



THE ELECTORAL OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

CORPORATE PLAN 2005 TO 2008

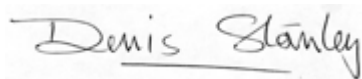
ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2005-06

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Corporate Plan of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI) for the period 2005-2008 and its Annual Business Plan for the year commencing 1 April 2005.

The Corporate Plan explains the approach of the EONI over the longer term to ensure that we continue to deliver a high quality service to electors and value for money. The Corporate Plan seeks to predict the likely demands on the EONI over the next three years and to identify the principal policy, administrative, legislative, operational and financial issues with which we are likely to be confronted during the period. It describes the strategies and outlines the actions the EONI will adopt to manage all such matters. Overall the Corporate Plan is a commitment constantly to search for and implement better ways of delivering electoral services. The Corporate Plan is a three-year rolling plan, which builds on the progress in previous years.

The Annual Business Plan describes the specific and detailed activity which the EONI will undertake in the first year of the new three-year cycle. In particular, the Plan identifies the operational objectives and targets which the organisation intends to achieve within the period and the resources which will be utilised in carrying out the work. The Plan also describes the EONI's main targets on efficiency and value for money. Both parts of this Plan underline the EONI's commitment to assessing and improving ongoing performance. We have established robust indicators to measure achievement and will regularly monitor progress.



D A STANLEY
CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1	INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	4
2	AIM AND OBJECTIVES	
	2.1 Corporate Aim	7
	2.2 Main Objectives	7
	2.3 Supplementary Objectives	8
3	MEASURING PERFORMANCE	
	3.1 Performance Indicators	10
4	CORPORATE PLAN 2005 – 2008	
	4.1 Strategic Issues for the Electoral Office	12
	- E-Voting	12
	- Registration	13
	- The Electoral Commission	16
	4.2 Resources	17
	4.3 Electoral Office Strategies	17
	- Financial Management Strategy	19
	- Quality Service Strategy	21
	- Human Resource Strategy	22
5	ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2005-06	26
	5.1 Key Performance Targets	26
	5.2 Financial Management Plan	29
	5.3 Quality Service Plan	31
	5.4 Human Resource Plan	33
	5.5 Monitoring and Reports	36

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The EONI is the organisation put in place to enable the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland (the CEO) to discharge his legislative duties. The CEO holds a Crown appointment, independent of Government. The operations of the EONI are funded by the Northern Ireland Office and the costs of running elections by HM Treasury. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is accountable to Parliament for all expenditure by the EONI.
- 1.2 The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is responsible for appointing the CEO under Section 14 of the Electoral Law Act (NI) 1962 as amended by Article 6 of the Electoral Law (NI) Order 1972 and the Northern Ireland (Modification of Enactments No 1) Order 1973.
- 1.3 The CEO is expected to deliver accurate and timely advice on electoral administration to the Secretary of State and to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland and the Local Government Boundary Commission. The CEO's relationships with the Secretary Of State, with the Commissions and with the Northern Ireland Office and how they are conducted is described in a formal document agreed by the Secretary of State, the Boundary Commissioners and the Northern Ireland Office.
- 1.4 The CEO's main managerial point of contact with Government on matters relating to electoral policy and law and to the organisation and administration of the EONI is the Rights and International Relations Division, Northern Ireland Office, London. Notwithstanding this, the CEO conducts business bilaterally with other parts of the Northern Ireland Office, for example, Financial Services Division or Personnel Services Division – where it is expedient or otherwise efficient to do so. On such occasions, the CEO keeps Rights and International Relations Division informed of the contacts and copies any relevant correspondence to the Division.

- 1.5 The Northern Ireland Office for its part includes the CEO in the consultation process in respect of any proposed legislative changes in the elections field, both primary and subordinate.
- 1.6 The Northern Ireland Office also ensures that the CEO is made aware of any policy developments on elections issues that emanate from other Government Departments.
- 1.7 As the sole body charged with delivering elections in Northern Ireland, the CEO has established an effective working relationship with the Electoral Commission, which recognises the respective statutory roles and objectives of both and which provides a suitable and harmonious operational interface for separate and combined activities aimed at providing effective and efficient electoral services in Northern Ireland. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Commission, the EONI and the Northern Ireland Office defines the basis of these relationships.
- 1.8 The EONI is made up of a headquarters and nine Area Electoral Offices, dispersed in seven locations around Northern Ireland. Two of the Area Electoral Offices are co-located in central Belfast alongside headquarters. Two other Area Electoral Offices are co-located in Banbridge and the remaining five offices operate from Londonderry, Omagh, Newtownabbey, Newtownards and Ballymoney. There is an Area Electoral Office within each Northern Ireland parliamentary constituency or within an adjacent constituency. The EONI presently has 43 permanent staff, of whom 17 are located in headquarters. However, for elections and during the period of the annual registration canvass from September to November, many temporary staff are also employed. Around 4,500 polling station and counting staff are required for a major election and about 150 temporary office staff. Approximately 1,000 canvassers are involved between September and November for the annual canvass and over 100 temporary office staff in the same period.

1.9 The EONI Headquarters is located at:

St Anne's House
15 Church Street
Belfast BT1 1ER

Telephone: (028) 9044 6688

Fax: (028) 90 235612

Email: info@eoni.gov.uk

Internet www.electoralofficeni.gov.uk

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Corporate Aim

2.1 The Corporate Aim of the EONI is:

To serve democracy by administering the CEO's functions as defined in electoral law in a comprehensive, professional, timely, effective, efficient and economic manner equally across all the people of Northern Ireland.

Main Objectives

2.2 The main objectives of the EONI are:

2.2.1 **To prepare, publish and maintain an up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive Electoral Register for Northern Ireland.**

The objective is to prepare and publish an accurate Electoral Register each autumn as required by law and to maintain the Register through the process of Rolling Registration. The Register also serves as a basis for the selection of a panel for jury service.

2.2.2 **To conduct Parliamentary, Assembly, European and District Council elections and referendums in Northern Ireland effectively and impartially and in accordance with the law.**

The objective is to ensure that all elections and referendums in Northern Ireland are well managed so as to engender a public perception of an excellent and impartial electoral service, where electoral fraud has been eliminated. Independent surveys will be conducted in respect of the running of elections in conjunction with the Electoral Commission and the results of these used as a measure of the public perception of how well elections have been managed. The EONI will also take note of recommendations made by the Electoral Commission.

Supplementary Objectives

2.3 These supplementary objectives are the separate and intermediate steps through which the main objectives are to be achieved and complemented.

2.3.1 To design, publish and maintain a Polling Station Scheme

The Polling Station Scheme is the plan covering the schools and halls throughout the community in which the polling stations are located. The EONI has to ensure that there are sufficient polling stations in the right locations to enable electors to cast their votes conveniently and without unnecessary discomfort. This includes making every effort to accommodate people with a disability or who are otherwise infirm. There are at present 612 polling places (the schools and halls) and 1532 polling stations (the Presiding Officers, poll clerks and ballot boxes). The scheme is revised in accordance with legislative requirements or more frequently as needs dictate.

2.3.2 To provide advice to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on electoral matters

The CEO has, as one of his major responsibilities, the provision of advice on all electoral matters to the Secretary of State. This takes the form not only of face-to-face briefings and discussions with the Secretary of State and his Ministers, but also the submission of written material putting forward the views of the EONI on, for example, proposed changes to electoral legislation and their practical implications. The CEO also advises the Secretary of State about significant operational changes he intends to make in the running of elections and referendums and in the way in which the Electoral Register is to be prepared.

2.3.3 To provide advice to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland and the Local Government Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland

The CEO is required by law to act as an assessor to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland and the Local Government Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. Although this may involve only one or two people on a direct basis, there is be a need to provide data on electorate topography and advice to both Commissions on the re-drawing of boundaries.

2.4 The EONI's targets described in the Annual Business Plan flow from these main and supplementary objectives; thus performance indicators have been established to measure their achievement. The targets will be used to monitor and control the work of the EONI and to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach through the Area Electoral Offices. From these targets will cascade the tasks to be performed by individual staff as defined in their Forward Job Plans and Personal Development Plans.

3. MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Performance Indicators

3.1 The EONI has established Performance Indicators to measure the achievement of its main and supplementary objectives.

Objective	Key Performance Indicator
To prepare, publish and maintain an up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive Electoral Register for Northern Ireland.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completeness of the Register – having regard to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the last published Register; b) the population eligible to register. 2. Accuracy of the Register – having regard to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) personal identifiers; b) external data. 3. Timeliness of Publication and Revision of the Register.
To conduct Parliamentary, Assembly, European and District Council elections and referendums in Northern Ireland effectively, impartially, within statutory timetables and to prevent electoral fraud.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completion of prescribed preliminaries to elections within the relevant statutory timetable. 2. Extent of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) provision of published polling arrangements; b) breakdown in arrangements; c) electoral petitions. 3. Perceptions of effectiveness and impartiality, including the elimination of electoral fraud, derived from independent evidence and assessments.
To design, publish and maintain a Polling Station Scheme.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Periodic publication within the prescribed timetable and arrangements for consultation.

	<p>2. Extent of acceptance derived from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Equality impact assessments; b) Representations from the public and political parties; c) Independent evidence and assessments.
<p>To provide advice to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on electoral matters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Timeliness of advice. 2. View of the Secretary of State on quality, range and timeliness of advice.
<p>To provide advice to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland and the Local Government Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Timeliness of advice. 2. Views of Commissioners on quality, range and timeliness of advice.

4. CORPORATE PLAN 2005 - 2008

4.1 Strategic issues facing the Electoral Office

4.1.1 The EONI must plan on the basis of the likelihood of major elections at certain points. Some of these, such as District Council general elections and Assembly elections, take place at times determined by legislation, while the dates of others can be decided upon within a time frame spanning a few weeks. Some elections can be called at short notice, as in the case of Parliamentary elections. Referendums can also be called at any time. Nevertheless, the EONI is currently basing its planning on the following dates:

i.	Parliamentary general elections	May 2005
ii.	District Council general elections	May 2005
iii.	Referendum on the European Community Constitution	March 2006
iv.	Referendum on the Euro	March 2006
v.	NI Assembly Elections	May 2007

E - Voting

4.1.5 There are already trials of various forms of electronic voting taking place in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland has tested electronic polling and counting. The EONI intends to monitor closely the results of these trials, as well as wider commercial developments in the fields of electronic voting and counting, with a view to assessing the suitability of these methodologies to electoral administration in Northern Ireland. It might be expected that e-counting would prove an appropriate first step in Northern Ireland, but there would need to be widespread acceptance of such systems before substantial resources could be committed.

Registration

4.1.6 The EONI's broad basis for future planning is to ensure that it will at all times be in a position to administer effectively its main responsibilities for electoral registration and elections. The Electoral Fraud (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 introduced the requirements that electors should apply individually to be included on the Electoral Register and that they should provide three personal identifiers (as evidence of their identity). The legal obligation to renew the Register each year has remained unchanged. The principal vehicle for renewing the Register is the annual canvass carried out in September and October.

In response to the 2002 changes, the EONI successfully implemented new and significantly different office systems and procedures. Nevertheless, having assessed the impact and effectiveness of the new arrangements for registration and the general public response to them, the EONI has examined further changes to electoral registration aimed at higher levels of registration and more effective and efficient administration of the function.

In late 2004 the EONI conveyed to Ministers its view that the annual canvass is no longer an effective or efficient way to maintain the Electoral Register for Northern Ireland. There is evidence that the Register is falling year on year and will continue to do so unless specific action is taken to arrest the decline. The EONI is concerned that current legislation contributes to the problem. Moreover, while the level of registration is at risk, there is a significant part of the eligible electorate which persistently remains unregistered. The administrative burden of renewing the Register annually limits the EONI's capacity to deal with this deficit. The EONI is also anxious to ensure that the measures in place to counter absent voting fraud and other malpractices are effective and that they are sufficient to contend efficiently with the perceived risks.

The EONI has examined alternative methodologies to the annual canvass drawing on models for electoral registration employed in other major first world democracies. It has assessed the impact of adopting different

approaches on the completeness, integrity and accuracy of the Register and the potential for electoral fraud associated with them. As a consequence, the EONI has concluded that there is a viable option for change which should halt the decline in the Register, ensure an acceptable level of accuracy, reduce the cost of registration and encourage an increase in the size of the Register in future years. Having reviewed the present arrangements to prevent and detect fraud and malpractice in absent voting, the EONI considers them to be sufficient, bearing in mind that to make them more secure or more efficient would be disproportionate to the perceived level of risk.

The EONI therefore made the following recommendations to Ministers in 2004:

- a. The legal requirement for an annual canvass should be removed.
- b. The final annual canvass should be that to be carried out in autumn 2005.
- c. The Register published at 1 December 2005 should be as complete as possible by encouraging the Electoral Commission to undertake an extensive advertising campaign, emphasising the long term nature of the new Register, and by conducting an extensive outreach programme along with the 2005 canvass.
- d. Using new legislation where necessary, automated data transfer arrangements should be put in place to provide the EONI with information;
 - i about all domestic premises in Northern Ireland,
 - ii young people becoming eligible for registration,
 - iii people moving house, and,
 - iv people changing their name

held by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Valuation and Lands Agency, Driver Vehicle Licensing NI, Rates Collection Agency, district

councils, the new water authority, the Registrar General, the Social Security Agency, HM Revenue and Customs, the UK Passport Service, the Court Service, the Stamp Office and education authorities.

- e. Using the information obtained from these sources, the EONI should extend and keep the Register up to date by contacting:
 - i all eligible and newly eligible electors who are not registered,
 - ii all electors who have moved house or changed their name, using targeted mailing and, when necessary, doorstep visits, and,
 - iii remove from the Register all deceased electors and those known to have left Northern Ireland or who fail to confirm their circumstances when requested by the EONI.
- f. The EONI should conduct regular awareness and publicity programmes in conjunction with the Electoral Commission.
- g. Electors, when they apply to register, should be required to provide the three personal identifiers in line with current legislation.
- h. The accuracy of the Register should be determined by statistical survey at regular intervals.
- i. The electorate should be canvassed at the discretion of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) in consultation with the Secretary of State when the CEO is of the view that the Register has reached an unacceptable level of inaccuracy.

Ministers announced in November 2004 that the Government had accepted the shortcomings of the present registration system and is committed to moving away from the legal requirement for the Register to be completed refreshed each year. The Rt Hon John Spellar MP, the then Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, said that he believed such a move would

reduce the burden on the individual citizen and allow the resources of the EONI to be redirected towards targeting those groups where rates of registration are low.

The EONI sees this change as being of major strategic significance and one which will have a long term impact on the work of the Office. It will mean, for example, that the emphasis in Area Electoral Offices in respect of registration will move from reactive to proactive by allowing staff to reach those who traditionally have been reluctant to register. This will be achieved through a vigorous and co-ordinated outreach programme with the Electoral Commission.

The Electoral Commission

4.1.7 The Electoral Commission has now been operating in Northern Ireland for four years. The EONI and the Commission pursue the mutual objectives in the Province of effective modern electoral services and ready access to these services, a comprehensive and accurate Register and voter awareness and information systems. Both organisations recognise the need to make the most effective use of their combined resources to achieve these outcome. The EONI will continue to maintain good, practical and harmonious working relationships with the Commission generally and with its Belfast office in particular.

4.2 Resources

4.2.1 At present the EONI is funded by the Northern Ireland Office for all expenditures except those directly as a result of elections, the costs of which are funded by HM Treasury according to laid down scales.

The following figures show the amounts allocated each year over the Corporate Planning period.

	EXPENDITURE		
	2005-06 Allocation	2006-07 Allocation	2007-08 Allocation
	£k	£k	£k
Programme	3471*	2974*	3055*
Depreciation & Cost of Capital	227	227	227
Revenue Total	3698	3201	3282
Capital	842	365	377
Receipts	130	130	130

* Including end of year flexibility.

4.3 The Electoral Office strategies

4.3.1 The EONI has drawn up a number of strategies designed to provide a high level of service to the electorate and to improve cost effectiveness. The organisation is also responsible for the proper care and control of public funds and for the development and career management of its staff. The EONI has a wider responsibility in relation to the implementation of appropriate Government initiatives, such as Modernising Government, and to prepare for any change that might be made to legislation governing electoral matters.

Financial Management

4.3.2 This strategy aims to ensure that the resources are managed with due consideration to value for money, economy, efficiency and effectiveness; that there is proper accountability for and use of public money; and that adequate controls and targets are in place to ensure that the requirements of Parliament, Ministers, the Northern Ireland Office and the EONI are met.

Quality Service

4.3.3 The aim of this strategy is to improve continuously the quality of service to electors in line with Modernising Government, to complement the efficient running of elections and of maintaining the Register and to ensure that improvements in efficiency are actively sought and implemented. The strategy necessitates a continued high level of staff commitment.

Human Resource

4.3.4 The greatest part of EONI running costs is expended on staff salaries. The staff, both full-time and the many part-timers (up to 4500 at major elections), are also the service deliverers and it is therefore vital that the EONI has a properly trained, highly motivated workforce capable of providing a high level of service in the most cost effective manner. This strategy therefore aims to maximise the contribution that each individual can make to the work of the EONI, as well as addressing the wider issues of personal development, career planning and equality of opportunity and fair treatment in line with statutory requirements, Northern Ireland Civil Service policy and the Investors in People programme.

4.4 Financial management strategy

4.4.1 EONI bases its Financial Management Strategy on a number of important areas, which must be addressed in order to ensure that public money is accounted for properly, its expenditure is in order and proper planning is in place. The methods by which this strategy will be implemented are as follows:

Accounting System

4.4.2 Continued refinement and development of the systems covering both routine expenditure and expenditure at election times will take place to ensure that appropriate accounting information is provided for Parliament, Ministers, the Northern Ireland Office and the EONI.

Management Information System

4.4.3 The management information system developed to ensure that the EONI meets the needs of Ministers and the Northern Ireland Office will be developed further to meet any future need. This will be focussed primarily on providing up-to-date and accurate information to enable the CEO, the Senior Management Team and Team Leaders across the organisation to make informed decisions in respect of progress towards targets throughout each year.

Fraud Prevention

4.4.4 The EONI will continue to maintain an active fraud prevention culture at all levels, based on best practice in the public and private sectors.

Internal Audit

4.4.5 A programme of scrutiny of the EONI systems and procedures will be agreed each year with the Northern Ireland Office.

Financial Delegations

- 4.4.6 The EONI will review its systems of financial delegation on an annual basis to ensure that there is delegation of authority down to the lowest level practicable while, at the same time, ensuring the accountability required for the proper control of public funds.

Publication of Plans and Reports

- 4.4.7 The EONI will prepare Corporate and Annual Business Plans and an Annual Report each year. The Accounts, although not published in report form, will be audited and the Annual Report will be submitted to the Secretary of State to lay in Parliament, after which it will be published.

Corporate Governance

- 4.4.8 Although the CEO has no statutory responsibility to submit formal financial accounts, nevertheless the EONI recognises a duty to manage its affairs to the highest standards of stewardship and best practice. To this end it has developed a risk management framework in line with approved standards and guidance against which the operations and procedures related to the statutory functions of registration and the conduct of elections will be continuously tested, as well as the control and use of human, financial and other resources. The EONI is subject to audit by the National Audit Office, but in addition, the system of internal control will be reviewed annually by independent auditors, the reports of whom will be made available to the Northern Ireland Office. In accordance with administrative arrangements agreed with the Northern Ireland Office the Corporate and Annual Business Plans of the EONI are subject to approval by the Secretary of State. The CEO will provide the Department's Accounting Officer with a statement of assurance about the use of resources each year.

4.5 Quality Service Strategy

4.5.1 The theme of continuous improvement will be a central part of the EONI Quality Service Plan. A change management team has been established to develop a quality improvement plan, with the emphasis on identifying methods whereby the standard of service to electors can be improved. New plans will be produced each year. The EONI will endeavour to gain Charter Mark status in the year 2006-07.

4.5.2 The EONI will seek continuously to develop its service to electors in the following ways:

i Enquiries and Complaints from Electors

The arrangements for responding to all written and verbal enquiries from electors will be kept in line with the Six Whitehall Standards and with the principles of Modernising Government. The arrangements for handling complaints will be reviewed annually. A new telephone system, covering the whole EONI, has been introduced to provide an effective information handling service for the electorate, candidates and parties and its performance will be monitored to ensure that it provides the appropriate level of service. The web site will continue to be developed to provide easily accessible on-line information.

ii Public Briefings and Meetings

Presentations to and meetings with groups and individuals interested in the work of the EONI will be carried out as required. The CEO will also continue to provide press briefings and media interviews when necessary. Programmes will be developed annually in conjunction with the Electoral Commission with the aim of educating the public in the registration and electoral processes.

iii Equality

The EONI will ensure that all staff, in every facet of their work, have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. To these ends the EONI will continue to review all its existing policies, powers, duties and functions and similarly consider all new areas. There will be put in place a planned programme of communications and training to implement efficiently all matters covered in the Equality Scheme.

4.6 Human Resource Strategy

4.6.1 The staff of the EONI are one of its key strengths and must be supported and developed through good personnel management and training. In order to sustain a flexible, skilled and motivated work force capable of meeting targets in the most cost effective manner the EONI will seek to attain the national standard set by Investors in People by the end of 2005-06.

Personnel

4.6.2 Service level agreements will be drawn up with the Northern Ireland Office for the provision of central personnel support services. The Equal Opportunities Officer will continue to oversee implementation of equality policies.

Grading and Pay

4.6.3 The EONI will continue to keep under review pay and grading arrangements to ensure that the most appropriate arrangements are in place in 2005-06 and beyond.

Staffing Levels and Absenteeism

4.6.4 Staffing levels will be kept under review to ensure that EONI aim, objectives and targets are met as cost effectively as possible. Absenteeism will be monitored with a target of 4% or below.

Staff Relations

4.6.5 Staff will continue to be consulted on developments which involve or affect them. The established EONI/ trade union arrangements will be maintained, but enhancements, such as the introduction of an annual Whitley meeting, will be considered with NIPSA.

Staff Opinion Survey

4.6.6 A staff opinion survey will be conducted each year among all full-time and a random 20% of part-time staff and the results used to inform the annual Human Resource Plan.

Health and Safety

4.6.7 Health and Safety will be kept under review and changes in Northern Ireland Civil Service and Northern Ireland Office policy and procedures implemented.

Training and Development

4.6.8 The EONI will produce an annual training and development plan and monitor progress against this by way of regular in-year staff reviews. The provision of training through the Northern Ireland Office Training and Development Branch will be regulated by the service level agreement drawn up with Personnel Services Division. A system of job-related training and personal development will be introduced, using mentoring by senior staff and external sources as necessary. Leadership training will be implemented as described in paragraph 4.6.10.

Internal Communications

4.6.9 The EONI is committed to promoting and maintaining good communication between staff at all levels. Internal communications will be given priority to ensure that everyone understands what they are expected to do, how they will be measured and the implications for them of changes within the EONI, the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the Northern Ireland Office. The series of procedures manuals covering all aspects of EONI work will be maintained and distributed to staff to ensure that everyone fully understands their job.

Leadership

4.6.10 Good leadership is essential at all levels to take staff successfully through whatever changes might lie ahead. Development of individual leadership styles will be a key element and this will be achieved by a comprehensive leadership programme covering the following:

- i 2005-06 Maximising the benefits of change
- ii 2006-07 Consolidating the gains
- iii 2007-08 Building for the future

This programme will be prepared by the Human Resources Officer with oversight by the Senior Management Team; assistance will be sought from the Northern Ireland Office Training and Development Branch and outside consultants as necessary.

Management of Performance

4.6.11 To encourage and support staff in setting and achieving challenging individual goals there needs to be a fair and objective framework by which the EONI, teams and individuals can be judged and rewarded. This will be achieved by:

- i Dissemination and cascading objectives and targets so that individuals can set their annual Forward Job Plans and Personal Development Plans accordingly.
- ii Continued development of the EONI management information system so that individuals have the information needed to manage and measure performance accurately.
- iii Continuing operation of the system of regular in-year staff reviews and mentoring to ensure that staff are enabled to contribute to the best of their abilities.

5. ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2005-06

5.1 Key Performance Targets

The Key Performance Targets for 2005-06 are as follows:

Objective	Performance Indicator	Target
<p>To prepare, publish and maintain an up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive Electoral Register for Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>1. Completeness of the Register – having regard to:</p> <p>a) the last published Register;</p> <p>b) eligibility of applicants.</p> <p>2. Accuracy of the Register – having regard to:</p> <p>a) personal identifiers;</p> <p>b) external data.</p> <p>3. Timeliness of Publication and Revision of the Register.</p>	<p>1. To compile a Register at 1 December 2005, with reference to 15 October 2005, which is not less complete in respect of eligible applicants than the Register at 1 September 2005.</p> <p>2. To compare all dates of birth, national insurance numbers and signatures provided on registration forms with previously obtained personal identifiers and request and obtain clarification on all inconsistent data.</p> <p>3. To continue comparing all national insurance numbers and dates of birth of registered electors with the Department of Work and Pensions’.</p> <p>4. To publish a Register at 1 December 2005 and revisions of the Register at the first of each month.</p>
<p>To conduct Parliamentary, Assembly, European and District Council elections and referendums in</p>	<p>1. Completion of prescribed preliminaries to elections within the relevant statutory timetable.</p>	<p>1. In the event of any election to be held up to 1 June 2006 to take all the preliminary statutory action required strictly in</p>

<p>Northern Ireland effectively, impartially, within statutory timetables and to prevent electoral fraud.</p>	<p>2. Extent of:</p> <p>a) provision of published polling arrangements; b) breakdown in arrangements; c) electoral petitions.</p> <p>3. Perceptions of effectiveness and impartiality, including the elimination of electoral fraud, derived from independent evidence and assessments.</p>	<p>accordance with the legislation and statutory timetables. Plus all other preparatory steps as necessary.</p> <p>2. In the event of any election held up to 31 March 2006 to operate all the polling stations listed in the Polling Station Scheme during the whole of the prescribed duration of the election so that each polling station is manned during the whole period by a Presiding Officer and Poll Clerk(s) and to provide appropriate absent voting facilities.</p> <p>3. Not less than 90% of people who voted should view the election arrangements as effective and impartial.</p>
<p>To design, publish and maintain a Polling Station Scheme</p>	<p>1. Periodic publication within the prescribed timetable and arrangements for consultation.</p> <p>2. Extent of acceptance derived from:</p> <p>a) Equality impact assessments. b) Representations from the public and political parties;</p>	<p>1. To evaluate the polling station arrangements within one month of any election up to 31 March 2006 and consult on and implement changes as appropriate.</p> <p>2. Not less than 90% of electors should view the arrangements as satisfactory.</p>

	c) Independent evidence and assessments.	
To provide advice to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on electoral matters	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Timeliness of advice. 2. View of Secretary of State on quality, range and timeliness of advice. 	To take a view from the Secretary of State on the timeliness, quality and range of advice given.
To provide advice to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland and the Local Government Boundary Commission.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Timeliness of advice. 2. Views of the Commissioners on quality, range and timeliness of advice. 	To take the views of the Commissions on the timeliness, quality and range of advice given.

5.2 Financial Management Plan

5.2.1 In order to meet its targets the EONI finances for 2005-06 are as follows:

2005 – 06 Allocation	
	£k
Programme	3,471*
Depreciation & Cost of Capital	227
Revenue Total	3,698
Capital	842
Receipts	130

* Including end of year flexibility

Value for Money

5.2.2 The EONI has set the following target aimed at achieving value for money and further improving efficiency:

To manage the workload in 2005-06 within a running costs budget (to cover salaries and administrative expenditure) to financial limits agreed with the Northern Ireland Office.

5.2.3 The EONI has set the following subsidiary targets to ensure that financial management remains fully effective:

- i To maintain the accounting system to ensure that it meets the needs of Parliament, Ministers, the Northern Ireland Office and the EONI.
- ii To maintain a financial fraud prevention culture at all levels.

- iii To agree an audit programme with the Northern Ireland Office by September 2005.
- iv To review the EONI financial delegations, by December 2005.
- v To prepare a draft Corporate Plan for 2006 - 2009 and a draft Annual Business Plan for 2006-07 by March 2006.

Efficiency Plan

5.2.4 The EONI Efficiency Plan for 2005-06 is based on a continued review of working practices and staffing levels so as to obtain best value for money and reduce running costs. The EONI will use the European Business Excellence Model as a tool to develop more efficient systems and processes. The Efficiency Plan is founded on the twin aims of delivering efficiency gains and continued quality improvement but, of course, it must be sufficiently flexible to allow for the unpredictability of the business in which the EONI operates.

5.2.5 The European Business Excellence Model involves a self-assessment process which is designed to help businesses improve knowledge of themselves and to provide:

- i An insight into private sector best practice.
- ii A focus on the business, on all the issues affecting the EONI and on their linkages and interdependencies.
- iii A process for management at all levels to assess where they currently are and where they need to be in relation to EONI plans.

- iv An overview of issues common to other electoral administrators as well as specifics for individual inter-agency contact and sharing of best practice.
- v A logical framework within which initiatives such as Modernising Government, Charter Mark and Investors in People can achieve synergy.

The information gained from this approach will be used to influence staffing and systems reviews intended to provide efficiency savings.

5.3 Quality Service Plan

5.3.1 In keeping with the principles of Modernising Government, the EONI is committed to improving continuously the service it provides to electors. Thus the EONI has set the following subsidiary targets in order to put its customers first by maintaining and, where possible, improving the standard of service. The EONI aims to equal or better the Six Whitehall Standards:

- i To reply to at least 95% of letters within 10 working days of receipt.
- ii To attend to callers at any EONI location within five minutes.
- iii To acknowledge at least 95% of Rolling Registration claims within three working days from the date of determination.
- iv To respond to telephone enquiries on the same day or at the latest within 24 hours.
- v To reply, within seven working days, to those who raise matters of concern with the CEO. (In exceptional cases when an interim reply is necessary, a full reply will be issued within 10 days).

- vi To provide timely and appropriate information to the press, community groups and individuals who have an interest in the work of the EONI. This will continue to be done by way of press briefings, media interviews and presentations to community groups. Individuals who approach the EONI for information will be answered in person, by telephone or letter, as appropriate.
- vii To provide clear and straightforward information about EONI service in simple textual format, (similarly in Braille, in large type and on tape cassette for those with sight difficulties) and provide a central telephone enquiry point.
- viii To continue to operate the Complaints procedure and to send out information about the procedure upon request.
- ix To conduct, by December 2005, Equality impact assessments, in accordance with the EONI Equality Scheme.
- x To produce, by December 2005, an EONI Charter Statement.
- xi To produce, by March 2006, plans whereby voters with disabilities can gain more readily access to polling stations and Area Electoral Offices.
- xii To revise and publish, by March 2006, the EONI Equality Scheme if appropriate and prepare an Annual Equality Report.
- xiii To revise and update, by March 2006, a new EONI Quality Service Plan using, inter alia, the European Business Excellence Model, to include recommendations on how to improve further leadership, business processes and customer satisfaction

5.3.2 The EONI is working to meet the Government's general aim to improve services through electronic access and it is part of the change programme to identify opportunities for the development in this area. Registration forms have been made available on the website, www.electoralofficeni.gov.uk. Unfortunately, neither the technology nor legislation allows for the submission of forms electronically since electors are required by law to provide signatures. The EONI is planning to install a system of electronic records' management to address the Government's specific target in this regard for 2005. The system will also provide an effective basis for dealing with information requested from the EONI under the Freedom of Information Act from 1 January 2005.

5.4 Human Resource Plan

5.4.1 The EONI personnel and training programmes are intended to develop and maintain a properly trained, highly motivated workforce capable of consistently providing a high quality service. The programmes must also be sufficiently flexible to respond to any significant changes in the workload, e.g. a sudden and major election or referendum.

Personnel

5.4.2 The EONI has set the following subsidiary targets for personnel matters:

- i To keep under review pay and grading arrangements to ensure that they meet the needs and circumstances which are likely to obtain throughout the year.
- ii To keep under review staffing levels to ensure they are consistent with the volume of work.

- iii To manage absenteeism with the aim of ensuring that the average level for the year is no higher than 4%.
- iv To conduct regular meetings with trade union representatives in accordance with the established EONI / trade union arrangements.
- v To conduct a staff opinion survey and to implement such practicable improvements as the survey results suggest.
- vi To conduct regular reviews of health and safety matters, and arrange training as appropriate.
- vii To prepare, by December 2005, a service level agreement with the Northern Ireland Office for the provision of central personnel support services.

Training and Development

5.4.3 In order to develop EONI staff to meet performance targets in the most cost effective manner the following subsidiary targets have been set:

- i To monitor the completion and updating of Personal Development Plans throughout the year.
- ii To continue induction and job-related training for all staff.
- iii To computerise the training records of all staff.
- iv To arrange, by September 2005, appropriate training for all staff tutors.

- v To implement, by October 2005, a leadership training programme for middle and senior management on the subject of “Maximising the benefits of change”.
- vi To review, by December 2005, the EONI in-year Training Plan, in response to needs identified in the staff opinion survey.
- vii To establish the national standard set by Investors in People through the regular analysis of training needs, the issuing of quarterly training reports leading to an annual training report and the production of a new training plan in March 2006.
- viii To review by December 2005 the arrangements with the Department’s Training and Development Branch for the provision of training services.

Internal Communications

5.4.4 Good internal communications are vital for providing a clear vision of EONI aims and the attainment targets as well as keeping staff informed about the wider issues in the Northern Ireland Civil Service and in the Northern Ireland Office. To this end the EONI has set the following subsidiary targets:

- i To maintain the system of monthly Team Leaders’ meetings
- ii To review, by December 2005, the Internal Communication Plan in light of the staff opinion survey

Information Systems

5.4.5 The effective use of information systems and technology are important elements in helping staff achieve their Aims and Targets. To maintain

and develop these systems the EONI has set the following subsidiary targets:

- i To examine by December 2005 how the new computer system could best be developed to meet the needs of staff.
- ii To review by December 2005 the EONI contingency plans in the event of a major disruption at St Anne's House.

5.5 Monitoring And Reports

5.5.1 The EONI will monitor performance against its Performance Indicators. If it appears that any targets are at risk the CEO will advise the Minister and the Northern Ireland Office about options for corrective action.

Reporting

5.5.2 The EONI will produce internal monitoring reports for all staff. The CEO will also report to the Minister on EONI performance and in addition the CEO and senior staff will be available to meet Northern Ireland Office colleagues as required. The CEO will publish an annual report 2005-06 before the 2006 Parliamentary Summer recess.