

Home Affairs Committee

Appointment of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

First Report of Session 2024–25

HC 713

Home Affairs Committee

The Home Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Home Office and its associated public bodies.

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Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

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Contents

Introduction	1
The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration	3
The recruitment process	5
The Government's preferred candidate	7
Ensuring the effectiveness of the ICIBI	9
Appendix 1: Correspondence from the Minister for Migration and Citizenship	12
Appendix 2: Information provided by the Home Office about the preferred candidate and recruitment campaign	13
Appendix 3: Job advertisement	16
Appendix 4: Curriculum vitae for John Tuckett	21
Appendix 5: Candidate questionnaire	25
Formal Minutes	32
Witnesses	33

Introduction

1. Since 2008 select committees have held pre-appointment hearings to scrutinise the Government's preferred candidates for a variety of public appointments. They provide an opportunity for:
 - scrutiny of the quality of ministerial decision-making;
 - public reassurance, in addition to the processes of the Office for the Commissioner of Public Appointments, that those appointed to key public offices have been selected on merit;
 - public evidence of the independence of mind of the candidate; and
 - enhancing the appointee's legitimacy in undertaking his or her function, including providing the public with an insight into the candidate's views on policy issues related to the role.
2. The Liaison Committee has published guidance for committees about the conduct of pre-appointment hearings.¹ While committee findings on a candidate's suitability are not binding on Ministers, it is expected that the appointing Minister will consider a committee's views before deciding whether to proceed with an appointment.

Posts subject to pre-appointment hearings by the Home Affairs Committee

3. There are three ministerial appointments for which the Government invites the Home Affairs Committee to undertake formal pre-appointment scrutiny.² These are:
 - Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration;
 - HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and HM Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services; and
 - Chair of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.

1 Liaison Committee, Third Report of Session 2017–19, [Pre-Appointment Hearings](#), HC 2307, Annex

2 Cabinet Office, [Cabinet Office Guidance: pre-appointment scrutiny by House of Commons select committees](#), published November 2013, last updated January 2019

We were assisted during the pre-appointment process by our specialist adviser David Neal, a former Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.³

3 David Neal made declarations of interests which can be found in the [formal minutes of the Home Affairs Committee](#), Session 2024–25, Appendix B.

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

4. The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) monitors and reports on the efficiency and effectiveness of the immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions carried out by the Home Secretary and by officials and others on their behalf. Their purpose is to help improve the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the Home Office’s border and immigration functions through unfettered, impartial and evidence-based inspection.⁴
5. The ICIBI is personally responsible to the Home Secretary for fulfilling statutory responsibilities as an independent inspector and pursuing agreed objectives. The ICIBI’s main responsibilities—as set out by the Home Office in the job description for the role—are to:
 - Monitor and report on UK immigration, asylum, nationality and general customs functions in accordance with legislation (UK Borders Act 2007, sections 48–56) and its delegated contractors to deliver any of those functions.
 - Conduct an open and constructive relationship with Home Office officials and Ministers, to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Migration and Borders Group and operational capabilities.
 - Engage effectively with Government stakeholders and external stakeholders.
 - Act as Accounting Officer, ensuring compliance with Government Accounting Rules. The office holder will be responsible for an annual budget of approximately £2 million (note Departmental budgets are reviewed annually).

4 Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [About us](#), accessed 11 February 2025

- Provide timely financial and management information to the Department and ensure that the accounts are properly prepared and presented in accordance with any directions set by the Home Office or by any other government department.
- Represent the Office of the ICIBI to the public and Parliament.
- Provide strong leadership for the Office of the ICIBI and ensure all staff observe the highest standards of regularity and propriety and act in accordance with Civil Service values.
- Promote efficient use of resource to ensure delivery and value for money, whilst maximising the effectiveness of the ICIBI's functions.
- Set and monitor performance goals for all staff of the office of the ICIBI in line with Home Office policy.
- Produce annual inspection plans in consultation with others (including the Secretary of State) that describe the objectives and terms of reference of proposed inspections.
- Submit all reports to the Home Secretary for laying before Parliament and publication.
- Keep proper accounts and proper records in relation to the accounts, to prepare statements of accounts in respect of each financial year and to send a copy of the annual accounts to the Home Secretary.
- Appoint appropriate staff in correspondence with the legislation.
- Promote equality and diversity.⁵

6. The ICIBI shares the Civil Service's values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality and it has its own 'Vision Statement', which states that the ICIBI will:

- be highly-skilled, professional and effective, with a reputation for the highest standards of work and conduct;
- operate thorough, rigorous and transparent processes to reach sound, evidence-based conclusions;
- deal with others consistently and reliably;
- be efficient, forward-thinking, committed to continuous improvement and focused on delivery; and
- enable and develop its people.⁶

5 [Appointment details: Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration](#), gov.uk, accessed 11 February 2025

6 Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [About us](#), accessed 11 February 2025

The recruitment process

7. The recruitment process to find a new ICIBI was launched on 21 February 2024, with a closing date of 2 April 2024.⁷ The interview process, which concluded on 8 May 2024, identified three appointable candidates, but the process and next recruitment steps were paused due to the calling of the 2024 general election.⁸ The Government named its preferred candidate for the role—John Tuckett—on 21 January 2025.⁹ Further information about the recruitment process for this role is appended to this Report.¹⁰

Role and person specification

8. The person specification for the ICIBI recruitment is as follows:
- Part one—Essential skills and Experience
 - Proven track record of leading an organisation, operating at Board level or equivalent, with associated financial and people management skills.
 - Demonstrable experience of the consistent delivery of excellent performance outcomes within a changing operational environment.
 - Evidence of contributing to the development of a sound strategic direction for an organisation.
 - Evidence of building strong and effective working relationships with internal and external stakeholders, displaying sensitivity to their views and an ability to handle conflict diplomatically.
 - Evidence of the ability to analyse and make judgements from complex data and contribute to workable recommendations on complex and sensitive issues.

7 [Appointment details: Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration](#), gov.uk, accessed 11 February 2025

8 Appendix 2

9 Home Office press release, [John Tuckett named as preferred candidate for ICIBI role](#), 21 January 2025

10 Appendix 2

- Evidence of the ability to gain respect and keep the confidence of key stakeholders including Ministers and senior government officials through effective communication and influencing skills (both oral and written).
- Part Two–Personal abilities and behaviours
The candidate should also be able to demonstrate:
 - That they are at ease working within a given statutory framework.
 - Decisiveness and independence.
 - High standards of corporate and personal conduct, including a sound understanding of and strong commitment to equal opportunities, public service values and principles of public life, enabling them to act impartially and uphold the role of ICIBI.

The full job advertisement for this role is appended to this Report.¹¹

The Government's preferred candidate

9. The Government's preferred candidate for the role of ICIBI is John Tuckett, who is currently the Immigration Services Commissioner, leading the Immigration Advice Authority. Mr Tuckett was appointed as Immigration Services Commissioner in July 2019, prior to which he held a range of Chief Executive and senior leadership roles in the public sector.¹² Mr Tuckett's CV is published with this report.¹³ To help inform our pre-appointment hearing, Mr Tuckett was asked to respond to a candidate questionnaire, with questions about his background, motivations for applying for the role, and priorities should he be appointed. His response to this questionnaire is published with this Report.¹⁴

Our questioning

10. Our questioning was designed to test Mr Tuckett's competence and personal independence, as recommended in the Liaison Committee's guidance on pre-appointment hearings.¹⁵ During the pre-appointment hearing we questioned Mr Tuckett about his motivations for applying for the role, his experience and skills and how he would apply these to the role, and his personal independence.
11. The transcript of our hearing is published with this Report.¹⁶

Conclusion

12. Mr Tuckett demonstrated significant experience of senior leadership in the public sector. We agree with the advisory assessment panel that Mr Tuckett meets the criteria for the position of Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.

12 [Biography: John Tuckett](#), gov.uk, accessed 11 February 2025

13 Appendix 4

14 Appendix 5

15 Liaison Committee, Third Report of Session 2017–19, [Pre-Appointment Hearings](#), HC 2307, Annex, para 20

16 [Qq 1–86](#)

13. That said, Mr Tuckett resides in Finland, and told us he travels to the UK for work as required. To operate effectively we believe that the ICIBI needs to spend a significant proportion of their time in London, or conducting inspections across the UK. We are also concerned about the reputational risk this creates. Mr Tuckett said he would be willing to work in London five days a week if necessary. If appointed, it will be for Mr Tuckett to decide on his precise working patterns, but we would expect the majority of his working time to be spent in London, or on inspections.

14. In addition, Mr Tuckett repeatedly highlighted his intention to work collaboratively with the Home Office, but was less reflective about how he would challenge Ministers and senior officials when required. In the previous Parliament there were difficulties in the relationship between the Home Office and ICIBI—particularly when it came to the publication of reports submitted by the ICIBI. It will be essential, if Mr Tuckett is appointed as ICIBI, that he demonstrates his independence and ability to challenge the Home Office—both privately and publicly—when necessary. Mr Tuckett may also wish to reflect more on the public facing aspects of the role of the ICIBI, in improving levels of public trust.

Ensuring the effectiveness of the ICIBI

15. While the focus of this Report is on the suitability of the Government’s preferred candidate for the role of Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI), the appointment of a new Chief Inspector provides an opportunity to consider some of the factors that will affect their ability to operate effectively.
16. The purpose of the ICIBI is to help improve the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the Home Office’s border and immigration functions through unfettered, impartial and evidence-based inspection.¹⁷ For the ICIBI to be able to achieve this purpose they must have a good working relationship with the Home Office. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. Relations between the Home Office and the former ICIBI (David Neal) broke down in the last Parliament, and his appointment was terminated by the previous Home Secretary in February 2024 after he discussed what the Home Secretary described as “sensitive and misleading information” with the press.¹⁸ Mr Neal told our predecessor Committee “I have been sacked for doing my job”.¹⁹ This took place after an extended period when the Home Office had not been publishing reports submitted to it by the Chief Inspector: in 2023–24 only three of the 21 inspection reports published met the ministerial commitment to lay reports in Parliament within eight weeks of receipt.²⁰ In June 2024 an interim Chief Inspector was appointed, since then there has been an improvement in the timeliness of publication of reports submitted: of the four reports submitted and published since then, three were published within eight weeks, and one had over four months between submission and publication.
17. Our predecessor Committee questioned Mr Neal shortly after his dismissal, to explore the circumstances around his removal from post, and hear his reflections on his time as Chief Inspector. In addition to delays publishing his reports, Mr Neal raised concerns about the Home Office’s excessive use of

17 Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [About Us](#), accessed 11 February 2025

18 Letter from the Home Secretary regarding the former Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [18 March 2024](#)

19 Oral evidence taken on 27 February 2024, [Q1](#)

20 Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [Annual Report for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024](#), September 2024

the formal process to make redactions to reports, supposedly on grounds relating to national security or personal risk to individuals.²¹ Mr Neal also provided a written submission setting out ten changes he felt could make the ICIBI more effective.²²

18. The Lessons Learned Review conducted by Wendy Williams following the Windrush scandal recommended that the Government review the remit and role of the ICIBI and consider giving the ICIBI more powers with regard to publishing reports. She also recommended that Ministers should have a duty to publish clearly articulated and justified reasons when they do not agree to implement ICIBI recommendations.²³ Jill Rutter, Senior Fellow at the Institute for Government, has also said that independent inspectors need the right to publish independently of those they scrutinise.²⁴ Other independent inspectors—for example His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales—already have the power to publish their own reports.
19. The Government initially accepted the recommendation made by Wendy Williams for a review of the remit, role and powers of the ICIBI, including consideration of whether Ministers should have a duty to publish clearly articulated and justified reasons when they do not agree to implement ICIBI recommendations.²⁵ However, in 2023 the then Home Secretary stated that the Government had decided not to proceed with this recommendation.²⁶ The then Home Secretary stated that “There are a number of ways in which we are inviting this challenge and scrutiny in a more efficient way”. Both Wendy Williams and then ICIBI David Neal expressed their disappointment at the decision not to proceed with this recommendation.²⁷
20. There is also a question about the resilience of the role of ICIBI if the post of Chief Inspector is vacant for any reason. While the most recent recruitment process was underway David Bolt—who had been ICIBI from 2015 to 2021—was appointed as interim ICIBI. It was announced on 24 May 2024 that he

21 Oral evidence taken on 27 February 2024, [Q9](#)

22 Written evidence received for the Committee’s one-off evidence session with the former Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [David Neal](#), February 2024

23 Home Office, [Windrush Lessons Learned Review by Wendy Williams](#), HC 93, 19 March 2020

24 [“David Neal’s sacking shows why independent inspectors need more powers”](#), Institute for Government, 23 February 2024

25 Home Office, [Response to the Windrush Lessons Learned Review: a comprehensive improvement plan](#), CP 293, 30 September 2020

26 [Update on the Windrush Lessons Learned Review Recommendations](#) HCWS523, 26 January 2023

27 [“Suella Braverman ditching Windrush reform is ‘slap in the face’ for victims”](#), The Independent, 26 January 2023; Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration press release, [Role and remit review of ICIBI discontinued](#), 26 January 2023

would take up this appointment from 3 June 2024.²⁸ This means that there was no ICIBI in post from 21 February to 2 June 2024. David Neal raised the issue of resilience in his written evidence to our predecessor committee, because the constitution of the ICIBI means that all of the responsibility of the office falls directly to the Chief Inspector.²⁹ Mr Neal suggested that making provision in legislation for a deputy would allow greater resilience in the event a vacancy in the Chief Inspector position should arise for whatever reason.

21. It is deeply regrettable that in the last Parliament the relationship between the Home Office and the former Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) broke down to such an extent that his appointment was terminated. It is essential that the Home Office establishes a constructive relationship with the new ICIBI, so that they are able to fulfil their responsibilities confidently and effectively, and the Home Office can benefit from their advice. The Home Office may sometimes disagree with the findings and recommendations of the ICIBI, but if it is to retain public trust, it should not obstruct the ICIBI's work, or unduly delay the publication of their reports. Establishing and maintaining a good working relationship should be a priority for both the Home Office and the new Chief Inspector. If the Home Office fails to engage with the ICIBI in a positive manner we will take this up with ministers and senior officials.

22. There has been considerable debate in recent years about the remit, role and powers of the ICIBI. It is essential that the Chief Inspector has the confidence to act independently, and the powers to work effectively. We will be interested to see whether the Government plans to review the remit, role and powers of the ICIBI—as recommended by Wendy Williams in her Windrush Lessons Learned Review—and we expect to be kept updated about any work in this area. We will return to this matter if we feel reforms are necessary for the Chief Inspector to be able to operate effectively and secure improvements to the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the Home Office's border and immigration functions.

28 Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration press release, [David Bolt appointed as interim ICIBI from 3 June 2024](#), 24 May 2024

29 Written evidence received for the Committee's one-off evidence session with the former Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [David Neal](#), February 2024

Appendix 1: Correspondence from the Minister for Migration and Citizenship

Letter from the Minister for Migration and Citizenship to the Chair of the Committee, dated 2 April 2025

Dear Dame Karen

Appointment of permanent Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) Following my letter of 26 November 2024

I am pleased to inform the Committee the Government's preferred candidate for the permanent ICIBI role is Mr John Tuckett.

Mr Tuckett has served as the Immigration Services Commissioner since July 2019, bringing extensive leadership experience across the public sector including defence, healthcare, and government services. His career spans over three decades of public service, with significant expertise in leading major organisational change programmes.

Prior to his current role, Mr Tuckett served as Chief Executive of the Marine Management Organisation and held senior positions across various government departments including the Home Office, where he led the programme merging the Prison and Probation services. His career began in the Royal Navy as an Executive Officer, where he specialised in submarine command.

My officials are in contact with your clerks to finalise the date for the pre-appointment hearing.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on this important appointment process.

Yours sincerely

Seema Malhotra MP

Minister for Migration & Citizenship

Appendix 2: Information provided by the Home Office about the preferred candidate and recruitment campaign

Information on the preferred candidate

Name of the preferred candidate	John Tuckett
Their current CV (redacted for publication)	As attached (Appendix 4)
Declaration of relevant interests made by the candidate	None
Declaration of relevant political activity made by the candidate required under paragraph 9.2 of the Governance Code on Public Appointments	None
Proposed terms of appointment and remuneration (if any)	Appointment: Three years, with the possibility of re-appointment Remuneration: £140,000 (full-time) Further details enclosed in the attached candidate pack (Appendix 3)

Campaign information

Campaign Launch Date	23 February 2024
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Campaign Closing Date	2 April 2024
Reason for any changes in timetable to that originally published	<p>Prior to the General Election, an open competition to recruit a new Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) was at an advanced stage. The interview process, which concluded on 8 May 2024, identified three appointable candidates, however the process and next recruitment steps were paused owing to the pre-election period.</p> <p>To ensure the ICIBI role did not remain vacant, the former Home Secretary appointed an interim ICIBI, David Bolt, who has been serving in the post since 3 June 2024.</p> <p>On 28 November, the Minister for Migration and Citizenship wrote to the Committee regarding the decision to extend the interim ICIBI's tenure until 2 April 2025.</p>
Advertising strategy	<p>In addition to the use of Executive Search, the role was advertised online across national media and diversity related publications including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Appointments website • Gatenby Sanderson website • In Touch Networks website • Pink Shoe website • Sunday Times Appointments website • Diversity Jobsite • LGBT Equality website • Women's Equality website • Disability Jobsite website • Britain Inclusive website • Disability network website • Home Office LinkedIn

Advisory Assessment Panel	<p>Panel Chair: Simon Ridley (Second Permanent Secretary) and Panel Chair</p> <p>Other Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sahil Mahtani (Senior Independent Panel member) • James Cooper (Home Office Non-Executive Director) • Rosie Varley OBE (Second Independent Panel member)
Number of applicants	23
Number of candidates invited to interview	6
Number of candidates found appointable	3

Diversity data

With regard to diversity data, there were fewer than five candidates in at least one category for each characteristic and therefore, in line with ONS guidance on statistical disclosure, disclosure of data is not possible.

Appendix 3: Job advertisement

About the appointment

Introduction

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration works to ensure independent scrutiny of the UK's border and immigration functions, providing security, confidence and assurance as to their effectiveness and efficiency. They report annually to the Home Secretary and their reports are placed before Parliament.

Leading a team of approximately 30 staff you will strive to continually improve the UK's approach to the Border, Immigration and Citizenship System.

Appointment description

The Independent Chief Inspector of Border and Immigration (ICIBI) is appointed by the Home Secretary and has responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the efficiency and effectiveness of the UK's Border and Immigration functions.

The ICIBI works to a published inspection plan and will consult the Home Secretary about this. The Home Secretary may also commission specific inspections.

The ICIBI is responsible for leading an independent inspectorate that is funded through a delegated budget.

Key Responsibilities

The ICIBI is personally responsible to the Home Secretary for fulfilling statutory responsibilities as an independent inspector and pursuing agreed objectives.

The ICIBI main responsibilities are to:

- Monitor and report on UK immigration, asylum, nationality and general customs functions in accordance with legislation (UK Borders Act 2007, sections 48–56) and its delegated contractors to deliver any of those functions.
- Conduct an open and constructive relationship with the Home Office officials and Ministers, to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Migration and Borders Group and operational capabilities.
- Engage effectively with Government stakeholders and external stakeholders.
- Act as Accounting Officer, ensuring compliance with Government Accounting Rules. The office holder will be responsible for an annual budget of approximately £2 million (note Departmental budgets are reviewed annually).
- Provide timely financial and management information to the Department and ensure that the accounts are properly prepared and presented in accordance with any directions set by the Home Office or by any other government department.
- Represent the Office of the ICIBI to the public and Parliament.
- Provide strong leadership for the Office of the ICIBI and ensure all staff observe the highest standards of regularity and propriety and act in accordance with Civil Service values.
- Promote efficient use of resource to ensure delivery and value for money, whilst maximising the effectiveness of the ICIBI’s functions.
- Set and monitor performance goals for all staff of the office of the ICIBI in line with Home Office policy.
- Produce annual inspection plans in consultation with others (including the Secretary of State) that describe the objectives and terms of reference of proposed inspections.
- Submit all reports to the Home Secretary for laying before Parliament and publication.
- Keep proper accounts and proper records in relation to the accounts, to prepare statements of accounts in respect of each financial year and to send a copy of the annual accounts to the Home Secretary.
- Appoint appropriate staff in correspondence with the legislation.
- Promote equality and diversity.

Statutory Responsibilities

The ICIBI's statutory duties are set out in sections 48 to 56 of the UK Borders Act 2007. They are to:

monitor and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of functions by the following:

- a.** designated customs officials, and officials of the Secretary of State exercising customs functions.
 - b.** immigration officers, and officials of the Secretary of State exercising functions relating to immigration, asylum or nationality.
 - c.** the Secretary of State in so far as the Secretary of State has general customs functions.
 - d.** the Secretary of State in so far as the Secretary of State has functions relating to immigration, asylum or nationality.
 - e.** the Director of Border Revenue and any person exercising functions of the Director.
- Consider and make recommendations about:
 - Consistency of approach within the border and immigration system.
 - Practice and performance of the Home Office in performing border and immigration functions.
 - Practice and procedure in making decision.
 - The treatment of claimants and applicants.
 - Certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (c.41) (unfounded claim).
 - Compliance with the law about discrimination in the exercise of functions, including reliance on paragraph 17 of Schedule 3 to the Equality Act 2010 (exception for immigration functions).
 - Practice and procedure in relation to the exercise of enforcement powers (including powers of arrest, entry, search and seizure).
 - Practice and procedure in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of offences.
 - Practice and procedure in relation to the conduct of criminal proceedings.

- Whether customs functions have been appropriately exercised by the Secretary of State and the Director of Border Revenue.
- The provision of information.
- The handling of complaints.
- The content of information about conditions in countries outside the United Kingdom, which the Home Secretary compiles and makes available for purposes connected to immigration and asylum, to immigration officials and other officials.

The ICIBI shall not set out to investigate individual cases but can consider or draw conclusions about an individual case for the purpose of, or in the context of considering a general issue.

Regulation of appointment

This post is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. For more information, please refer to the [Commissioner's website](#).

Person specification

Essential criteria

Part one–Essential skills and Experience

- Proven track record of leading an organisation, operating at Board level or equivalent, with associated financial and people management skills.
- Demonstrable experience of the consistent delivery of excellent performance outcomes within a changing operational environment.
- Evidence of contributing to the development of a sound strategic direction for an organisation.
- Evidence of building strong and effective working relationships with internal and external stakeholders, displaying sensitivity to their views and an ability to handle conflict diplomatically.
- Evidence of the ability to analyse and make judgements from complex data and contribute to workable recommendations on complex and sensitive issues.

- Evidence of the ability to gain respect and keep the confidence of key stakeholders including Ministers and senior government officials through effective communication and influencing skills (both oral and written).

Part Two–Personal abilities and behaviours

You should also be able to demonstrate:

- That you are at ease working within a given statutory framework.
- Decisiveness and independence.
- High standards of corporate and personal conduct, including a sound understanding of and strong commitment to equal opportunities, public service values and [principles of public life](#), enabling you to act impartially and uphold the role of ICIBI.

Appendix 4: Curriculum vitae for John Tuckett

Profile

- Over 20 years' experience as a CEO or equivalent in a wide range of public sector organisations consistently delivering outcomes and transformation.
- Extensive experience of leading inspections/reviews in complex and sensitive contexts with a track record of pragmatic recommendations that are accepted and implemented.
- Used to politically sensitive environments; credible with Ministers/ Senior civil servants.
- Accredited mediator and former Royal Navy submarine commanding officer.

Career summary

July 2020–IMMIGRATION SERVICES COMMISSIONER: Accountable to the Home Secretary for regulating 3000+ Immigration Advisers (not solicitors/ barristers) across UK, promoting best practice and disrupting activities that abuse the immigration system and migrants.

- During the Covid pandemic and afterwards, delivered all statutory regulatory and enforcement functions; transformed the Office (55 staff) into an outward looking, proactive organisation with a new sense of drive and purpose; introduced regional operations teams across UK enabling closer working with local bodies, supported by a new cloud-based ICT infrastructure.
- Made significant efficiencies (15% of annual budget of £4m) by relinquishing London Head Office reinvesting savings in front line staff; all staff becoming home based employees resulting in significantly enhanced engagement scores.

- Improved the quality of advice available to migrants through increasing adviser numbers by ca 10%, annually, introducing new performance standards for advisers, and a comprehensive risk-based audit regime.
- Changed HO Ministers and senior officials' perceptions of OISC through briefings, plans and new outward approach. Reflected in enhanced financial allocations supporting transformation and ICT systems, and Ministerial support for Corporate Plans.
- Jan 2025, OISC rebranded as Immigration Advice Authority to facilitate easier access to information for advice seekers using social media and reflect the new organisational approach and culture.

Jan 2015–June 2019: CEO MARINE MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION - a DEFRA NDPB regulating all activities (including fishing) in the seas around England. Annual budget £17m; 300 staff, split between Newcastle Head Office and 14 coastal offices.

- Transformed MMO to an enabling regulator working proactively with clients to balance the demands of marine developments with safeguarding the environment.
- Led implementation of new measures protecting marine environments in UK protectorates worldwide eg St Helena, Falkland Islands
- Developed new IT systems for fishing vessels, improving data and safety.
- Advised DEFRA officials and Ministers on potential post Brexit fisheries regimes.

Jan–Apr 2016: INTERIM CHANGE DIRECTOR DEFRA: Working for the Perm Sec, led a review of the Defra's Transformation Portfolio changing ways of working within the department and across its delivery bodies - all recommendations accepted.

Apr 2012–Dec 2014: CHURCH OF ENGLAND: PROGRAMME DIRECTOR AND DIOCESAN SECRETARY (CEO) DIOCESE OF WEST YORKSHIRE & DALES: Working for Archbishop of York.

- Led the debate within dioceses of Ripon & Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield, and wider CofE hierarchy on plans to create a single new entity needed as viability of 3 separate dioceses increasingly uncertain. Resulted in General Synod approval.
- As Diocesan Secretary of the new diocese, merged the administration of the 3 dioceses and with the new Bishop developed a new vision and simplified governance system.

Apr 2011–Apr 2012: Sabbatical year

2006–2011: OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT COMMERCE/MAJOR PROJECTS AUTHORITY (HM Treasury then Cabinet Office) - Director Major Projects:

- Over 3 years assessed progress of the government's 40 most notable change programmes, briefing CO/HMT Ministers on warning signs of failure. Identified 10 key lessons for programme success in a new publication "Causes of Confidence"; printed but not distributed due to change of government in 2010.
- Led reviews of many of the 40 programmes including DH Pandemic Flu preparations, MoD's Strategic Deterrent and Carrier Strike with recommendations for SROs on improving delivery/HM Treasury on future funding. Recommendations always accepted.
- In 2010 designed and led review of all 40 major projects for 2010 Spending Review; identified £6.5bn savings, two programmes (e-Borders and Fire Resilience) cancelled.

2004–2006: HOME OFFICE - NATIONAL OFFENDER MANAGEMENT SERVICES (NOMS) PROGRAMME DIRECTOR (SCS2): Working to NOMS CEO led the programme merging Prison/Probations services in England/ Wales aiming to reduce re-offending levels.

- With CEO developed a new strategy and system architecture reflecting regional commissioning of prison/probation services with a head office oversight role.
- Managed the portfolio bringing NOMS into being achieving all key milestones and a new HQ structure within Home Office with 30% headcount reductions.

2002–2004: MoD (Defence Medical Services DMS) PROGRAMME DIRECTOR: Working to the Vice Chief Defence Staff, led programme transforming DMS to improve the timeliness and quality of care provided to military personnel by NHS and military staff.

- Developed new strategic approach for DMS reflecting views of military commanders. Included phasing out military hospitals, and MoD/DH Ministerial Agreement.

2000–2002: MoD (DMS) - CEO DEFENCE SECONDARY CARE AGENCY (SCS2/2*): Working to the Surgeon General, with 2000 military doctors/nurses world-wide provided hospital care for all military personnel, including those on live operations.

- Turned around a failing organisation; commissioned private sector to treat military patients rapidly, raising morale of patients, and credibility with military commanders.

1992–2000: NHS - CEO TEES HEALTH AUTHORITY:

- Created new Tees Health Authority by amalgamating 4 existing health bodies and reducing staff levels by 20%
- Implemented NHS reforms introducing the commissioning of all NHS services on Teesside (budget £400m pa population 556000).

1991–1992: NHS - CEO CLEVELAND FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES (FHSA)

- Chief Executive of an HQ with 75 staff; annual budget £75m. Supervised work of 500 NHS Doctors and Dentists across Teesside/Cleveland

1974–1991 CAREER WITHIN THE ROYAL NAVY: Submarine specialist with command of two submarines, one nuclear powered, and roles within Naval Headquarters (overseeing UK submarine operations 24/7) and MoD (planning future submarine force levels).

Education

1970–1974 CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY–Kings College: MA in Chemical Engineering

Development activities/accreditations

1996 Cabinet Office Top Management Programme.

2008 Accredited Team Leader for: HMT Gateway and MPRG Reviews.

2019 Accredited Mediator by CEDR Centre for Dispute Resolution.

2022 Nominated Leader for Cabinet Officer Public Bodies Reviews.

Appendix 5: Candidate questionnaire

Motivation

1. What motivated you to apply for this role, and what specific experiences would you bring to it?

I am motivated by the following aspects of the role:

- The opportunity to influence and make a real difference in improving efficiency and effectiveness within Border and Immigration processes.
- That Borders and Immigration is a critically important area for the nation's security and wellbeing as well as a top government priority.
- The intellectual challenge of addressing an agenda of this scale, breadth and size with its variety, its need for in depth analysis and to find implementable solutions.
- The opportunity to meet and engage with a very wide range of people from migrants and asylum seekers to caseworkers to government officials and ministers.
- The nature of the work is similar to that I have undertaken before, and enjoyed, especially as every review/inspection is an opportunity to learn something new and to pass on some of one's own experiences.

I bring the following relevant specific experiences:

- 20 years leadership experience in a wide range of public sector roles all as complex and sensitive as Borders and Immigration, that shows my ability to be agile and effective in different contexts. This will be especially relevant in this role where a key requirement is to be flexible in addressing each inspection and draw on broader experiences to see where efficiencies and effectiveness can be achieved.

- As part of HM Treasury and Cabinet Office, I have led reviews and inspections of complex public sector programmes and organisations within many departments. My track record of success lies in identifying how to enhance successful delivery with implementable recommendations.
- As a CEO and in leading reviews I have analysed multiple issues to identify how best to improve outcomes, utilising a model of organisational thinking that has proved successful whatever the complexity and scale of the issue. I would look to use this as ICIBI.
- As a CEO in many different sectors and contexts, I am aware of the pressures of delivery in the public sector, and also how difficult it can be to implement recommendations of reviews/inspections on top of the day-to-day business. My experience will help me frame recommendations that are pragmatic, implementable and will deliver improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.
- My roles have involved interacting with politicians, stakeholders and users at all levels and across many professions and backgrounds, all of which will be invaluable in this role.

2. If appointed are there specific areas within your new responsibilities where you will need to acquire new skills or knowledge?

- I would need to develop rapidly my understanding of the entire Borders and Immigration system. Whilst my current role gives me some insights there are many areas where I would need to start from scratch.
- I believe I already have the basic skills/experience needed for the role.

3. How were you recruited? Were you encouraged to apply, and if so, by whom?

- I was contacted by Gatenby Sanderson after I had downloaded the Job Description from their website. They are a company I have had considerable dealings with both in applying for jobs and in using them to assist in recruitments. After a discussion with their lead consultant exploring what was required and how that matched my experience and profile, he strongly encouraged me to apply, which I then did.

Personal Background

- 4. Do you currently or potentially have any business, financial or other non-pecuniary interests or commitments, that might give rise to the perception of a conflict of interest if you are appointed? How do you intend to resolve any potential conflicts of interests if you are appointed?**
 - I have no such interests or commitments.
- 5. If appointed what professional or voluntary work commitments will you continue to undertake, or do you intend to take on, alongside your new role? What is the time commitment for any professional or voluntary work commitments you will continue to undertake, and how will you reconcile these commitments with your new role?**
 - I have no such commitments.
- 6. Have you ever held any post or undertaken any activity that might cast doubt on your political impartiality? If so how will you demonstrate your political impartiality in the role if appointed?**
 - I am not aware of any such post or activity.
- 7. Do you intend to serve your full term of office? Would you seek re-appointment?**
 - I fully intend to serve my full term of office. As for re-appointment I would wish to assess my personal circumstances nearer the time.

The role

- 8. If appointed what will be your main priorities on taking up the role?**
 - Meeting with all key stakeholders, within and outside of government, to establish credibility and gain initial insights of ICIBI performance.
 - Working with Home Office officials to start the process of rebuilding trust in the inspectorate and its work, developing a shared understanding around goals, our respective roles, ways of working and what each expect of each other.
 - Designing the programme of work for the remainder of 25/26.
 - Familiarising myself with the various elements of the Borders and Immigration system through visits and discussions with officials and stakeholders including migrants and asylum seekers.

9. What criteria should the Committee use to judge your performance over your term of office?

I would suggest:

- The Committee’s own conclusions from any appearances before them as to my credibility and effectiveness.
- Feedback to the Committee from Home Office Ministers and senior officials on the utility and usefulness of ICIBI inspections.
- Evidence that the efficiency and effectiveness of processes within the Borders and Immigration systems have improved as a direct result of implementation of recommendations.
- The % of recommendations that are accepted by the Home Office as an indicator of their pragmatic, value-adding and implementable nature.

10. How will you protect and enhance your personal independence from the Government?

There are currently different interpretations of what “independence” does or should mean, and how it manifests itself. This can lead to confusion and conflicting expectations. As ICIBI I would seek to clarify from the outset the current degree of independence and protect it with the following:

- Develop with senior HO officials a new compact/agreement covering:
 - The overall aim of the inspectorate’s work in supporting the Borders and Immigration system.
 - The roles of key players at all stages of the life cycle of an inspection from conception through to delivery of enhanced efficiency and effectiveness, including monitoring of progress and implementation.
 - Agreed/refreshed protocols covering communications, managing reports and escalation routes in the event of disagreements.
 - Clarity around what each party expects of the other.

Such an approach would reinforce how all parties work together, clarify who is responsible for what, clarify and protect the independence of the ICIBI where appropriate. A similar compact would then be developed for each individual inspection.

Other ways of protecting the current level would include:

- Developing a constructive relationship with the HASC of issues and progress in progressing inspections and in maintaining the independence of the role.
- Ensuring that all stakeholders have access to the ICIBI to air views and concerns, with appropriate feedback on decisions made, so the ICIBI is seen taking stakeholder views into account as much as those of government and being independent of all.
- Ensuring the Inspectorate operates from outside of any main Home Office base thereby enhancing the optic of independence.

Enhancing the degree of independence would come from:

- Supporting any review of the role and remit of the ICIBI arising for example out of the current review of Windrush recommendations, that explored the appropriate level independence for the ICIBI and how this is best manifested.
- Building on the compact outlined above as a baseline, explore with Ministers and HO officials specific areas where independence could be enhanced with benefit to all parties.

11. What is your view of the public profile and reputation of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration?

- The public profile and reputation of the ICIBI is largely driven by media coverage of the ICIBI and its work and will inevitably vary, but I suspect includes the following themes:
 - The role is an essential part of ensuring secure borders and an effective immigration system.
 - The role appears at times to be in discord with the Home Office over process issues such as when reports are published, rather than working together tackling efficiency and effectiveness.
 - The role appears somewhat of a “toothless tiger” with seemingly controversial recommendations or elements being redacted or mitigated through delayed publication of reports.

My view of the above is that whilst such views may be understandable and negative, they refer to the past. With a new Government and a new ICIBI there is now an opportunity to reset and re-define a new working relationship between the ICIBI and the Home Office, one which is built on trust and mutual respect, defines roles clearly and especially when and where the independent nature of the ICIBI is paramount. This coupled with success in improving efficiency and effectiveness in demonstrable ways can I am sure, quickly change current views.

12. What risks do you think you will face over your term of office? How do you intend to manage them?

- Risk 1: The totality of the Borders and Immigration system is vast with correspondingly large areas meriting inspection. The risk is that with a very small team, something significant is missed and the opportunity to improve efficiency and effectiveness is lost through a focus on lesser issues.

I would manage this by thorough research and discussions with stakeholders to identify where those critical areas are, feeding back results and checking out the validity of any conclusions before publishing any programme of work.

- Risk 2: Financial pressures lead to budget cuts for the inspectorate reducing the number of inspectors/teams available for the work, thereby reducing its impact and reach.

I would manage this by constant reiteration to Ministers and officials of the potential an annual investment of ca£2m in the inspectorate can bring in term of financial savings elsewhere through good inspections and recommendations; I would further argue that an increased investment is needed to expand the team and should be seen as a “spend to save” measure that will pay for itself.

- Risk 3: Former practices and ways of working between HO and ICIBI re-assert themselves leading to the previous issues with report finalisation and publication delays, and negative perceptions.

Mitigation: Interim ICIBI has already done much to ensure this does not happen. My challenge is to build on his good work and develop new relationships that respect ICIBI independence on the one hand and recognise the need for joint working with Home Office officials.

- Risk 4: Any review of the role and remit of the ICIBI arising out of the Windrush report detracts from the inspectorate’s routine work and hampers efforts to improve effectiveness and efficiencies.

As ICIBI I would welcome any such review and can reduce this risk by protecting staff from undue involvement and working with HO officials to ensure any review has minimum disruptive effect.

- Risk 5: The focus on any assessment of the work of the ICIBI is on process inputs such as number of recommendations, numbers accepted, delays in publication etc, rather than on the end-result of improved consistency, efficiency and effectiveness.

I would mitigate this risk by ensuring and report recommendations are always focussed on the three issues of efficiency effectiveness and consistency. This way the attention is on the overall aim, rather than on any processes that lead up to that aim.

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 11 February 2025

Members present

Karen Bradley, in the Chair

Paul Kohler

Robbie Moore

Chris Murray

Joani Reid

Bell Ribeiro-Addy

Appointment of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Draft Report (*Appointment of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 22 read and agreed to.

Appendices agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 11 February 2025

John Tuckett, Government's preferred candidate for the role of Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

[Q1-86](#)