chief Executive

The Clerk/Chief Executive will provide the strategic and operational leadership required to drive a complex, multi-functional organisation that is fluid enough to react to the changing political and fiscal environment but is also capable of delivering a range of parliamentary services to MLAs that are progressive, effective and efficient. The post-holder will be expected to deliver a culture in keeping with the Commission's Vision, Strategic Goals and Values by providing strong leadership to all staff, increasing the confidence of the Commission in the strategic management of the Secretariat.

The post-holder will be personally responsible for ensuring the Secretariat is effectively positioned and resourced to take forward the strategic goals of the Commission. As Accounting Officer, the post-holder will have personal responsibility for ensuring that resources are managed with due regard to regularity, propriety and value for money, and ensure that sound governance arrangements are in place. The Assembly presently functions on an annual budget of £38m per annum. Resources must be utilised effectively, and efficiencies sought in a time of reducing budget provision for the Assembly Secretariat.

The Clerk/Chief Executive is the ultimate source of advice to the Speaker of the Assembly on procedural matters, and must provide effective support to the Assembly Commission in its work. The post-holder will also have extensive contact with MLAs and it will be his/her responsibility to ensure that they receive the support that they need to undertake their work effectively. A particular aspect of the role will be the need to make decisions which are based on sound political judgement.

This is a high profile role for the post-holder given the need to communicate and engage with government officials, parliaments and assemblies and a range of other stakeholders. The Clerk/Chief Executive will be expected to influence a wide variety of people to ensure that the core functions of the Assembly are being delivered. In carrying out this role, the post-holder will be

required to establish effective networks, external to the organisation. For example, with fellow Clerk/Chief Executives on other legislatures to discuss and agree issues such as developing and strengthening the parliamentary process, issues of common purpose, how engagement and outreach is impacting on civil society etc. They will also be expected to represent the interests of the Assembly with visiting dignitaries, government bodies, the private sector and academic institutions.

The main duties of the Clerk/Chief Executive are:-

- providing advice to the Speaker, Deputy Speakers, Committee Chairpersons, Business Committee and MLAs about Assembly procedures and practices;
- delivering the full range of progressive parliamentary services to enable MLAs to undertake their representative and legislative functions;
- continually reviewing and implementing changes to the provision of Secretariat services and its organisational structure to ensure they remain appropriate to the delivery of legislation and scrutiny of government;
- acting as Accounting Officer for the funds agreed for the Assembly and being responsible to the Commission for the effective and efficient use of resources and sound financial management;
- ensuring the Commission has a dedicated, professional and motivated group of staff who have clearly defined delegated responsibility;
- representing the Assembly locally, nationally and internationally, with credibility; and
- ensuring the Commission is accountable for its performance to the Members and that it fulfils other regulatory and reporting obligations.

Person Specification

This section sets out the essential knowledge, experience and competencies which are necessary to undertake the work of the Clerk/Chief Executive.

Essential Criteria

At the closing date for applications, applicants must demonstrate on their application form the following:-

- i) A minimum of 5 years' experience of working at a senior level within an organisation with responsibility for taking decisions at a strategic¹ level.
- ii) Evidence of the strategic leadership and delivery of services to meet with customer needs. This will include evidence of leading on service restructuring and improvement at a time of reducing financial and staffing resources.
- iii) Evidence of interpreting a complex range of financial information to make management decisions. Providing assurance to the organisation on the highest standard of internal control and governance.
- iv) Experience of operating effectively at a senior level which requires impartial judgement in dealing with sensitive matters, while remaining independent.

¹ 'Strategic' is defined as those decisions or actions which affect the whole organisation and which are medium to long lasting i.e. 3-5 years].

Shortlisting Criteria

At the closing date for applications, applicants must demonstrate on their application form the following:-

- i) Evidence of successfully managing at a senior level, an organisation through a period of organisational change.
- ii) Evidence of successfully managing, at a senior level, difficult people related decisions.

Competencies

- *Contextual Understanding* - understanding of the political context in which the Assembly works and how such factors may influence the strategic direction of the organisation. Understanding of the public service ethos.
- *Leadership & Management skills* - establishing a direction and future vision for an organisation through effective management and engagement with people and promoting and exemplifying desired Values and culture. Demonstrates the ability to motivate and develop people to achieve high performance.
- *Advisory Skills* – advising effectively at a senior level through the delivery of information that is well researched and structured and tailored to the needs of the audience. Advice can be relied upon for sound decision making.
- *Relationship Building* - delivering business objectives through strong business relationships, encouraging collaboration which cuts across organisational and wider boundaries. Building constructive partnerships and effective relationships with a range of senior stakeholders and partners.
- *Representational Impact* – professional presentation skills and presence and excellent communication skills.

Stages of the Selection Process

The following information provides detail on each stage of the selection process for the post of Clerk/Chief Executive.

Eligibility Sift

The Essential Criteria (listed above) reflects the experience and knowledge that an applicant must possess in order to be able to undertake the role. In the first instance an eligibility sift will be carried out on the basis of the information provided by applicants in their application form against each of the essential criteria. Applicants will therefore demonstrate clearly in their application form how and to what extent they meet with the essential criteria for the post.

Shortlisting

The selection panel reserve the right to use shortlisting as part of the selection process for this post. Should shortlisting be used, the shortlisting criterion listed above will be applied. The selection panel reserve the right to set a minimum standard for the shortlisting criterion which applicants must achieve in order to be invited to the interview stage of the selection process. If shortlisting is not necessary, all applicants who have demonstrated the essential criteria will proceed to the interview stage of the selection process.

Interview (including Presentation)

The selection panel will carry out interviews for applicants who have proceeded to the next stage of the selection process following the eligibility sift. The Essential Criteria and the Competencies (listed above) will be assessed at interview stage. As part of this stage of the selection process, applicants will be required to prepare and deliver a presentation to the selection panel in advance of the formal interview questions. Applicants will be given a set period of time to prepare their response to the presentation question immediately in advance of their interview.

Further Interview Stage

The selection panel reserves the right to hold a further interview stage if deemed necessary.

Main Terms & Conditions of appointment

Tenure

The Clerk/Chief Executive will be appointed by the selection panel on behalf of the Commission and will be appointed on a permanent basis becoming an employee of the Commission. All appointments will be subject to the satisfactory completion of a six month probationary period.

Salary

The salary for the Clerk/Chief Executive post is currently in a pay band ranging from £117,532 to £125,000 and the starting salary will be £117,532 per annum. Any change to the pay band will be in line with any formally agreed revalorisation of Assembly Commission salary scales on an annual basis.

Hours of Work

The standard working week is 37 hours, excluding meal breaks (42 hours gross). Working hours will be dictated by the mode of operation of the Northern Ireland Assembly and may involve work into late evenings, at weekends and on public holidays.

Location

The post will be based in Parliament Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, Northern Ireland. Occasional travel within the UK and overseas may be involved.

Annual Leave

In addition to the usual public holidays and privilege holidays, there is an annual leave entitlement of 30 days on commencement of employment. Applicants should be aware that a major influence in determining when leave can be taken will be the parliamentary timetable.

Pension

The Assembly Commission offers all new employees an attractive pension package. Further details can be found on the website at:

<https://www.dfpni.gov.uk/topics/working-northern-ireland-civil-service/civil-service-pensions-ni>

If you are unable to access the website or require the information in another format please contact:

The Pensions Manager
Human Resources Office
Room 402
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BT4 3XX
Tel: 028 9052 1685

Please note that the NI Assembly does not use HR Connect.

Security Vetting

A basic Access NI check will be completed before appointment.

References

References will be taken up by the Human Resources Office in accordance with Assembly policy.

Health Questionnaire

Applicants must be assessed as to the likelihood of them being able to provide regular and effective service. A health questionnaire will be issued to the successful applicant for completion.

Making an Application

Applications forms are available on the Northern Ireland Assembly website and should be completed online. Completed application forms, which demonstrate the skills and experience sought, must be submitted by the closing date of midnight on Friday 29 January 2016. Late applications will not be accepted.

Online: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/secretariat/job-opportunities/>

The application form is designed to ensure that applicants provide the necessary information to demonstrate how they meet the essential and shortlisting criteria for appointment.

The selection panel may decide to interview only those applicants who appear, from the information available, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and ability. It is therefore essential that applicants describe fully in the application form the extent to which they satisfy the above criteria. It is not appropriate simply to list the various posts that the applicants have held. The selection panel will not make assumptions from the title of the applicants' posts about the skills and experience gained.

Applicants are reminded that the application form must be fully completed. Incomplete application forms will not be accepted. CVs or other supplementary documents will not be accepted in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms.

If it is deemed necessary to shortlist, the shortlisting criteria will be used to decide who appear, based on the information available, to be most suitable in terms of relevant experience and skills to undertake the role and those applicants will be invited to interview.

Final selection of applicants will be based on performance at a criterion based interview(s) including a presentation based on the essential criteria and

competencies. All applicants will be expected to display an acceptable level of competence in each of these areas tested.

It is planned that interviews will be held during February / March 2016. It is hoped that the successful candidate will take up appointment in June 2016.

Applicants attending for interview may be eligible for reimbursement of reasonable travel, subsistence and overnight accommodation costs within the UK as appropriate at rates agreed in advance of travelling with the NI Assembly HR Office.

Every effort will be made to provide whatever reasonable support applicants with disability/disabilities require in attending for interview and whatever reasonable support the successful applicant needs to help them carry out their duties.

Under fair employment legislation, the Commission is required to monitor the community background of those applying to fill vacancies. Applicants must, therefore, complete the equal opportunities monitoring section of the application form.

This Applicant Information Booklet should not be taken as constituting conditions of employment and should be read in conjunction with "Guidance for Applicants".