

Meeting with Chief Electoral Officer 7 May 2025 @ 2pm

In attendance:

Aisling Quinn, Director HR policy

David Marshall , CEO

Joan Fleetham, ER Policy

Jonathan Mitchell, Deputy CEO

Standards of Conduct, Section 6

DM: 10,000 officials work at election time.

Electoral Office is ALB of NIO and adopts NICS T&Cs. Employed permanent staff reduced from 70/80 to around 20 post digitisation.

1500 polling stations with 600 premises used for count (2000 people)

Don't have an exact number of those who are civil servants.

Not allowing civil servants to take annual leave to undertake polling station and count duties would effectively prevent them from taking up the work and have a significant impact on the democratic position in NI.

AQ: Keen to understand the resourcing position better and what outreach is used by the Electoral Office to attract and retain staff given that it is not just staff from the public sector who can carry out the duties.

DM: Process for recruitment is permanently open on website. Whilst not a requirement to use public sector staff, they tend to be good at the job, understand equality requirements, are training in dealing with the public and like the work. A significant proportion are NICS, local council and other public sector staff.

Introduced concept of "Democracy Days" used by GB local councils where a day of paid leave is allocated as well as payment for the election duties.

AQ: Benchmarking with civil service in other jurisdictions clearly indicates that staff are not allowed to use annual leave and accept payment due to "double payment" rules Read across to GB Civil Service, Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct.

DM: NICS undertakes duties similar to councils in GB. Suggested closer comparison between NICS and GB Councils rather than NICS and other jurisdictions. Changing rules would make the job of running an election significantly harder.

AQ: what is process of outreach and attraction used? What marketing strategy is used? What is the pool of people that you are reaching?

JM: Electoral Commission is the regulator and made recommendations on improvements to the recruitment process.

■: Advertise through papers, trusts, public sector bodies, councils. Social media campaigns. Becoming harder and harder to find people to do the work.

